

A Place At The Table

The recent approval of ISO/IEC 29500 places it along side ISO/IEC 26300 at the ISO table. That step creates a common meeting place for the communities that originated those standards.

If that doesn't seem like a lot, when was the last time you heard news reports of a: "one party peace negotiation?" Or any "negotiation" at which only one side was heard? Standards and standards making are not about excluding people from the process but about including them.

People such as the Microsoft developers and business partners who were reported to be "flooding" national bodies. There isn't anything sinister about being a Microsoft developer or even a Microsoft business partner. One can easily imagine their joy at the thought that Microsoft would be committed to a public definition of its format, after years of having to ferret out arbitrary changes in that same format.

People such as new national bodies who have joined JTC 1 to participate in the vote on ISO/IEC 29500 and who are then criticized for not knowing "the ropes" of the rather arcane JTC 1 processes. Yes, new members need to make an effort to participate fully but JTC 1 and in more particular, ourselves, should be reaching out to these new members to welcome them to the table.

We need to recognize that simply calling our standards "international" because ISO/IEC has the copyright on "ISO/IEC" doesn't necessarily make them so. That requires having truly international participation in the standards process. Securing that participation will not be easy but if we are to move beyond simply labeling standards as being international it is necessary.

Securing a place at the table means having rules that are clear for everyone and that empower members. It will also require better use of the very technology that Joint **Technical** Committee 1 is charged with standardizing. The technology exists to facilitate document distribution, voting, remote participation in meetings, etc. Very little of which is used effectively across the JTC 1 to facilitate participation in the standards process.

It is my hope that the approval of ISO/IEC 29500 is not only the beginning of a conversation with ISO/IEC 26300, but also the start of a standards reform effort to make JTC 1 inclusive, responsive and above all, empowering for its members.

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PS: I see that Bob Sutor (IBM) has called for an [initiative on openness](#). I don't think anyone doubts that substantial reform of JTC 1 processes is necessary but it will be interesting to see if IBM is willing to work with everyone who is interested in reform.