



Report:

The Current State of ICT Standardization Consortia:  
Levelling The Playing Field for Developing Nations

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## Summary

ICT Standards consortia exist as an alternative to traditional, international or ultra-national standards bodies, and were originally meant to be a way to drive non-formal standards at a faster pace. Twenty years on from the originators, many consortia are now as established and “procedural” as the organizations they were meant to supplant. Big vendors have effectively seized control of many groups, and are generally content with the status quo; vendors controlling, some input from users and government organizations, and no one rocks the boat.

The question for developing nations such as China and India, with rapidly expanding economies allowing them to play on the world stage, is how to compete with the West? Can new nations with new energy, new needs, and new technology make effective use of the existing standards universe, created and shaped for large Western vendors?

What is needed is an overall view of the most important consortia, examined with an eye to discovering their membership patterns, external influences, and adaptability to the new reality of non-traditional standards players.

Based on the work done in The Brinkburn Analysis™, the following was undertaken:

- A list of 50 agreed consortia, with attached specialized membership lists.
  - From the above, a list of the Top 50 companies which participate in them.
  - From the above, a graphical segmentation by general geographical region (i.e. North America/Europe/Asia Pacific/All Others.)
- The organizations' approximate total membership commitment in these 50 consortia, and where possible, a report of the general revenue for the consortia.
- Special care has been given to point out any Government agencies involved in the membership of these 50 consortia.

Additionally, there will be an analysis of the "newer" vs. "traditional" areas of standards, with a focus on discovering if there are any segments where developing nations can get involved in on equal, or near-equal, terms.

The data has been prepared both statistically and visually where appropriate.

## Results

In total, the 50 organizations with the broadest reach in the 50 selected consortium included 3 organizations from China (or 6%); **Lenovo Group Limited**, the fourth largest manufacturer in the world; **Huawei Technologies Co., Ltd.**, the largest networking and telecommunications equipment supplier in China; and **ZTE Corp**, a global provider of telecommunications equipment and network solutions.

The vendors on the list (attached in this document as Appendix A) were responsible for a total of 753 corporate memberships in the 50 consortia selected. Most consortia have additional alternative membership arrangements which may consist of Individual, Government, NFP, SME, SDO, Academic, or other special, non-corporate memberships. While there were a significant number of these, it was the heavyweight vendors and organizations in the Top 50 who have most of the sway and are responsible for setting the agenda of the consortia that we examined.

Of the 753 corporate memberships, the three China-based organizations account for 23, a total of 3.05%. This indicated that not only do China-based organizations make up only 6% of the major corporate players in ICT, they only account for half of that amount (3.05%) of the total membership outlay among the 50 consortia we examined.

In only three cases were China-based organizations on the Board of Directors/Governing Board of consortia; ZTE Corp is on the BoD of the WiMax Forum, China Mobile is on the BoD of the TeleManagement Forum, and Lenovo Group sits on the BoD of the Bluetooth SIG.

### Encouraging Signs

Some effort was being made among the consortia to appeal to the China-based markets; some had websites available in Chinese, some were establishing new offices. Typical of such was the Digital Video Broadcasting (DVB) Project, which has a DVB China that is a Chinese language version of their website. More impressive was the work of the International Electronics Manufacturing Initiative (iNEMI) which has both a China Steering Committee and China Technology Groups; however, all steering committee and technology group members are from North American/EU -based organizations. iNEMI will, however, open their first China office in Shanghai in January 2008 and has scheduled 3 meetings in China for 2008.

Some consortia, notably W3C and the Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards (OASIS) have significant Chinese representation in their membership. OASIS, among its membership, has Beijing CE Open Source Software Co., Ltd., Beijing Digital China Limited, Beijing Redflag Chinese 2000 Software Co., Ltd., Beijing Sursen International Information Technology Co., Ltd, China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), but none of the 3 "main" Chinese organizations.

### Best Possibilities

The Wireless and Mobile sector seems the most encouraging for the inclusion of China-based organizations; though a large field, China-based organizations are present among most memberships in the sector and actually have some leadership on the board of a major consortium. No doubt this is due to the incredible size of the consumer market, but mobile technology is also relatively new to the consortia scene; all the organizations are narrow spectrum and there is no single, overriding global spec or standard that is enforceable yet. These factors are also present to more limited extents in the Media-Multimedia and Healthcare-Environment specific sectors, though there would need to be a larger sample for any definitive conclusions.

Generally, the more unsettled a sector is, with newer consortia, diversified memberships, and when there is no single overbearing product or standard that dwarfs others, the more receptive the sector is regarding the involvement of membership from new countries. The dinosaurs of Architecture, Management, and Hardware are far less likely to take new direction.

### Two Evils

Unfortunately, there is a problem with adaptability in consortia. The smaller consortia seem to be more flexible in their approach and results, but haven't the track record, membership base, or cash to be of much use to China-based organizations. The bigger, more well-established consortia have all three of those qualities, but take their strategic direction from the 94% of companies that are either in direct competition with, or want to ruthlessly exploit, companies from China, India, and other newly emerging economic powers.

### Conclusions

ICT Consortia are now as well established as the organizations they were meant to replace; they have life cycles all their own and in many cases actually prove less effective than traditional SDOs. Memberships in consortia are, if not static, then of a certain ebb and flow. Some members leave to pursue different projects, some new members come in. There is a pool of about 50-100 major players, plus governments, who determine what all of the 250-300 major consortia do, and more importantly, **how** they do it. This can best be illustrated by the fact that there are organizations such as Global Inventures, KAVI, and The Open Group which specialize in the establishment of consortia, from establishing the branding and operations side to the setting up of an almost template legal framework. Consortia are now COTS products, and they are established to give the best working procedures to those big 50-100 players, without whom there could be no consortia.

For new countries with huge economies, vast workforces and determined work ethics to crash onto the scene and attempt to influence consortia has proven problematic. It has provoked concern among the traditional players that they might lose their slice of the pie. It has lately come to be seen, however, as an opportunity to gain new memberships for the consortia, while still maintaining their allegiance to the 50-100 western companies who still pull the strings. Efforts have been made to window dress the consortia; they have some new members, they establish chapters and offices in China; they may hold conferences and even have panels discuss how to work with the Chinese and Indian companies that are now arriving on the scene. But it is always with an eye towards having the new companies turn into the 101-150 new clients who understand how the game is played in the West.

It will take a major sea change for established consortia to deliver true value to organizations outside the Top 50-100.