



What are “standards” and why are they important?

Standards help to level the playing field among manufacturers by enhancing interoperability and usability to society. There are three major types of standards: “regulatory standards” which are the fewest in number and to which compliance with their requirements is mandatory; “voluntary consensus standards” which are developed through a rigorous and stepwise developmental process enforced by a third party – conformance to the requirements in these standards is “voluntary” however, they are often used in the courtroom or by regulatory agencies where the distinction between voluntary and mandatory can be blurred; and “industry standards” which are by far the most numerous. These are not developed within a consensus process, but generally by a group of dedicated professionals within a particular industry and intended for use by that industry. The role of standards in commerce is immense! It is generally estimated that standards are behind and drive between 85 to 95% of global commerce.