#ISO70years for the Cyprus Organisation for Standardisation (CYS)

Happy 70th Birthday ISO!

"In 70 years' time, I would expect to see standardization delivering more expertise in the field of computing, networking and security. I would also expect ISO to use distributed systems, the cloud, and the internet of things to make standardisation accessible for more people and easier to implement".

Andreas Solomou, ISO/TC 258
National Representative

Being part of the ISO family had a great impact on my professional career as it provide me a broader perspective of my profession and field of expertise.
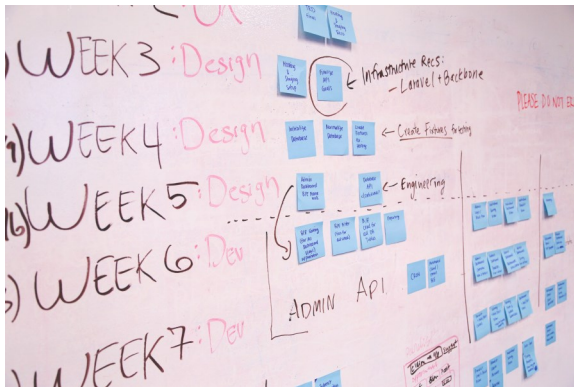
Working as a project manager and educator, I was looking at standards from the "user's" perspective, studying the way these could be implemented based on a specific set of users and within the confined boundaries of the organisations I was dealing with.

Being a member of the ISO technical committee for the development of project management standards though, has broadened my view from the focus on the specific user's/organisation's requirements to a holistic view of how a standard should be streamlined in its entirety in order to be appealing to all users and to fit any organisation in different sectors. This approach poses significant challenges in many aspects for any family of experts, since a standard should comply with the requirements of the users, the practitioners, the consultants and the academia as well. Although each of these groups has a different focus and requires a different approach, the result should meet the requirements of all stakeholders.

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Beyond the valuable expertise, being part of the ISO family enhances my professional status, contributing to the advancement of my personal life and career. Within my working group I challenge my own expertise in the field and have the opportunity to practice the full spectrum of my skills and discover my hidden potentials. Also, being of service to the society through ISO, gives me a real sense of achievement.

International standardization is the best method to streamline business procedures across the globe by providing the common, logical steps necessary for managing the complexity of the modern business environment. Beyond processes, standards provide the common language and standardised metrics that connect business to business operations and match organisations' with customers' perspectives.

No organisation should be "reinventing the wheel" every time a typical or even a non-typical issue arises. Living in a "connected society" means that addressing the frequently changing business environment, aspects of business management such as quality, risk, security or projects doesn't have to be a challenge every time. Having a management system in place will secure those aspects that customers value most in an organisation, thus, safeguarding the organisation's competitive advantage.

Humans possess a wealth of knowledge, however without the international community of standardisation, this wealth of knowledge would remain isolated and implicit. The ISO family brings together subject matter experts from all over the world to share their expertise, discuss and analyse their experiences and provide solutions to complex issues professionals face in day to day business. Shared challenges are identified and the best practices to address these are documented to become, in this way, readily available to everyone, both professionals and practitioners. Furthermore, these best practices are continuously reviewed and revised, taking into consideration current and anticipated market shifts and technology developments.

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International standardisation simplifies the way we deal with challenges at national and international level. It encourages efficient and sustainable development and promotes responsible behaviours that protect both humans and the environment

For many years now, benchmarking has been a major promoter of innovation. International standards provide important benchmarks in many aspects of life and business assisting organisations to assess their performance, efficiency and effectiveness in dealing with business matters. In this way it encourages the development of competitive products and services which are fit for purpose. Beyond innovation, governments use standards as a benchmark to introduce or streamline legislations that make better societies.

One of the most important outcome of the use of standards is that it "makes life accessible", since it removes barriers, especially for people with special needs. The use of standards helps fight isolation and safeguards that people, especially vulnerable groups, will have access to more than the basics of life. Standardization brings together the subject matter experts and the people who actually have the needs and this results in "a human centric society", that improves mobility, accessibility, provide opportunities and enables millions of people that are challenged in life to improve their living conditions.

Standards are also the mean to increase stakeholders' confidence, especially the end-users' customers', when choosing services or products. Increased confidence means less time and effort in decision making, thus allowing individuals and organisations to focus on those things that matter most for them in life.

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Being member in various committees in charge for the development of project management and related standards, I have met people coming from various industries and diverse cultures. It is very interesting to observe the different approach of each subject matter expert to the same problem and understand the way each ones background influence their individual professional methods and skills.

Most of the experts I had the opportunity and pleasure to meet, had varied expertise in different aspects of the project management discipline. Usually these experts are assigned to work only on a very narrow scope or very specific aspects of projects, thus allowing them to gain tremendous insight and expertise relevant to the specific project's aspect they are dealing with, especially if they have many years of experience. During one of the meetings of a specific working group, I had the chance to listen to one of these experts sharing his expertise on a matter. During his presentation I was taking notes to help to provide my comments to the group later on. When reviewing my notes I came to realise that in an hour, on a few pages I was able to gain expertise, that otherwise would have taken me years to achieve. More so, I would have had to battle my way with projects in order to understand the multiple challenges involved. This story reinforces the notion that when working as a family of experts is much faster and easier to document the best practices and make them available to everyone.

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With the advancements of technology and computers taking on several tasks that humans are performing today, I see standardisation as the most significant element for managing the increased complexity, especially in communications. Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning might free humans from having to perform a numerous, dangerous or complex tasks within a limited time frame, however, there will be at the same time, an exponential increase in systems' management requirements. One way to alleviate complexity and achieve highly efficient management skills is standardization.

Andreas Solomou is actively involved in the field of project management and education for more than 18 years. He has successfully managed a large number of product development projects as well as educational programs and currently works with private and government organisations as an external project manager and consultant. He is a Certified Project Manager (PMP) and he holds an MCTS (Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist) certification for project management using information systems. He is the National Delegate representing Cyprus in the International Standardisation Organisation's Technical Committee for developing the ISO/TC 258 for Project, Programme and Portfolio Management. He is a visiting lecturer at various education institutes and frequently delivers project management certification programs.