

Let your ideas be heard

The IDEA Industry Standards Committee is looking for a few good men—and women. by James Tinker & Joe Wallace

In order to stay competitive, distributors are constantly implementing new services. One of the ways to minimize the costs and risks of implementing those services is through the use of standards.

Standards are best practices that have been wrapped up in a set of guidelines that allow companies to piggyback on the experience and knowledge of the entire industry—and then reduce the cost of doing business by allowing quantifiable data to be transmitted throughout the supply chain efficiently and effectively.

Business partners working from the same set of standards are using the same playbook. That means that they have a streamlined conduit for communication. Effective and efficient communication simplifies business processes while reducing or eliminating error-prone manual tasks, freeing resources to focus on activities that can impact the bottom line and make the company more competitive.

The IDEA Industry Standards Committee (ISC) is a group that is proud to serve as the standards-setting body for e-commerce in the electrical industry. ISC members volunteer their time, energy, and passion to implement the highest-quality technical and data standards available worldwide and are dedicated to bringing both fresh blood and veterans together to tackle the big issues.

WHY PARTICIPATE?

Why participate in the creation of standards instead of simply implementing existing standards to take advantage of the work that has already been done? Consider the following reasons:

- Participating in the full life cycle of

the standards process allows one to stay informed. Standards are at the leading edge of technology.

Those who attend and contribute to the standards meetings stay educated on the latest technologies so that they can easily identify the ideal time to take advantage of a standard, or the technology it supports, positioning a given company to implement the standard earlier.

- Networking with peers in the industry provides opportunities to meet and make contacts with both vendors and customers and gives participants access to technical resources that would otherwise be unavailable. Access to the right people can increase productivity, improve responsiveness, and enable faster decision making.

- Increased participation leads to universal and robust standards and ensures that appropriate and essential standards are addressed. Standards must be flexible enough to benefit a wide variety of users; a larger sampling of participants helps create the flexibility that is needed.

- The knowledge and experience gained during meetings will reduce implementation costs, accelerate develop-

ment, and position participants as a greater asset to their companies and to the industry.

But to be successful, everyone needs to play a part. The industry owns IDEA, the IDW, and the ISC, and these entities will only be as good and as successful as what the industry invests into them.

There's an expression, "You reap what you sow"—and it's important to sow a future for this industry that is on the cutting edge of technology.

Consider where you want to go with your e-commerce initiatives. Do you want to be on the cutting edge of technology? Do you want to be in the game and create the standards of today that will generate the success stories of tomorrow?

Those interested in more information can get involved with the ISC by contacting Mary Shaw at 647-722-3406 or by e-mailing mshaw@idea-esolutions.com. ■

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SUBCOMMITTEES OFFER WAYS TO BE INVOLVED

Those who are a part of the electrical industry are invited to join the IDEA Industry Standards Committee (ISC). The ISC is made up of seven subcommittees: Electronic Data Interchange, EDIFACT, Flat File, XML, Data Content, Product Code, and Product Identification. These are responsible for developing and maintaining industry-specific e-business standards and guidelines, which are then submitted to the ISC governing body for final approval. Volunteers can choose to serve on the ISC governing body and any of the subcommittees in one of four member levels: ISC Voting, Active, Participating, or Informed. For more information on the ISC or one of its subcommittees, visit idea-esolutions.com.