

# Re: US consumer products design reference – what inventors should know

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  - *Date:* Fri, 28 Sep 2007 21:42:03 +0100
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tns1 wrote:

This standards thing has gone beyond ensuring that products are safe, has become a whole parasitic industry. By making it complicated enough, you now probably have to hire some consultant, just to tell you which \$1000 standards you need to buy, which will then tell you to do things you were going to do anyway, and then you can look forward to the cost of the testing.

If this product is for technically minded users, maybe you could do it as a semi-assembled kit, which probably avoids some of the difficulties, at the expense of requiring a lot more customer support.

If there were a government that really wanted to have a lot of start-ups, then that country would either buy outright, or create from scratch a complete set of standards, make them as strict in every respect as the strictest of the widely used standards in the rest of the world, declare that they are legally adequate standards for products sold in their country, and then place the lot in the public domain.

I think that it would be interesting if someone were to compile a list, by country, of the overhead cost of starting company and selling an electronic product, the "null product" – where we assume that the design itself is trivial, but just count the cost of buying standards, health and safety audits, compliance testing fees, government bribes^H^H^H^H^H^Hregistration fees, WEEE registration etc. If this list were published every year, it might focus the attention of certain politicians on the reason why they seem to have so much trouble reducing unemployment and achieving positive balance of payments.

Chris

Re: US consumer products design reference – what inventors should know

Well said. How can it be that a private company, and a claimed non-profit organization, has managed to appoint itself as the sole arbiter of product safety, yet keep the standards themselves such a well-guarded secret? Our laws are not secret, public safety should not be either. The document pricing, restrictive licensing, and secretive way the UL guards their IP, all show the goal is more profit oriented than safety oriented. Heck, maybe Microsoft should apply for not-for-profit status.

I have no doubt that consumer products are safer having been designed to set standards, but once those standards become a requirement (in essence, the law) the text should be freely available, or at least reasonably priced. Even thick technical books rarely cost more than \$100, mainly due to competition. Only a monopolistic entity could get away with charging so much more for similar information.

I noticed my latest monitor has at least a dozen certification marks on the back. Why so many, since I believe CE meets or exceeds most of them. Maybe its time for a comprehensive set of open standards?

Yes, but you'll need a bunch of "lobbyists" with sufficient cash to grease the right politicians, or it will never get adopted, and therefore will not allow you to sell products. I think there is something called the "official journal" or something like that in the EU, which is a list of the standards that the governments will admit to having heard of. I think it is probably expensive to get on that list. There would be enough competent people and companies who are sick of being ripped off, that actually coming up with the technical content of the standards would probably not be the hard part.

Chris

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