

Chapter 2

How Corporate Standardization Shapes Tomorrow's Business

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ABSTRACT

Corporate standardization coordinates and supports experts involved in standardization bodies. It sets up standardization strategy in alignment with global strategy of the company. In this chapter, the authors illustrate how a company can embrace standardization and leverage it to increase its position in a competitive business environment. The authors first present an overview of corporate standardization strategy: how is standardization considered in a private company; how to capture the ins and outs of a corporate standardization; how to define, implement, and manage standardization strategy; etc. Then the authors present the benefits of standardization development for a company. Finally, an example of commitment in ISO TC 279 innovation management is presented.

INTRODUCTION

Because standards frame our daily life, because standards make the world safer and more interoperable, because standards try to solve babel tower issues, they impact strongly businesses.

When the word “standard” is pronounced in a company, a lot of questions arise on the actual scope and acceptance of the word standards. Actually, a lot of concepts are covered under this concept: does “standard” make reference to internal standards, policies or a regulation or a certification, product standardisation (especially in lean management), interfaces standards (technical specifications...). Standard can also be the assessment of the customer perception. We note there are common and usual thinking about standards: about their usefulness, representatively or applicability. Henceforth, it is relevant to report on what is perceived behind each of these notions; and analyse how corporate standardisation manage these (sometimes wrong) perceptions of standardisation purpose.

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Defining every used term can be considered as an obsession of standardisation staff but understanding how the word “standard” is used in business is mandatory to develop a standardisation development strategy. In the first part, the authors sum up typical perception of standard and standardization activities in a company. Then they recall actual objectives of standardisations, how to set up a standardization corporate function, how to efficiently benefit from standard to implement a company strategic plan. Finally, the authors introduce the current work on the standardization on innovation management. In each section, a set of questions are raised and answered to guide the reader through all the reasoning and questioning associated with the set up of a standardization activity.

HOW IS STANDARDISATION PERCEIVED IN A COMPANY?

“Standards” have different declination in a company. They all revolve on the concept of defining and agreeing upon a set of practice so as to improve business or facilitate communication. Here is a collection of the notion of “standards”, ranging from internal practice up to customer-oriented needs.

Internal Standards or Policies

Companies use internal policies to harmonise their internal practices, so as to facilitates interaction across and among their departments. Even if these policies are internal, they have a huge impact on company's external image. Indeed, as these policies regulate the whole company life, they create the values of the company. The values conveyed by a company can become only marketing words to create an image if they do not have any footprints on employees and their internal processes; or become iconic and representative of a set of values customers want to share (and buy).

Setting an internal policy has many impacts on other policies up to the whole organization of a company. For example if one of the company values is green compliancy (ecology, preservation or resources, etc.), then one can expect there will be an internal policy specifically for this topic. But all other policies gravitating around this topic will be impacted (e.g. general procurement, company building) and an emphasis on this topic will be put. Generally the creation or the update of new policies is accompanied with a communication plan to aware employees. Hence, company policies are a bridge between management standards and their implementation in the company.

Certification

Certification moves internal policies one step further and confirm to external parties – customer or business partners – which particular policies are effectively in place in a company. A typical example is the ISO9001 standard that is being associated with certification activities. As a matter of fact, since the 1980's most of the company wants or has to be ISO9001 certified given its importance in quality assessment process. As the needs for quality were huge, the ISO9001 certification has been an amazing success. CQO (Chief Quality Officer) function has been created to manage this topic and create a quality culture across companies.

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