

TIPS FOR KEEPING YOUR DOCKET UNDER CONTROL

ALWAYS

- do cases in date order – standard inventory policy – first in, first out.
- know what cases are in your office – what they are, what needs to be done, and when it needs to be done – do a minor triage every morning; there should be no surprises in your office.
- keep up with amendeds – if you get behind, they can really mess you up.
- touch a file as little as possible – standard organizational technique
 - new cases – pick it up, ownership search, 2(d) search, checklist, maybe Nexis, make a decision, write a letter, tram it and get it out of your office
 - amendeds – pick it up, see what you asked for, see if they gave it to you, sign it for pub or write a quick suspension letter or a quick id final; if it's a substantive refusal, maybe put it aside and think about it and ask around, but don't put it off too long, tram it and get it out of your office.
- keep as few files as possible in your office (I try never to have more than 30 at a time - new and amended together) – keep 'em moving – tram at least once a day and get them out of your office.
- keep an eye on the big picture; if the amended shelves are getting full, don't pull 30 new cases on Thursday afternoon; get a feel for the office – if the docket clerks are driving around huge carts full of files – ask what's up? are they suspension checks? abandonments? will it affect me?
- make a plan that works for you and stick with it – amendeds every Monday and Friday or new cases in the morning and amendeds in the afternoon, just be sure to balance the time and keep up with everything, doing a little of everything every day makes the work a little less boring and keeps your production steadier; with the new Friday amended distribution, it may be a good idea to clear your office of amendeds every week – get them out by Thursday.

NEVER

- pull new cases just to get points without finishing old batch (a few old ones waiting for your trainer or the attorney to call back are OK, but they all need to have been searched and worked on)
- put off amendeds until the last day (they shouldn't even be put off until the last week; and don't fall into the 21 day trap! They are still going to be there – do them now!)
- tram anything until it's ready to put on the shelf!!!!

IMPORTANT PEOPLE AND PLACES

Pre-exam (STB) – we don't deal with them much except to send back files that never should have gotten filing dates.

Program Control (STB) – Very Important – these people can fix everything; they give us retro credits; Betty Andrews is the X-search wizard; Blake Pearl is the TRAM man; Kathy Dixon knows everything – she can run the whole place herself and fix any TRAM problem; Myrtle, Lottie, Noreen and the rest can help when you can't seem to get TRAM to do what you need it to do; they're all nice and very helpful, introduce yourself.

Photocomp Coordinators (STB) – Deborah and Deedee do post-publication amendments; when you need to fix a goof and the file has already been pub'd you do an Examiner's Amendment but don't mail it, TRAM it to photocomp, and drop it off in the bin on the fourth floor, be sure to write a note saying whether it needs to be repub'd or not.

Vistronix (STB) – the contractor that does proof reading before the mark appears in the OG; if the file is TRAM'd here you cannot get it until it receives a pub date – don't even try – they have no batching system, no tracking system, just check TRAM every week until it gets a pub date and then go to Pub & Issue.

Pub & Issue (STB) – After a file has been given a pub date, it waits here until it actually gets pub'd; if an applicant calls you and wants to change something or you need to get the file, go to the window, tell them you're the examining attorney on the case and you need it back – technically they need to withdraw it from issue before they can give it to you and sometimes you need to fill out a form and it takes time – this is where being friendly really helps – usually if you ask real nice someone can do it for you right away.

ITU (STB) – this is where the files stay until an SOU comes in; really the only time we have to go over there is when the file wasn't TRAM'd right – they have to TRAM it “SOU processing completed,” if they don't, then when you try to TRAM it you get an error message saying “first action on merits already taken” and you have to go over there and have them fix it – they are the only ones who can.

TAC (STB) – they are nice and helpful people (that's why they work with the public!); you go there to declare a file lost if you can't find it, or to get a file “unlost” if you try to TRAM it and you can't because it's been declared lost; they also recreate lost files, but hopefully you won't ever have to have that done. Note – only have a file declared lost if you've tried everything, waited a few days and tried everything again, then had the docket staff and Philip try everything – usually the files turn up.

OFFICE WORKFLOW

New Case

Letter

Pub

Mailed by Docket

Batched by Docket

Filed in ARD

Reviewed by LIE

Response arrives

Sent to Vistronix

Matched and Batched by Docket

Sent to Pub & Issue

Entered by LIE

If ITU, sent to ITU

Placed on shelf

Returned to you on Friday

Final – start at top of this column

Pub – go to next column

NB – if you need to find a file, there are “batch books” on the shelves – look in TRAM to find the date the file was batched, look in book under that date, find batch no., find file; if you take it out and keep it, make a note on the sheet and initial it.