Chapter 10
Adhering to Open Technology Standards

CHAPTER CONTENT

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DOI: 10.4018/978-1-60566-854-3.ch010
CHAPTER FOCUS

This chapter lets you understand why open technical standards are necessary. We then provide a case study of an organization who is working toward getting various entities and international officials together to coordinate the growing need for common standards. We bring up the topic of technology standards organizations that prepare and maintain technical standards for the greater society. Each technical standard has a set of stages through their life that includes development, draft, available, and sunset. We provide an example technology classification model that can be used as a reference for representing technical standards within an organization. After this we provide an understanding of the DoD Technical Reference Model and a representative system technical standards profile. The standards profile is comprehensive in nature, and provides a common set of technical standards that are in use at any organization.

THE NEED FOR OPEN STANDARDS

In this current Internet age, it is important to discuss a vital concept that makes everything work and that is the use of “open standards”. It is not necessary to sell the concept of open standards. Almost everyone agrees that they are necessary. The problem resides as to how they are implemented and how application and system vendors make money from products that they create using open standards.

Most participants in the information age recognize that open standards usually provide specifications that are owned and fostered by vendor-neutral organizations, and not one particular “proprietary” organization.

Open standards have been touted as the digital equivalent of a common gauge for railroad tracks. Open standards enable different information technology systems to communicate effectively when necessary. This recognizes that technology systems do spend most of their time consuming and processing data in their own specific manner.

Open standards and “open source” software is not the same thing. In the past decade, the IT industry has seen a large proliferation of open source software, which is really a development model for software in which code is freely shared and improved by a cooperative network of programmers.

Governments have also followed suit in quick adoption of this open source software since it allows software application development costs to be reduced dramatically. The spread of open source software allow the benefits of openly sharing information technology to reduce costs and make it easier for users themselves to innovate. Anyone is free to build open source software according to specifications without infringement of intellectual property rights, though there are limits to that, which is set by the software owner or maintenance vendor.

CASE STUDY: THE BERKMAN CENTER

Berkman Center For Internet & Society At Harvard University

A project begun by the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at the Harvard Law School (can be researched at http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/) put together officials from a number of countries around the world. These included officials from United States, China, India, Thailand, Denmark, Jordan,