

Introduction

The Pharmaceutical Trade Marks Group – defining an industry role

Author

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There is a considerable history behind the Pharmaceutical Trade Marks Group (PTMG) and some major traditions to be upheld. Reflecting the pace of change in the pharmaceutical trademark sector and the challenges facing trademark counsel, the PTMG cannot stand still, but needs to progress, learn, grow and develop. The PTMG has to manage change and rise to new challenges, while at the same time remaining true to its essential nature.

The PTMG was founded by Derek Rossitter in May 1970, with the first official PTMG meeting taking place on September 25 that same year. Held in the Surrey offices of Sterling Winthrop in England, the meeting boasted 20 attendees representing 19 companies. Forty years on, the group has grown from that small gathering of professionals in the UK industry into a well-established organisation known all around the world, with more than 1,000 members across the globe.

As such, today's PTMG conference is a very different animal, with attendance highly valued by senior trademark professionals, both in-house and in law firms. There is never a shortage of distinguished speakers ready to tackle every conceivable relevant topic, and we pride ourselves that delegates repeatedly state that each conference improves on the previous event in terms of educational content, presentation and networking opportunities.

However, it is important to stress that there is one thing that the PTMG is definitely not. As one of the few organisations that deliberately keeps

itself out of any political debates on IP issues, the PTMG does not 'lobby' and does not 'take a position' on industry issues. Rather, the PTMG discovers and investigates current topics, finds the right speakers to tackle them and presents those topics in unusual and thought-provoking ways to an audience of lawyers, in-house counsel and IP service providers. From the Internet to indigenous rights, from dilution to domain names, from parallel trade to practice hints and tips – if it impacts on the pharmaceutical trademark practitioner, the PTMG will cover it.

To achieve this, PTMG conferences are designed and implemented by the PTMG Committee, a team of dedicated trademark professionals who either hold or have held senior positions in major international healthcare companies.

Officially, we describe the PTMG as "a not-for-profit organisation, the primary objective of which is to enable members to meet at regular intervals to consider problems of mutual interest on the important subject of trademarks in the pharmaceutical sector". Put another way, the PTMG has the twin aims of education and networking within the trademark profession, which it facilitates through two educational conferences per year.

While this description is correct, as chairman I feel that there is something missing – an indefinable quality which makes me conclude that the PTMG is more than the mere sum of its parts. I would therefore summarise that the group is an organisation committed to providing its members, old and new, with an insight into issues which affect the pharmaceutical industry and its use of trademarks. It also provides members with an opportunity to meet and to forge professional networks that often last a lifetime. [WTR](#)

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Sue Evans is a UK-qualified trademark attorney and is currently head of corporate trademarks and domain names in group legal at Novartis, based at its headquarters in Basel, Switzerland. Before joining Novartis seven years ago, she gained her professional experience in the trademark departments of other major healthcare companies and in private practice. Ms Evans has been a PTMG Committee member for several years and was elected as PTMG chairman in 2004.

