

What Makes Standards Succeed?

A View From The Outside-In

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Overview

What are the necessary and sufficient conditions for standards developed within the standards process to succeed outside it?



Measuring Success

- Adoption within the target community
- Adoption *outside* the target community
- Adoption by follow-on work

Exiting standards process is not a measure of success.

Unquestioned Successes

- HTTP, HTML, ATOM Publishing
- Widely deployed
- Has enabled innovation
- Not limited to original target

Passing Grade

- CSS, XPath
- Widely deployed within target community
- Have seen re-use within other standards

Questionable

- XML Schema, XLink, WS*
- Adopted within specialized communities
- Difficult to build on
- Re-use outside target has proven difficult

Possible symptoms of over-standardization

Primary Take-Aways

- Standards should be informed by wider requirements
- Requirement generation, followed by specification misses wider target.
- Successful standards say what you *can* do while staying silent on what you can't.

Standardizing too early limits innovation.