

**ANSI Annual Business Meeting 2006
Remarks from the Chairman**

Robert W. Noth

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Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Bob Noth and As Chairman of the ANSI Board of Directors, it is my great pleasure to welcome all of you to the Institute's 2006 Annual Business Meeting and to call this meeting to order.

<< *Personal remarks* >>

ANSI's status as a non-profit 501(c)3 organization incorporated in the State of New York requires us to report to our members a summary of our financial outcomes and activities. The Annual Business Meeting is a way for us to meet that legal obligation. But more importantly, it is an opportunity to come together as a community for a discussion of where the Institute has been, where we are today and where we are going.

(pause)

As coordinator of the U.S. standards and conformity assessment system, ANSI has brought together stakeholders for the purpose of consensus-building for nearly 90 years.

Politics, technology, and commerce are constantly changing – sometimes completely reinventing – the world in which we live. Our community is changing with it.

Since I became involved with ANSI in the early 1990s, I've seen the Institute make great progress in many areas.

Today, there is a much greater understanding of the linkage between standards and commerce than ever before.

Corporate America as a whole is better recognizing the effects of standards, regulations and conformity assessment programs on price, quality, time to market, social consciousness, domestic and global trade.

In my work at Deere & Company, we have embraced standardization as an essential part of our business strategy.

But there is a different perspective between those that develop standards and those that use them. There are two sides of the standardization coin.

Philosophically, there is a difference between standards *as* business and standards *for* business. Understanding the nuances between these perspectives will help us define the priorities that will guide the Institute in the near future All progress comes from change.

(pause)

First and foremost, it is imperative that we recognize that ANSI's responsibilities—what it is we were formed to do—has an impact on our ability to attract and retain members.

One of the things I've observed in my years in business is that in most organizations that produce a product or service there are different types of employees. Those who are directly involved with the design, production, delivery and interaction with the customers are in the "Line" organization.

Those who perform auxiliary and ancillary functions that directly support the line or are necessary to the business are known as “staff”. There are also employees whose function is to coordinate and foster collaboration on a level one step further removed from the direct action and direct support. These people can be classified as “staff to staff”.

Often people in the “line” can’t see the benefits that the “staff to staff” provide and they complain about the cost of these services. When organizations hunker down to ride out lean times in the business cycle, “staff to staff” are often the first to go. The funny thing though, is that when the business cycle rebounds and the business wants to grow, “staff to staff” functions come back because the organization rediscovers the importance of the benefits they provide.

What is true of people in organizations is also true of organizations themselves.

ANSI faces the challenge of being in a “staff-to-staff” role for the U.S. standards system. We provide support to those groups that are supporting those engaged in the technical work of standards development.

But in coordinating the system, the Institute *also* provides information and intelligence that directly affects the people and organizations delivering products and services to the marketplace.

To ensure our future and the continued competitiveness of the U.S. standards system, we must be more precise when identifying the benefits of ANSI membership. We need to focus on the benefits and end results of what we do rather than on the features and functions of our organization. It is imperative that we clearly articulate the value proposition of ANSI membership in terms that are relevant to potential members.

To that end, we are aggressively promoting our ability to act in response to urgent national priorities. The ANSI Standards Panel program, which you will hear about in more detail from ANSI's president in a few minutes, has grown substantially and has proven to be a very successful, results-focused model. They ensure that the needs of standards stakeholders are heard, understood, and satisfied.

The panels are part of our effort to get ahead of the curve and become better at anticipating and embracing new opportunities within the scope of our mission to coordinate and harmonize U.S. standards and conformity assessment activities.

Aside from their fundamental qualities of responsiveness and harmonization, the panels also help to communicate what is being done and how to get all affected stakeholders involved.

(pause)

The panels have brought many new participants to the ANSI table.

When I have a chance to talk with new members of ANSI or the Panels, I always get good feedback. They have invested time and resources to join a panel, or a regional standing committee, or a policy committee, or some other type of group, because they see value in what ANSI is doing.

This observation prompted my decision earlier this year to establish a Board Ad Hoc Group on Extended Outreach. Chaired by Ron Silletti, the group will engage the broader spectrum of U.S.-based standards and conformity assessment communities. I am relying on the involvement of my

fellow Board members to help identify the issues that are important to those stakeholders. And hopefully a discernable way that ANSI can add value.

As I've noted in my letter in the Annual Report, more than half of the organizations that set standards in the United States are not members of ANSI. Our aim is to build effective partnerships with stakeholders now outside the Institute's usual network or that are minimally engaged. This may include standards developing organizations as well as consortia, consumer organizations, and companies — including those in the rapidly expanding services sector.

The *United States Standards Strategy* (USSS) specifically directs ANSI to reach out to organizations not under our current framework. We have been called upon to explore ways to work with those groups so that, together, we will support the needs of all stakeholders.

It has been nearly a year since the *Strategy* was approved and ANSI has been tracking the implementation efforts that have occurred so far.

It didn't surprise me when I heard that there isn't a whole lot to report at this time. Many of the *Strategy's* tactics are ongoing activities that ANSI and other organizations do day-in and day-out. In part, the *Strategy* documented what we were already doing.

What is troubling, however, is that many people still do not even know about the Strategy.

It is very important that we continue to devote adequate resources to promoting awareness of the *Strategy*. We know that enhanced awareness helps to bring about stronger engagement. It can also uncover mechanisms for minimizing redundancy, for accessing and sharing information, and reducing time to market.

We need to keep in mind the connection between idea and result. We must give appropriate time and effort to defining metrics and measuring our success. When implementing the USSS, we must continue to look for links between action and benefit.

(pause)

I said a moment ago that all progress comes from change but the caveat is that all change is not progress. The challenges the Institute is facing are familiar ones. Many of you have heard these messages before.

How **do** we build effective partnerships and continue to grow? How **does** ANSI add value for our members? How **do** we continue to elevate ANSI's role as coordinator and facilitator?

We have to continue to apply the metrics I mentioned earlier. We have to find smarter solutions to business problems.

ANSI's members and volunteers provide the driving force behind the Institute and its many programs. It is through your expertise and efforts that we are able to focus on the critical needs facing consumers, government and the business community.

I look forward to being a part of the Institute's future as we pursue the achievement of its many goals.

(pause)

And now, it is my great pleasure to introduce ANSI's President and CEO, Mr. Joe Bhatia. Joe joined ANSI at the beginning of the year, after an intensive global search to identify a successor to Dr. Mark W. Hurwitz who retired at the end of 2005. Joe formerly served as executive vice president and chief operating officer of the international group at Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL). This year, he certainly hit the ground running. I look forward to hearing his perspective on what we can expect for the Institute on our path forward.

(lead applause)

Joe