


ANSI
American National Standards Institute

**Awareness in the United States:
Implementing the
National Standards Strategy
for the United States**



Mr. Lane Hallenbeck
Vice President, Conformity Assessment
American National Standards Institute

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ABSTRACT

The U.S. standardization model resembles both the nation’s political structure and economic structure. It is sector-based, driven by market needs, and relies strongly on diversity and decentralization. Today, however, the cultural, economic and regulatory factors that have helped to shape this system are being tested as the trend towards globalization draws increasing attention to standards that are relevant around the world, rather than regionally or locally relevant. The traditional strengths of the U.S. system – such as consensus, openness and transparency – must be married with new requirements, such as speed, relevance, and meeting the needs of public interest constituencies. As the U.S. engages in its first major review and revision process for the National Standards Strategy (NSS) that was approved in 2000, Mr. Lane Hallenbeck, ANSI vice president of conformity assessment, will comment on the revision of the NSS and the relevance of various principles of this strategy to global standardization.

*“Successful people create the future
rather than wait for it.”*

Peter F. Drucker
Managing in the Next Society



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- Modern circumstances require that all segments of our global society work together more closely for mutual benefit.
 - Buyers demand:
 - Confidence requirements
 - Expedient delivery
 - Minimum cost
 - Supplier expect:
 - Uniform, equivalent requirements
 - Consistent, reproducible tests
 - No redundancy – universal acceptance
- The standardization community brings together in an open forum professional representatives of industry, government regulators and legislators, consumer groups, academics and others.

Together, we conduct a careful examination of the issues facing the marketplace and society and we work together in an efficient, effective, and expeditious manner for the development of standards-based solutions to meet these critical needs.



The international language of commerce is standards.

Source:

U.S. Secretary of Commerce – Donald Evans

*Report on Standards and Competitiveness –
Removing Standards-Related Trade Barriers Through Effective
Collaboration*

May 18, 2004



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- For many – especially among those in the community of standards users – one of the leading areas of need is related to global trade because, as global markets have grown, standards have also gained importance. As noted in your conference program, standards are an indispensable part of nearly every aspect of daily life for everyone in both modern and emerging economies. But there has not always been equal, or sometimes even adequate, representation from the user community.
- In March 2003, the U.S. Department of Commerce announced a new initiative that was aimed at boosting U.S. exports by reducing technical barriers to trade. Included in the program was an eight-point plan that was aimed at creating a more level playing field around the world.
- ANSI was solicited and relied upon for input during the development of the project. We welcomed this initiative and viewed it as a means to help to strengthen a widespread understanding of the important role that developing and using voluntary standards and conformity assessment systems play in the support of U.S. citizens and the competitiveness of our nation's industry in international trade.
- In May 2004, Donald Evans, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Commerce, released his report on the Department's initiative. In his remarks, he stated that "Standards are the international language of commerce."
- ANSI has committed its resources to supporting the Commerce Department in its execution of a long-range plan that addresses a host of issues important to standards developers and standards users. The Institute will be an active partner in its implementation.
- This is a great testament to the increasing awareness and interest that global standardization activities are receiving from the highest levels of U.S. government and, apparently, from governments around the world. It is also a perfect example of the strengthening collaboration between those who use standards and those who develop them.



The U.S. Standardization Model

“One Approach Among Many in the World”

- The U.S. “standardization” model includes both standards-setting and conformity assessment programs
 - resembles the nation’s political (federal) structure
 - resembles the nation’s economic structure
 - sector-based and driven by market needs
 - relies strongly on diversity and decentralization



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- The U.S. approach to standardization relies upon the involvement and cooperation of these diverse stakeholders. Our standards system is highly decentralized and naturally partitioned into industrial sectors that are supported by numerous independent standards developing organizations.
- It is estimated that there are more than 95,000 recognized standards in the U.S. alone. Most of these are developed and used on a voluntary basis. The majority are developed by technical committees formed within the private sector.
- ANSI’s role is to serve as a coordinator of the voluntary consensus standardization aspects of this system. The Institute addresses standardization needs in all fields – industries involved range from nuclear energy to information technology and from material handling to electronics. Alongside traditional engineering committees and design-based standards are new and innovative projects ranging from quality and environmental management, to standards for the service industry and most recently, for personnel certification programs.
- The Institute does not itself develop these standards . . . our members do. There are some 200 ANSI-accredited standards developers across the spectrum of industry. I will speak more about ANSI’s role in just a moment.
- In some industries, we have seen non-traditional groups such as consortia becoming more involved in standards-setting activities. Recent trends also indicate there are an increasing number of collaborative partnerships between consortia groups and traditional standards-setting bodies. This is an ideal scenario because it combines the speed of development that is often associated with consortia groups with the consensus and due process requirements that are typically associated with the more formal, or traditional, standards-development bodies.
- In most cases, government and industry representatives participate as “equal partners” in standards-setting committees. In this distributed environment, the costs are typically borne by the participants, not the standards developing organization.



Compliance and Enforcement: Factors Influencing Standardization

Examples from a U.S. perspective . . .

- Public opinion
 - Example: Publicity about faulty or dangerous products will negatively impact the market

- Legal system
 - Example: Laws allow consumers to return faulty products
 - Consumers can sue producers of faulty or dangerous products
 - Penalties include requiring companies to recall and withdraw products from the market

- Government agencies (federal, state or local)
 - Example: The import of unsafe products can be denied
 - Faulty or dangerous products can be recalled or removed from the market



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- Contrast the U.S. system with those in place in other regions of the world and you will undoubtedly see quite a difference. In fact, we recognize that other regions of the world sometimes perceive that no one in the U.S. — neither the government, nor any central authority — is in charge. I hope to clarify this misconception for you.
- Because the launch of a new standards project is driven by market need, we often refer to the U.S. system as a “bottom-up” approach to standardization. Culturally and systematically, this differs from the “top-down” approach to standards-setting that can be seen in many other systems around the world. In this model, the government - or groups closely coupled to government(s) – typically serve as the standards setters.
- In the “bottom-up” approach, the need for a standard or conformity assessment program is driven by the market. The proposal for a new project may arise from any source. For instance, public concern about a product or service may lead to the development of a new standard or test that helps to enhance consumer safety or health. This need may be reinforced when litigation is introduced related to dangerous or faulty products or when government agencies introduce laws and regulations.



U.S. National Standards Strategy



- In 1998, the U.S. standards community set about to develop its “future vision.” The result is the first-ever *National Standards Strategy for the United States (NSS)*
- The Strategy was developed in such a way that different sectors would be able to support and implement the strategy in the ways that were most effective to them.



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- The U.S. believes that a “one-size fits all model” does not work. Effective standardization must be sector-specific and market driven. In the mid- to late 1990’s, several groups within the U.S. began to dialogue about the value in coming together to develop a structured approach to our standardization strategy. Over a period of two years and through a collaborative effort that included input from hundreds of diverse U.S. interests, the first-ever National Standards Strategy for the United States, or “NSS,” was developed. The current NSS was approved on August 31, 2000.
- This Strategy reaffirms the basic strengths of the U.S. standardization system. It maintains several traditional principles, including:
 - Consensus
 - Openness
 - Balance
 - Transparency
 - Due process
- It also brings new attention to the implementation of principles such as
 - Responsiveness to real world needs (market and societal)
 - Performance-based rather than design-based standards that can be too restrictive
 - Relevance (value is added)
 - Coherence (no apparent duplication or overlap)
 - Flexibility
 - Timeliness



Principles

- Standards will be relevant, responsive to real world needs, and performance-based
- Decisions will be reached through consensus of all affected interests (including harmonization so as to meet global regulatory requirements)
- Balance will be maintained among competing interests
- Processes will be transparent, flexible, timely and coherent
- All views will be considered and appeals are possible
- The traditional standards-setting bodies will work cooperatively
- Traditional and nontraditional standards-setting bodies will work well together



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- When applied in the context of international standardization, the principles of the NSS mean we need better involvement by more nations and better operation of many national standardization representatives to ensure that positions taken at the international table truly reflect the national consensus. This may mean recognizing that not all work is done through ISO and IEC and that all good work can be globally relevant. This may also mean that more leaders in our - and other - countries will perceive the value of voluntary standards work to their organization and take leadership positions.
- This list seems to exclude consortia. I would like to make the point that there is little difference between any non-American National Standard or ISO or IEC document from a consortia document in the sense that some higher body hasn't approved it. As standards developing organizations react to market demands, they are providing processes leading to documents that aren't standards. ISO and IEC have International Workshop Agreements and the Publicly Available Specification processes. The IT sector has lots of organizations. The point for our look at the future is that these organizations are relevant to their user's needs.
- One task for standards professionals is to better inform those wishing to develop documents of the choices and the impact of those choices on the resulting documents.



Twelve Strategic Initiatives

- The need for standards for health, safety and the environment
- Responsiveness to consumer interests
- Including non-traditional standards developers in the process
- Government use of voluntary consensus standards through public/private partnerships
- Improving processes internationally, particularly in ISO and IEC
- Harmonization of standards to meet regulatory requirements worldwide
- An outreach program for those outside the U.S.
- Improve standards processes to achieve greater efficiency and responsiveness to customer needs
- Improved communications
- Educate public and private decision-makers about the value of standards
- Establish a stable funding mechanism



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- The NSS includes a set of strategic and tactical initiatives within a framework that can be used – as appropriate – by diverse interests to meet their own national and individual organizational objectives. These initiatives can be implemented by traditional standards-setting bodies or by non-traditional groups – such as consortia.
- The significance of this framework is that each sector is responsible to determine what constitutes successful standardization for its stakeholders. For example: the level of consensus needed and the speed with which the standards are developed. It is the standards users who determine what standardization initiatives to pursue and who dictate the course and direction of our future activities.
- It is also important to recognize that each group and each sector is also responsible for elements of the Strategy's implementation.
- We firmly believe that our basic principles are equally relevant to international standardization. U.S. interests from many diverse industries are working with their colleagues around the world to promote the sector-based approach in both regional and international standards development arenas.



Implementation and Tracking

- ANSI developed a web-based tracking system to provide for a centralized data collection platform and real-time “snapshots” of performance

- Education and outreach was identified as a critical first step
 - The U.S. government became an active partner in implementation efforts



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- Section VI of the NSS clearly recognized that “the proof of a strategy is in its execution.” ANSI was instructed to track implementation efforts and provide a mechanism for coordinating, integrating, and reporting progress. We developed a web-based tracking system for the collection of data from all who were involved in implementation. This system provided the ability to generate an up-to-date snapshot of all the actions in progress and/or completed relating to the implementation of the goals and tactics.

- Education and outreach leading to increased awareness were identified as critical tasks for immediate implementation. We knew that the more publicity we had on our work throughout its lifecycle, the better the results would stand hard tests. Efforts began immediately. ANSI, standards developers, industry, consumers, the government, and others all stepped forward to assume responsibility for implementation activities.

- One of the first major undertakings was focused on outreach to federal and state government agencies for the purpose of educating them about voluntary consensus standards and conformity assessment programs. Within days of its approval, ANSI representatives were presenting testimony on the strategy before a Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives.

- In no arena has the value of the ANSI-led voluntary consensus standardization process been more readily accepted and recognized than in our relationships with the U.S. federal government. We are extremely pleased with the way our private- and public-sector partnership programs have grown in the past few years.



International Outreach

- U.S. delegates shared details of the NSS with colleagues domestically and in the international community
 - All were invited to share their perspectives

- The principles of the NSS were incorporated into the U.S. contribution to the International Organization for Standardization and the International Electrotechnical Commission
 - ISO Horizon 2005-2010
 - IEC Masterplan



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- A key component of ANSI's regional participation is educational outreach and relationship building that leads to the understanding of the benefits of a decentralized, market-driven, sector-based standards system and the global endorsement of a "one standard, one test, accepted everywhere" concept.
 - We reached broadly into the ANSI community for input and then responded with a comprehensive U.S. contribution on the development of an ISO long-range strategy for 2005 through 2010. ANSI's input on behalf of the U.S. encouraged an industry-led, government-accepted approach characterized by cross-sector cooperation and support of developing nations. Following submittal of the contribution, ANSI remained actively engaged during the development of the draft plan; approval was obtained at the ISO General Assembly in September 2004.
 - ANSI, via its U.S. National Committee, is equally active in efforts to implement and maintain the IEC Masterplan 2000, which set the agenda for 21 new programs across all IEC activities. Much like the NSS, a central feature of the Masterplan calls for IEC's early involvement in the development of new fast moving technologies. Other elements include flexibility and timeliness, such as the exploration of alternative deliverables when time is critical to bring new products to market.
- Outreach is a two-way street. So, at the same time we need to listen carefully to not only those currently committed, but the disaffected and the potential participants.



Educating the *Next Generation*

- The NSS identified a need to further public awareness and knowledge of standards
 - Inform and educate the business community
 - Make available educational programs on standards and standardization and incorporate standards into university curricula
 - Support the standards-related educational needs of those within the community



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- Equally important are the benefits arising from the education and rising awareness of business leaders about the strategic importance of standards and the need to invest in them. Like never before, ANSI has stepped up to its responsibility to educate the public, the academic community, and leaders in business and government about our wonderful profession. In the past we have shied away from that responsibility, but not today.
- Under the auspices of our Committee on Education, ANSI itself has launched programs aimed at:
 - raising the awareness of standards of higher education faculty and students
 - facilitating the incorporation of standards into university curricula
 - discussing the importance of educating the next generation of business leaders on the strategic importance of standards and conformity assessment
 - highlighting the impact of standards and the role of standards in education, communications and technology.



Review and Revision

- Strategy calls for a regular review and revision process
- A National Standards Strategy Committee (NSSC) has been formed and is working to identify possible new opportunities and to suggest necessary revisions
 - Public opinion is being sought
 - Many changes are expected to bring the NSS up-to-date
 - A new edition is expected by mid-year 2005
- The principles of the new NSS are expected to be applicable for implementation by other bodies (including other national bodies, regional or international groups) that endorse the market-driven, sector-based approach to standardization.



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- The NSS called for a regular review to determine whether new situations dictate revisions and offer new opportunities.
- As called for in the Strategy, in early 2004 – following three year's of NSS implementation efforts – a committee was formed to review and consider revisions for the Strategy. More than 100 representatives of the standards and conformity assessment community were engaged through an open, balanced and participatory process and are now actively involved as members of the NSS Committee or one or more of its four subgroups. ANSI is calling upon its constituencies in the standards community for input.
- The committee has been meeting throughout the summer and expects to have a first draft of a revised text for review and consideration by the end of this year.
- ANSI plans to launch an active communications campaign to generate awareness and interest in the draft. A public forum is being scheduled in Washington, DC, for early 2005 so that all interested parties can have their voices heard.
- The next edition of the NSS is expected to be completed by mid-year 2005.



Summary

- The principles of the U.S. National Standards Strategy support . . .
 - The common pursuit of “global relevance” and greater coherence in the overall standardization system
 - Standards developing organizations that are more responsive to the marketplace and societal needs of their constituents and that provide value-added services
 - Participants who will play an active role in influencing international policies and procedures

- To move forward requires a focus on
 - Collaboration
 - Cooperation
 - Flexibility
 - Meeting the end-users’ needs



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For more information:

American National Standards Institute

Headquarters

1819 L Street, NW
Sixth Floor
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: +1 202.293.8020
Fax: +1 202.293.9287

Operations

25 West 43rd Street
Fourth Floor
New York, NY 10036
Tel: +1 212.642.4900
Fax: +1 212.398.0023

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