

ACCI 2004 Conference

Roundtable Session: Voluntary Standards—Why Should Consumer Interests Be Represented?

“Educating the Public on Standards Participation”

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SLIDE #1 (title slide)

Voluntary standards play an important role in simplifying our daily lives as consumers.

They help to ensure that products work for their intended applications across the spectrum of technology.

From light bulbs to batteries, ATM cards to personal computers, standards promote product interoperability, enhanced quality and reliability.

They also perform an important societal benefit in that governments rely on voluntary standards to fulfill their public policy objectives relating to safety, health, the environment and consumer protection.

From a purely economic perspective, about 80 percent of global merchandise trade is affected by standards and by regulations that embody standards.

In addition, standards that are developed with consumer input are more likely to result in products that will be accepted into the marketplace.

However, consumers typically are unaware of the existence of standards.

My remarks this afternoon will focus on ANSI’s educational outreach to consumer groups and the academic community to raise awareness of the value of standards and standards participation.

Our goal is to help educate consumers and to involve them more directly in standardization, both at the strategic policy level and at the technical level of standards development.

An organized educational initiative will promote broader standards participation, more effective participants, and higher quality standards.

SLIDE #2 (examples of standards)

A standard is a document, established by consensus and approved by a recognized body, that provides rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their results.

Standards are guidelines to be used on a voluntary basis.

They become mandatory when they are adopted or referenced into laws or technical regulations.

As Professor Herrmann noted in his research paper last year, some of the earliest examples of standards were those for weights and measures.

With industrialization came the need for simplification and standardization to reduce problems associated with unnecessary differentiation in products.

Standards also began to be recognized as an effective tool to promote safe workplaces and for consumer protection.

More recently, with the growth of the global economy, standards for business systems and services have come to the fore.

And today international standards are fast replacing national and regional standards as a means of facilitating cross-border trade.

SLIDE #3 (what is ANSI?)

Voluntary standards serve U.S. interests well because government, consumers and industry work together to create them.

The American National Standards Institute was founded in 1918 by five engineering societies and three government agencies, who recognized the need for a focal point for standards coordination, harmonization and information.

Throughout its history, ANSI has provided a forum where the private and public sectors work cooperatively together to develop voluntary consensus standards that benefit the nation.

ANSI serves as the umbrella organization that coordinates and administers the U.S. voluntary standards system.

Our roles include:

- Accrediting U.S. Standards Developing Organizations (some 200 currently)
- Approving American National Standards that have been developed in accordance with our essential requirements for openness, balance, consensus, and due process (more than 10,000 approved to date)

We provide a fair, open and transparent process, with numerous checks and balances, that is designed to protect the rights and interests of every participant.

But standards are just good ideas unless products conform to them.

Accordingly, ANSI promotes consumer confidence by accrediting organizations that are involved with the certification of products.

Last year we also introduced a program to accredit personnel certification bodies.

We also serve as the U.S. national member of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and, via the U.S. National Committee, the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC)

In addition, ANSI is a one-stop resource for instant access to standards and standards information.

Significantly, ANSI is not:

- a government agency or a regulatory body, nor are we
- a standards developer.

We are a private, 501(c)3 non-profit membership organization.

Our members, not ANSI, develop standards.

ANSI is responsible for ensuring the integrity of the standards development process.

Consumer involvement adds credibility to this process.

SLIDE #4 (the ANSI Federation)

ANSI's diverse membership represents virtually every sector of the U.S. economy.

The ANSI Federation comprises a unique and diversified body of stakeholders that includes industry, standards developing organizations, trade associations, professional and technical societies, government agencies, labor organizations, consumer groups, and academia.

ANSI's strength comes from its diverse constituents working together to promote a strong U.S. voice in the global marketplace.

Membership in the Institute is not required to participate in standards development.

SLIDE #5 (Education Committee)

In August 2000, the ANSI Board of Directors approved a National Standards Strategy for the United States.

Goal 11 of this strategy is to:

Make the value of standards development both apparent and real by educating private- and public-sector decision-makers about the value of standards and how to take advantage of the process.

In furtherance of this goal, ANSI established an Ad Hoc Committee on Standards Awareness and Education which last year was made a permanent Committee of ANSI.

The Committee comprises representatives of the ANSI Federation, including the academic community.

Among its first tasks, the Committee conducted an education and training needs analysis of target segments within the standards community.

An outcome of this analysis was to develop a strategy to get standards and conformity assessment content into the curricula of institutions of higher learning.

While the initial focus is on emphasizing the strategic importance of standards to businesses operating in the global market, there is also an opportunity to bring standards education into family and consumer science programs.

SLIDE #6 (Web-based Training)

ANSI's earliest training efforts were delivered in the traditional, classroom setting and we continue to offer such courses.

However, a number of factors prompted ANSI to explore, develop and implement alternative mechanisms for delivering standards-related training.

In 2002 ANSI released its first e-learning course, *Why Standards Matter*.

This free, introductory course covers:

- what standards are
- how different organizations are involved in standards development
- the importance of standards in everyday life
- how standards protect our health, safety and the environment
- the difference between voluntary standards and regulations
- the role of standards in U.S. business and the global marketplace.

A follow-up course, *U.S. Standards – Today and Tomorrow*, also free, focuses on the national standards process.

These courses enable students to acquire valuable information, at their own pace, right at their own desktop.

Another effective delivery mechanism is the virtual workshop.

This option combines the benefit of involving a live instructor with the cost savings of delivering content via a phone and Internet connection.

Fundamentally, web-based training helps to make standards education available to a much wider audience than ever before.

Moreover, it offers an inexpensive and effective means of delivering training to consumers and other interest groups who may lack the time, resources and inclination necessary to travel to a distant training facility.

We encourage you to take advantage of our existing e-learning courses and to give us your feedback.

Later this year, we will introduce a new virtual workshop on opportunities for consumers to become involved in standards-related policy activity.

SLIDE #7 (University Outreach)

The ANSI Committee on Education is moving forward with several initiatives to incorporate standards-related information into the curricula of colleges and universities.

ANSI is partnering with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on a national design competition that will award grants to university students for projects in engineering and environmental technology for sustainable development.

Members of the standards community are also preparing materials that can be used to persuade university faculty and deans of the need to incorporate standards-related content into curricula.

ANSI's Education Committee also has had discussions regarding the potential development of training modules for universities to assist them in this endeavor.



This initiative will be addressed at the fall 2004 regional conference of the American Society for Engineering Education.

SLIDE #8 (For More Information)

In summary, ANSI's strategy is to create programs that will help to raise awareness of standards and the value and importance of participating in national and international standards development.

Toward that end, we will continue to build effective training partnerships with standards developers, companies, government agencies, educational institutions, consumer groups and others.

We hope that ACCI and its members will partner with us in these efforts.



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Examples of Standards

There are standards for:

- Time
- Weights and measures
- Design and performance characteristics of products and materials (physical, chemical, electrical, mechanical)
- Safety, health and environmental protection
- Public information symbols
- Quality and environmental management systems
- Services
- Personnel certification



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“What is ANSI?”



American National Standards Institute

- Founded in 1918 by five professional / technical societies and three federal government agencies
- From the beginning, a private-public sector partnership
- Only accreditor of U.S. Standards Developers
- Only body that approves standards as American National Standards
- Provides access to international and regional standards bodies
- Accredits conformity assessment bodies
- Information provider

ANSI is not a government agency or a standards developer.



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The Federation

**Private Sector
& Public Sector
Working Together** →

Academia
Individuals
Government
Companies
Trade Associations
Professional Societies
Standards Developers
Consumer and Labor Interests

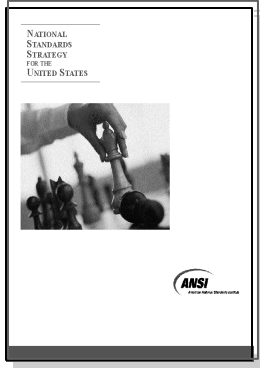


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ANSI Committee on Education



- Oversees and Coordinates ANSI's Education and Outreach Initiatives to fulfill Goal 11 of U.S. National Standards Strategy
 - *Educate private- and public-sector decision-makers about the value of standards*
 - Chaired by Dr. William E. Kelly, Professor of Civil Engineering, The Catholic University of America
- Develop strategies for improving the general understanding of the standards process, benefits and safeguards
- Develop strategies for promoting the importance of standards to university faculty and students



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Web-based training



- E-Learning (you learn “at your own pace”)
 - Two introductory courses (both free)
 - Why Standards Matter
 - U.S. Standards – Today and Tomorrow
 - International Standards (coming in 2004)
- Virtual workshops (instructor-led, presented “live”)
 - Students connected via online meeting software program and teleconference
 - Instructor moves through presentation, allows time for questions (works well for small groups)



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University Outreach



- Partnering with U.S. EPA on national student design competition on sustainability
- Developing resources and materials on standards for use by university faculty
- Fall 2004 regional conference of American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE)



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Thank you!



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