

Standards Boost Business

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From the corner offices across America to the halls of Capitol Hill, leaders in the public and private sectors are sounding the call for economic reform and job creation.

As the U.S. looks to forge a path for sustainable economic growth for the nation, there is a powerful business tool that can help U.S. industry to fuel business performance and drive growth. This tool can help tap into new and expanding technologies. It can help businesses out-innovate competitors in the global market. And it can help you cut costs and boost your bottom line.

I'm talking about standardization (i.e., standards, codes, conformance activities) – and there has never been a more crucial time for American businesses to leverage standards and conformance to gain a powerful advantage in the global marketplace.

Standards have the power to turbo-charge innovation and fuel business growth. From design and manufacturing to distribution and marketing, all products and services are affected at some point by standardization. But standards and conformance also impact the strength of the American workforce, inform the direction of innovation, and underpin global commerce.

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That is why the [American National Standards Institute](#) [1] (ANSI) and a group of [partnering organizations](#) [2] have joined forces to launch [Standards Boost Business](#) [3] (SBB), a campaign to help American companies leverage standards and conformance to win a trade advantage in the global market.

To gain the greatest advantage, you have to get informed, and – better yet – get involved. The SBB campaign aims to help C-suite executives and senior public policy officials understand the strategic and economic value of standards – both to your company, and to our overall national competitiveness.

Dollars & Sense

More than 80 percent of global commodity trade is impacted by standards and conformance – that amounts to more than \$14 trillion each year. With numbers like these, it's easy to see why companies that participate actively in standardization gain a competitive edge.

The [case studies](#) [4] and testimonials at [StandardsBoostBusiness.org](#) [3] provide real-world examples of how U.S. businesses are leveraging standards to their advantage. [Examples](#) [5] include how the U.S. Department of Defense is projecting

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\$789 million in cost avoidance through standardization, and how [Dominion Resources](#) [6], one of the nation's largest producers and transporters of energy, has saved millions of dollars, increased efficiencies, and improved safety measures. And a [gallery of videos](#) [7] from executives at such major firms as [Hubbell Incorporated](#) [8], [NEMA](#) [9], and Eaton Corporation (watch Tom Gross below) offers first-hand accounts on how standardization has fostered the success and growth of their businesses by streamlining processes, trimming costs, gaining market access, and boosting their bottom line.

Increased Exports = More Jobs at Home

As the technical underpinning of many products and services, standards play a critical role in removing barriers to trade, enforcing free trade agreements, and expanding foreign markets for U.S. goods and services. This results in increased export opportunities for U.S. companies abroad, which in turn helps create more jobs here at home.

American manufacturers, and particularly small- to-medium enterprises, should be aware of what they are missing out on in the export market when they do not take advantage of the economic and strategic value of standardization — 97% of companies that export are small and mid-sized businesses, and yet the majority of these companies export to only one or two countries, leaving vast opportunities uncovered. With 95 percent of the world's consumers outside the U.S., we need to grow our exports to grow our economy. The greatest opportunities for growth are in other parts of the world, and it is imperative that U.S. companies find new customers in these markets.

Fostering American Innovation

Innovation is based on technology and product development, but it is also about reinventing business processes and building new markets that meet untapped customer needs. Standards and compliance programs are being actively leveraged by U.S. companies and industries to foster innovation in the marketplace, shortening the cycle between initial concept and global market access. Those groups who are maximizing standardization activities realize that relying on previously standardized technologies, systems, and terminologies lowers overall R&D costs.

Spreading the Word

In today's global marketplace, your company needs every advantage it can get. Here are four important steps you can take to make sure that you reap the rewards standards and conformance can provide:

1. Participate in standards development activities, both domestic and international – Participation in standards development enables a company to exert influence on technical content and align its products and services with changing market demand. It provides insiders' knowledge and early access

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to information on emerging issues, and helps reduce redundancy, minimize errors, and shorten time to market.

2. Rely on standards to design your products and services, and turn to recognized conformity assessment systems to test, inspect, certify, and accredit them – Demonstrating compliance to standards helps a company’s products, services, and personnel to cross borders. Standards also make cross-border interoperability possible, ensuring that products manufactured in one country can be sold and used in another.
3. Treat standardization as a strategic business tool – Standards and conformance are critical business tools that should be managed alongside an organization’s quality, safety, and environmental policies. It is just as important to the long-term health of a business.
4. Make a resource commitment - time, money, and manpower - to the U.S. standardization system – Take advantage of the numerous free resources available at <http://www.tandardsboostbusiness.org/> [10]. I think they will convince you that the SBB campaign is worth your support and I invite you to [join the partnership](#) [11].

A Path Forward

Standards and conformance are essential to a sound national economy and global commerce. And at a time when the public and private sectors are looking to foster economic growth and create good jobs for the future, it is more important than ever that U.S. companies understand and harness the power of standardization.

Together we can ensure America’s strength in the innovation age while driving business growth and advancing U.S. competitiveness on the global stage.

S. Joe Bhatia, president and CEO of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), has more than 30 years of leadership experience in global business operations covering engineering, governmental and congressional liaisons, external affairs, and standardization and conformance, and is a frequent lecturer in the U.S. and around the world on topics such as international trade, technical developments, commercial market access, and health, safety and environmental concerns.

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