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TRENDS

MAKING THE TECHNICAL PROCESS WORK (AN INSIDER'S VIEW)

Introduction: One of the most important, and perhaps least acknowledged, roles in the modern commercial world is Director of Standards of a standard setting organization (SSO). This is particularly true in the information and communications technologies (ICT) industry, since the commercial viability of virtually every ICT product and service is dependent on the effective development and deployment of a variety of standards. Without these standards, most such products and services would simply not be able to operate in today's networked world.

But standards are not created by focused teams answerable to a single employer. Rather, they are produced by employees of competitors who often have divergent agendas (both public and private). And those employees are engineers with their own firmly held technical views, and varying degrees of experience in standard setting. Finally, the standards produced must work, rather than conflict, with other standards, developed not only by the host SSO, but also by other SSOs that may be active in the same or adjoining technical areas.

Hence, whether or not a useful standard is ultimately produced depends in large part on how well this quintessential aggregation of cats is herded. The individual who bears that burden first and foremost is the salaried or volunteer Director of Standards (DOS) of the SSO.

Whether carrying the title of Chief Technology Officer, Vice President-Standards, or some other title, the DOS is ultimately responsible for how well the entire system operates. Depending on the staffing and organization of a given SSO, the duties of a DOS may range from helping to define proposals at the front end of the process, to recruiting effective working group chairs, to rationalizing technical conflicts and resolving disputes, to explaining resulting standards to the world.

Given this role, DOSs are uniquely able to assess what works, as well as what does not work, in the standard setting process. Over time, they are also well positioned to spot trends in the standards community, and to evaluate the impact of those trends on the standard setting process and the quality of its output.

As a result, the Directors of Standards for SSOs are a perfect source of information on the current health of the SSO technical process. In this article, we present the results of an interview we conducted in the first week of November with the DOSs of three prominent and successful SSOs. The result is a first-hand report on what it takes to make the standard setting process work, and what is affecting that process today.

The Experts: We were fortunate to have the cooperation of three very experienced experts from a variety of ICT backgrounds: two from consortia and one from an accredited standards development organization (SDO). (Each of these individuals is expressing his personal views, and is not speaking for any organization that he is now or has in the past served.) Together, they have 25 years of corporate and/or SSO standards director level experience, and the SSOs that they have served have a combined membership of thousands of corporations, universities and government agencies. They are:

Karl Best: Until a few weeks ago, Karl was the Vice President of OASIS – the Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Systems (he is now the Director of Standards of another SSO). Karl's background in standard setting goes back ten years, and includes responsibility for the operation of OASIS technical activities for the past four and a half years.

Steve Oksala: Since 2000, Steve has been the Vice President, Standards of SCTE – the Society of Cable Telecommunications Engineers. He has been directly involved in standard setting since 1987, when he became Director of Standards Management for Unisys Corporation. He has also served on the Board of Directors of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) since 1990, and is currently the Vice Chairman of that Board. At SCTE, he manages an ANSI-accredited standards process.

Carl Reed: Carl is the Chief Technology Officer and Executive Director, Specification Program, of OGC – the Open Geospatial Consortium (previously the Open GIS Consortium). Carl initially became involved in the OGC standards process in 1994 as a member representative. In 2000, he began consulting with OGC as an architect, and in 2001 formally joined the OGC staff.

The Organizations: The SSOs that our experts serve are diverse. Their missions are as follows:

OASIS: Founded in 1993 as SGML Open, OASIS currently has 80 approved Committee Drafts (i.e., specifications that have been adopted by the Technical Committee and released for implementation). 18 of these specifications have been approved by the entire OASIS membership, and issued as OASIS Standards. The mission statement of OASIS focuses on the development and adoption of e-business specifications, but the definition of "e-business" is extremely broad (Karl Best: "i.e. anything that a business can do electronically"). In addition to standards, the work product of OASIS Technical Committees can include white papers, guidelines, test suites, and other useful material. OASIS has a very "big tent" approach, and at any point in time typically has more than 65 Technical Committees in operation.

SCTE: The society of Cable Telecommunications Engineers was formed in 1969, and currently maintains 140 approved standards. It is both a professional society with individual membership, as well as the host of a standards program that operates with the participation and support of corporate members. Since SCTE supports the cable telecommunications industry broadly, its standards development program is extensive, addressing: data and telephony over cable; application platform development; digital video; emergency alert systems; network monitoring systems; cables, connectors and amplifiers; and construction and maintenance practices. Its output includes standards, specifications, and technical reports, and its work takes place within six main technical subcommittees.

OGC: The Open Geospatial Consortium is ten years old, and has adopted 13 standards to date. Two of these specifications have also been adopted as ISO standards, with a third expected to attain that status in 2005. Its domain is standards for geospatial and location based services, and its mission is to create open and extensible software application programming interfaces for geographic information systems (GIS) and other mainstream technologies. Current work involves areas as diverse as digital rights management and sensor webs. The number of Working Groups active at any one time varies, but is generally about 12, including those engaged in revision of already adopted standards.

What we Learned: There was agreement on many issues and trends, but interesting differences of opinions on others. Here are some of the dynamics and trends (both positive and negative) that came through most clearly:

- Maintaining liaison relationships with multiple SSOs is necessary, and while the efficiency of this one-on-one method of interaction could be greater, the system works about as well as could be expected given its ad hoc, distributed character.

- New technical developments (e.g., the Internet and Web) and business trends (e.g., ICT convergence) are making liaison relationships more numerous and important than ever, and also increasing competition among SSOs.

- This competition among SSOs hinders, rather than helps, the over all standards environment. The proliferation of consortia in some sectors has aggravated this condition.

- Most SSO members generally accept the time span that a strong consensus technical process requires, but new intellectual property rights (IPR) policies are placing strains on their patience. In some cases, market timing concerns are leading SSOs to accept shortcuts that may have negative process impacts.

- What members put into an SSO will have a big impact on what they get out of that organization; simply sending employees to meetings is not enough to permit realization of maximum value.

- Similarly, members that only send engineers to an SSO, but do not promote the standards of that SSO, or share their strategic plans and standards needs with an SSO, do not help SSOs or their own standards-based products succeed as much as possible.

- The *member* activities that hurt the standards process most (and most often) are over-loading or replacing of representatives (leading to missed deadlines and delays), and deliberate game playing.

- Though not a problem in all three SSOs, the behaviors of member *representatives* that most hurt the process include gratuitous debating, lack of attention, and rule nit-picking.

- In general, SSO participants are more aggressively pursuing their corporate self interest than in the past, rather than placing the highest priority on creating the best standards.

- Playing a proprietary hand leads to getting less, and not more, out of the standards process – even for those that may be looking out for their self interest most overtly.

- Accredited SDOs and consortia are working more closely together, and each kind of SSO has learned some valuable lessons from the other.

- The increasing focus on IPR rules and process is making the lives of some DOSs more difficult.

- The development of sophisticated technology platforms is having a dramatic and positive impact on standard setting.

In addition, our three DOSs had a wealth of individual observations based upon the unique missions of their respective organizations, as well as some interesting suggestions (and the occasional rant). The full text of the interview follows.

A. Looking Inward

CSB: What's different about your organization in comparison to other SSOs (i.e., what do – or don't you do)?

KB: OASIS is designed to be very open in allowing all interested parties to either participate or observe, and is entirely member-driven in its technical agenda and approval process; OASIS management makes no decisions in regards to the creation or advancement of technical work.

SO: Unlike virtually all accredited standards development organizations (SDOs), we do not sell our standards. This is because we are organizationally based rather than individually, and because our organizational members are willing to provide dues support.

CR: We have interoperability initiatives that are fast tracked engineering collaborations that are structured to sequentially: capture requirements; develop a new interface specification (or profile an existing one); allow implementation by members; and then be finally written up. This has allowed us to define and document new specifications very quickly while at the same time having them implemented and tested. We have a number of standard setting processes and procedures that other SSOs might find of interest. Our Interoperability Program (test beds, pilots), Interoperability Experiments, and compliance testing framework are also not typically found in other SSOs.

CSB: How is the technical process staffed at your organization?

KB: Besides its other staff, OASIS has a three-person paid staff providing guidance and oversight to the operations of the TCs, but these people have other responsibilities as well. Each TC will have one chair or two co-chairs, generally a secretary, and generally an editor. In some smaller TCs all of these roles are handled by a single person. All of these roles are filled by non-staff volunteers. Note that unlike other organizations, OASIS does not provide technical input/participation from staff into the development of the TCs' work; staff participation is only oversight.

SO: The SCTE standards staff consists of three people. Member representatives act as chairs of our subcommittees (and vice chairs and secretaries where the subcommittee wants those offices) and they participate in the technical work. The members of our Engineering Committee supervise the operation of the standards.

CR: The OGC has 12 full time employees, four of which are dedicated to the standard setting process. Four other full time employees perform tasks that support the technical process in other ways (e.g., portal and website maintenance, outreach, and education). Finally, we have three member-dedicated employees that help with the technical process and the interoperability initiatives. All OGC Working Groups are chaired by representatives from member organizations. The OGC specifications themselves are written and edited by our members.

B. Looking Outward

CSB: With what other organizations does your organization maintain liaison relationships?

KB: Many, both formally and informally. In regards to the *de jure* international standards organizations, OASIS has Class A Liaison status with multiple ISO TCs, is a PAS submitter to ISO/IEC JTC1, is an A.4 and A.5 submitter to ITU-T, and a member of the ISO/IEC/ITU/ECE Memorandum of Understanding on e-Business. OASIS also has either formal MoU agreements or informal working relations with a wide range of industry consortia and standards organizations.

SO: CableLabs, NCTA, CEA, ATSC, IEEE, ETSI.

CR: ISO TC 211 (Class A and a Joint Advisory Group), OASIS Membership, volunteerism by OGC staff in the work of the IETF GeoPRIV Working Group, and collaboration with W3C, OMG and SISO.

CSB: Do you think that the current informal liaison system works well?

KB: As well as could be expected. Certainly things are not perfect, and it is not efficient to have to negotiate a new relationship between each possible pair of organizations. But given that each organization is independent and has its own process this is probably the best that could be done -- short of each organization giving up its sovereignty to a parent organization that would tell them how to operate. And this is obviously not going to happen.

SO: It works as well as can be expected among competing organizations. The staff of SSOs frequently think of themselves as operating businesses; this is fine until they begin to make decisions based on the best interest of the organization as opposed to the best interest of the members. Competitive behavior is one aspect of this. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that the participants at any given SSO develop ties to it, and are therefore biased toward it in any discussions.

CR: For us, it is working well for the ones we interact with on a regular basis. But we are also always seeking ways to improve communication and collaboration with the other SSOs we work with.

CSB: What do you think would enable better coordination among standard setting organizations?

KB: For the past few years I've been working on and promoting the idea of each organization publishing the status of its work in a registry. If all organizations published their information in a standard manner we could reduce the amount of duplicative work and increase adoption of completed work. A number of standards organizations including OASIS are hosting registries, but these registries are not constructed in a similar manner nor do they use consistent metadata.

SO: Stronger management by the members, particularly more senior management in companies.

CR: It would be nice to have annual face to face meetings in which all the SSOs send representatives to 1.) talk about what they are working on 2.) look for additional opportunities for collaboration 3.) look for ways to avoid duplication of work that leads to multiple standards designed to solve the same problem, and 4.) consider issues (such as IPR) that are cross-cutting issues and affect the work and potential success of any given SSO.

C. How Members Choose SSOs

CSB: Is the quality of the technical process a big factor when participants choose one SSO over another as a place to launch a given initiative?

KB: I think that it is. Obviously a person (or company) doesn't want to participate in a process that doesn't give them a say in how the work turns out. And as all participants have an interest in seeing the resultant work adopted, they should be listening to the concerns of the potential adopters; potential adopters will be (or at least should be!) concerned about the openness of the process. Participants should also want to know before joining whether the process has safeguards against hijacking or gaming by any small number of powerful participants. And finally, they should know whether an organization's standards will be eligible to be adopted by de jure international standards organizations, and whether the process will stand up to scrutiny by regulatory agencies (in the event of a lawsuit).

SO: I think it is a factor, but not a major one – the primary concern is that it is open and, for some of our work, the ANSI accreditation is important. The nature of the work is the most important factor.

CR: In the geospatial domain, no. As the OGC and ISO TC 211 are the only two standards organizations focused on the geospatial domain, this has not been a factor. Further, the OGC and ISO work closely together and collaborate on a regular basis to insure that the work of the two organizations is harmonized as best we can.

CSB: How often do you think differences in process methodology (e.g., following ANSI methodology, or providing test beds or test suites, etc.), as compared to difference in quality, make a difference in where participants choose to propose an initiative?

KB: Potential participants may indeed choose one organization over another based on the activities that the organization offers. They may be interested in pursuing a broader range of activities, i.e. creating test suites in addition to just developing the specification. There's a "complete picture" of activities related to the lifecycle of a specification, both before and after the specification itself is approved: gathering of requirements and use cases, development of certification requirements and test suites, development of reference implementations and adoption guidelines, long-term maintenance, etc.

SO: It makes a difference if the participants can exclude others, which they sometimes wish to do.

D. How Members Use SSOs

CSB: In your organization, do you find that participation is driven mostly by the employee/participant, or by the employer/company?

KB: Probably a bit of both. In some cases an employee will discover an effort that he is interested in, either personally or because it might be of some value to his employer, and request permission from his management to devote time on the effort. (In some cases he may even be interested enough to participate on his own time.) In other cases it might be the employer who becomes aware of the effort and assigns the employee to participate as part of his work assignment.

SO: By the company.

CR: Both

CSB: Do you think that participants generally find the requirements of a consensus-based technical process to be reasonable, or do they sometimes get impatient with the process?

KB: I think that most participants do indeed find them reasonable; they see benefits from allowing all interested parties to participate in an open, democratic process. But lately I have seen requests by certain large companies that standards organizations provide "fast track" approvals of already completed work that they submit. I see this as a disturbing trend: the practice of a single company or small number of partners developing work in a closed, private environment then submitting this work to a standards organization for quick approval or "rubber stamping." While I can certainly understand a company's desire to "get it right" and to "move quickly", they are getting it right only for themselves and are ignoring the needs of a broader audience who should have been invited to participate.

SO: If the participants are interested in an open process, they do not find the consensus-based procedures burdensome. These days it does not take all that long.

CR: The OGC Policies and Procedures are constantly reviewed and modified as required by the members to insure that our specifications move as quickly as possible to adoption. For the most part, OGC members are satisfied with the process and find the requirements reasonable. If not, they say so and if the membership agrees, we change the process. However, the new Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) policy that we had to recently put in place adds months to the adoption process. This is an unfortunate byproduct of all the IPR and patent issues surrounding IT these days.

CSB: How can companies best support SSOs, over and above sending people to participate in committees?

KB: The work done in technical committees or working groups isn't the only aspect of the standards organization's work, nor of the life cycle of a specification. Companies can support the standards organization itself through contribution of qualified people to work on advisory or governing boards, and by providing monetary and in-kind resources for events and activities promoting the adoption of the organization's work. Sponsorship is also needed for such activities as industry-wide registries.

SO: Financial support to the organization, obviously. (And in a way that allows the organization to give our approved standards away in electronic form, as we do.) Beyond that, companies can think ahead about things that are going to need standardization in the future; this allows the SSO staff to be proactive.

CR: Bring product and applications to market that implement standards and state so in their PR. Also, work with SSO staff to refine market messages and provide support of outreach and education activities. Finally provide continuing in-kind services and financial support.

CSB: What do members do (and/or their representatives) that helps the process most?

KB: Take their company hats off when entering the room to work on specification development or governance of the standards organization.

SO: Work with their competitors to get the best possible compromises that still produce a useful standard.

CR: In the OGC, the consensus collaboration, technical input, and volunteerism are incredibly strong forces that are consistently driving our standards process. I believe that these are some of the main reasons for the success of the OGC.

CSB: What do those that get the most out of the process for their employers do that's most effective in achieving that result?

KB: See my prior response; work for the standard, and not play games.

SO: Be very straight forward about what their organization wants in or out of a particular standard and why.

CR: Participate on a regular basis, provide input into the process, network with other member representatives, educate other employees and managers in their organizations, and not just talk the talk but also walk the walk.

CSB: What do member representatives sometimes do that causes their employers to get the least out of their membership?

KB: I really think its still that hat thing again – leave it at the door.

SO: Amusing themselves through debate, even though the issue is not germane to the technical outcome.

CR: Not participate, don't learn, and don't interact with the other members.

E. How Members Abuse SSOs

CSB: Alright, now what do members (and/or their representatives) do that causes the most problems?

KB: The reverse of my last answer. Looking after only their company's best interests when participating in the standards organization. Certainly a company needs to know that it will see benefit from the resources it devotes to the work of the standards organization. But the world seems to have moved away from the "bigger pie" approach to the benefits from standards work in favor of the "bigger piece for me and my friends."

SO: Members frequently change workload for their representatives, so they can't complete things they had promised to do. There are also (thankfully only a few) representatives who try and play the procedures game, to slow things down by nit-picking the rules.

CR: We really have not had major member/representative issues that cause problems in the 10 years I have been involved with the OGC. Perhaps the primary issues are that at times there is lack of consistency of representation from some member organizations and that schedules slip as key volunteers have commitments to their organizations that take higher priority. But this is a fact of life in a voluntary consensus standards organization.

CSB: What is it that representatives "get" the least about what you do as the director of the technical process?

KB: I think that generally the participants in my Technical Committees (TCs) understand what I do. They occasionally have trouble seeing the necessity of the various TCs working in a consistent manner and would prefer to "do their own thing" and go off in different directions. Our process allows this to a great extent; the TCs have a great deal of flexibility in how they conduct their day-to-day work. But part of

my job is to make sure that this doesn't go too far. I have to use my judgment in regards to deciding when something is "too far" from the norm and the rules.

SO: The need to keep documentation about everything that happened to ensure that we can demonstrate that due process was followed.

CR: Not sure. No one has ever said that they do not know what I do. Perhaps this is because I send an introduction letter describing my role in the OGC to every new member. Also, we have regular face-to-face meetings so that I get to know and speak to every attending member either one on one or in small working groups.

CSB: What is it that members "get" the least about what standard setting organizations do?

KB: I think that in general members understand the purpose of the standards organization pretty well. There's been an occasion or two when a member has thought that our job is to resolve market disputes or to call another member on supposedly false marketing claims; we don't do that.

SO: Trying to make sure that all points of view get considered.

F. Evolution (and Sometimes Progress)

CSB: What are the most significant changes that you've seen since you first became involved in standard setting?

KB: The old rule of "cooperate on the standards and compete on the implementation" has changed – companies are now bringing competition into the standards arena. Alliances, political and technical agendas, etc,… have all made the creation of technical standards much more difficult. I've been saying for quite a while now that there are no technical problems, there are only political problems.

SO: Here are a few:

- The change in companies from the view that standards is part of their corporate responsibility to society, to the view that they should only care about matters that are in their own interest.
- The use of IT tools, which has changed the process from a discontinuous process of physical meetings, to one where the process never really stops. This has made short cycle standardization possible.
- The willingness (after passage of the original NCRPA) of companies to send people to alternative forums that are not "conventional" standards organizations. Companies are now much more sensitive to what they are getting out of standardization.

CR: There are several significant changes that have occurred during the ten years the OGC has been developing standards for the geospatial industry.

- The World Wide Web has changed much of the focus of the work of the OGC, such as the transition from work on standards for tightly coupled applications to loosely coupled distributed architectures.
- Web Services has accelerated and intensified the focus of our work.
- The increased acceptance and implementation of standards in the geospatial marketplace.
- Increased coordination and collaboration with other SSO's, such as ISO, OASIS, the IETF, and the W3C. This is for two reasons. First, because much of our current standards work relies on other horizontal enabling standards, such as XML, SOAP, and BPEL. Second, because these other organizations also have requirements to incorporate geospatial content or payloads within their standards.
- OGC's development and successful use of interoperability testbeds.

CSB: What outside forces are acting on your organization today that are affecting the technical process?

KB: The increasing interest in doing open source work and the controversies of intellectual property rights are both topics demanding a great deal of attention within standards organizations generally, and OASIS has been no exception. Balancing the needs and desires of a broad range of members on these topics is extremely difficult.

SO: The standards process is reflective of the interactions between the industries that populate it. We have cable operators; vendors of equipment for cable operators; vendors of consumer electronic equipment; and broadcasters. There are issues on which these industries have differing positions, and this is reflected in the standards process. This is overlaid by actual or potential regulation based on the content of standards. There is competition from other standards developers (CEA, SMPTE) but this is not a serious concern. We have a close working relationship with the primary consortium in our industry, CableLabs, and work to process their standards through ANSI and ITU.

CR: There are several market forces that are shaping the work of the OGC. These include aligning the work of the OGC with mainstream web services and related standards, considering factors related to integrating geospatial content and services into enterprise workflows and/or architectures, and an increasing requirement for education and outreach as a service to help organizations that are implementing our standards. OGC members are the ones who voice these market forces and as a consensus organization our ongoing standards development work reflects these member voiced requirements.

CSB: Do you think that there is more or less game playing today than when you first became involved in standard setting?

KB: Yes, absolutely. See my rant above about members wanting to fast-track already completed work.

SO: With the caveat that I switched industries, I think there is less game playing. There are still the fights between parties who want different outcomes, but there is far less of the internal fighting in the standards process. I think this is primarily because there are few organizations any more that have a "standards department" – nobody has the time for those fights.

CR: About the same. We have been fortunate that there is not too much game playing within the OGC process.

CSB: What differences has the advancement in technology platforms made for standard setting?

KB: It has greatly speeded the development of specifications (but its hard for the standards organization to keep up with the ever-increasing desires and demands of their members in providing these new tools). This also plays into process: Where in the past someone could be physically standing at the door of the physical room to allow admittance only to the people with credentials to participate, with modern collaborative tools such as wikis the entire world can be invited to participate in real time. While this allows all interested parties to participate (a good thing), it raises serious concerns as to the ownership of the work from both a process as well as IPR perspective. And of course advances in computer science theory and techniques must be given credit as well for the development of increasing sophisticated and powerful specifications.

SO: Huge. (I will note in passing that the ability to generate standards really quickly is not an unmixed blessing.)

CR: There is the influence of enabling technologies and standards from outside our domain that now allow us to create new profiles of existing standards that better serve the community. Examples of this are SOAP, WSDL, UDDI, BPEL, ISO Metadata, and of course XML.

CSB: How have relations between consortia and accredited SDOs evolved as consortia have gotten more respect?

KB: I see this as a positive thing. The international *de jure* standards organizations recognize, I think, the value of the work coming out of the consortia, both because of the levels of participation as well as the flexibility and speed of the consortias' processes. The international organizations, in order to stay relevant, are seeing the need to work with the consortia, and in many cases are nurturing relationships and proactively working to advance consortia work through their own approval processes.

SO: I think the question here may be missing the mark. There has always been (at least in the high tech area) competition between standards developers. The introduction of consortia aggravates that, so the frustration level at any given SSO can rise because limited corporate resources (at least perceived to be so) get spread over more organizations, and perhaps away from your own. Beyond that, the distinctions between "SDOs" and consortia are all over the map – there are no comparisons that can be usefully drawn across the whole spectrum. I think SDOs (ANSI-accredited SDOs in the US, national standards bodies in other countries), and the big Is – ISO, ITU, and IEC – have some frustration that the things that used to be important (due process, openness, etc) do not seem to have the value they used to. On the other hand, I think that consortia have caused the SDOs to upgrade their own processes, thus raising the general level of quality.

CR: In our case, they have gotten stronger, especially with ISO.

CSB: What impact has the heightened focus on IPR issues had on the technical process at your SSO?

KB: This creates a lot more work for all parties involved. We can no longer merely all work towards the creation of a specification for everyone's benefit; we have to be concerned with who owns what parts of the work, and whether the various owners will give permissions (licenses) to potential implementers. Unfortunately a lot of this responsibility lies on the shoulders of the TC participants themselves.

SO: Not much. We do have patents, but there have been no contentious ones or any of the fights that resulted in the Dell or Rambus legal disputes.

CR: It has lengthened the time it take to adopt a new specification and the time it takes to adopt a revision to an existing adopted specification. This is because we had to institute a mandatory 60 day review period as part of the adoption voting process. It is also more onerous for the members as some may decide that they need to do a formal internal IPR review.

CSB: Has the focus on IPR rights made your job more difficult?

KB: Yes, significantly, and this will only increase over time.

SO: No, other than the problem of trying to get the participants to tell us about patents. (By and large they are just not willing to spend a lot of their personal time on this sort of thing.)

CR: Yes

G. What is to be Done

CSB: If there are things that you think don't work well about the standard setting process, what are they?

KB: I think that the standards-setting process itself is still good, but the increased tendency for "gaming", and the change in attitude towards competition in the standards environment, is troubling.

SO: The standards process is not good at distinguishing general relevance of standards except to the extent that the participants are willing to spend money to be there (and who may be either pushing their own products or acting in a purely defensive way.) This is made worse by a system that assumes that having a standard is always better than not having one; voting, for example, usually will allow a simple YES but requires reasons for a NO. The result is standards of questionable utility.

CR: In the OGC, perhaps the most difficult aspect of our work is keeping our standards harmonized (or consistent) with each other as well as working to stay harmonized or in sync with the standards work being done in ISO TC 211, OASIS and other SSOs.

CSB: If something could be done to fix those things, what would that be?

SO: New projects should have to pass a "I care" ballot – say at least 25% of the members think that a standard would be a good idea. That way they would at least think about it. In IEC TC 100, which does multimedia standards, a new project can be approved even if only two countries say they plan on working on it. Not the best situation.

CR: Resources and time – more of both!

Comments? updegrove@consortiuminfo.org