

Convergence and Harmonization of Standards Organizations

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Agenda

- Terminology
- Perceptions of Differences
- Convergence and Harmonization
- Why the Change?



Terminology

- Many ways to describe organizations that develop and approve standards
 - *de jure*, *de facto*, formal, informal, SSO, SDO, government, industry, sectoral, consortium, recognized, accredited, regional, national, etc.
- “Standards Developing Organization” or “SDO” commonly used to describe accredited or recognized bodies
- “Standards Setting Organization” or “SSO” commonly used to describe consortia or unaccredited bodies



Terminology

- But...
 - Not all SDOs develop (some do not *develop* but do *set* or *approve*), and most SSOs do develop.
- Therefore...
 - I will use “accredited” and “non-accredited” or “consortia” instead



Perceptions of Differences

- Consortia are somehow “less good” than accredited/recognized bodies
 - Less open and democratic, not concerned with balance
 - Closed; membership by invitation only
 - Quicker, but at the cost of a sloppy process
 - Short term thinking
 - Have to pay to join
 - More prone to anti-trust issues
 - Draw resources away from recognized bodies



Perceptions of Differences

- Accredited/recognized organizations are somehow “less good” than consortia
 - Slow, ponderous, difficult to work with
 - Difficult to join, “closed club”; hard to understand process and requirements for participating
 - More concerned with retrospective than anticipatory standards, far behind the leading edge; standards are late to market
 - Increasingly less relevant to a fast moving global market
 - Organizations do nothing to promote adoption
 - Selling standards inhibits their adoption



Perceptions of Differences

- Some amount of truth to all of these perceptions
- Some historically based, but changing
- Mostly depends upon who you ask



The Truth Behind the Perceptions

- There is no “one size fits all” organizational model for consortia
 - The term “consortium” can refer to an open group, but also used to refer to partnerships, fora, invitation-only groups, ecosystems, etc.
- Measures of openness, balance, transparency, due process, etc. are not binaries; all organizations, whether accredited or not, fall along a spectrum
- Age is not the only measure of maturity, or to using modern methodology and process
- All organizations have similar business concerns, operations, staffing, etc.
 - The largest difference in business model may be the revenue source, i.e. majority of revenues from dues vs. from sales



Are There Truly Differences?

- Accredited and unaccredited organizations are more alike than commonly perceived; becoming more alike
- *Many consortia are unaccredited merely because they see no need or benefit in doing so, but are otherwise qualified*



Are There Truly Differences?

- Yes, there are differences between organizations, but those differences are not necessarily based on whether an organization is accredited or not
- A better distinction might be made regarding
 - Emphasis on development of Anticipatory vs. Retrospective standards
 - Level of satisfying industry and market needs
 - Use of modern infrastructure vs. paper-based processes
 - Openness to public review and inspection
 - Emphasis on non-sales revenue
 - Emphasis on and success of adoption-related activities



Convergence and Harmonization

- Accredited organizations and consortia already close; moving closer together by adopting each others' operating styles and models
 - Globalization
 - Business Models
 - Recognition



Globalization

- National bodies and the organizations they accredit have historically had national interests
- Industry-based consortia have not been concerned with national borders
- Increasing global interest by all types of organizations
 - Recognition of the global economy; emphasis on industry/technology rather than national interests
 - Name changes
 - Opening offices in multiple countries
 - Increasing multi-national membership
 - Multi-country liaisons and MoUs



Business Models

- Business issues the same everywhere: How to fund and staff operations
- Accredited/recognized organizations have traditionally had most revenues from sales of documents, while consortia have focused on membership dues and other sources
- May be changing: ITU experiment with freely available standards declared a success
 - Challenge will be establishing new sources of revenue



Recognition

- Recognition by ISO and JTCl of the value of work produced by non-accredited organizations
 - Creation of fast-track, liaison, and PAS processes to accept work into national and international approval processes
- U.S. OMB Circular A-199 makes no distinction between accredited and non-accredited organizations
- U.S. Standards Strategy recognizes work done by consortia and forums



Why the Change?

- Recognition by national, international, and accredited bodies of the value of the work done by consortia
 - Relevant, anticipatory standards; bleeding edge
 - More open, efficient process; quicker results
 - Emphasis on adoption/promotional activities
- Recognition by consortia of the value of national and international recognition of their work
 - More thorough process
 - Legitimacy of international recognition leads to adoption



Final Questions

- Does the market care whether a standard is produced by an accredited vs. non-accredited organization? How does level of approval (consortium, national, international) affect adoption?
- With the movement towards efficiencies and adoption of each others' models, why are there so few mergers between standards organizations?



Conclusions

- Differences between organizational types not as great as commonly perceived
- Increasing adoption of each others' business models, policies, and practices



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