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5 Technology Standards Every Association CIO Should Know

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Most people don't think much about standards, where they come from, or why they're important. But for association management professionals, standards, particularly technology standards, are an essential part of the world in which we live and work. Whether it's data-exchange standards, security standards, standard definitions, or testing standards, association professionals rely on shared criterion to manage our work and ensure that our organizations thrive and succeed.

Standards aren't a new concept. King Henry I standardized the length of a yard as the distance from his nose to his outstretched arm. In the 19th century, railroads set standards to agree on common gauge track sizes. As our world continues to evolve, so does the scope and complexity of our standards.

Today there are standards on everything from children's crayons to swimming pool designs to manufacturing quality. For those of us who work with association management companies, there's even an AMC standard: [ANSI/AMCI A100.1-2002](#), the Standard of Good Practices for the Association Management Company Industry.

The standards that most often touch our daily lives, however, tend to be technology oriented. In fact, several emerging technology standards will have a significant impact on associations' core operations. Here are five you should be aware of:

1. PCI

The Payment Card Industry established a set of [PCI standards](#) for any organization that stores, processes, or transmits cardholder data. With so many associations accepting payment cards, these standards are critical for organizations to know—and know well. Unlike some standards, where adherence is a matter of convenience, failure to comply with PCI standards can put your members' card data at risk and expose your organization to serious financial trouble.

2. HTML 5

Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) is the language that runs the World Wide Web. HTML 5 represents the first major update to HTML since the release of HTML 4 in 1997, and that's a long time in web years. (In 1997, Google didn't even have a website, and Mark Zuckerberg hadn't started high school, much less Facebook.) HTML 5 brings with it a slew of new features, including code that makes it easier to embed video and audio elements into a page, as well as better site viewing across a wide range of devices and screen sizes. If your association is considering a website redesign, it's important to start thinking toward the [long-term growth of the web](#) as you develop your site.

3. NFC

Near Field Communication (NFC) is one of several standards that define transactions made via cell phone and short-range radio frequency communications. In many areas of the world, NFC has become an increasingly common way to make payments, access transit systems, and unlock hotel rooms.

NFC has particular [application benefits](#) for association professionals who oversee tradeshow and events. The technology offers fresh and interesting ways to manage registrations, add interactivity to exhibits, and even facilitate networking among attendees. NFC, along with similar technologies such as Airdrop and QR codes, is also becoming the standard method for lead-tracking at tradeshow.

4. gTLDs

While not technically a standard, [generic Top Level Domains](#) (gTLDs) are based on about a dozen standards governing domain usage on the internet. GTLDs are the part of a website's address located after the last dot, such as ".com" or ".org." Just as we've gotten used to surfing the web with these common URLs, more than 1,000 new gTLDs are going to become available over the next several years. Some examples include [.restaurant](#), [.London](#), and even [.sucks](#).

You can easily envision how these new gTLDs could be useful for your association. Are you representing professionals? How about a URL that includes ".expert"? Targeting a specific community? Why not incorporate ".community"? These new gTLDs represent the biggest expansion of the internet since its inception. Every association leader should have them on his or her radar.

5. IETF RFC 5545

IETF RFC 5545 is a standard that even the most diehard techies don't know by name, but odds are most of us already use this technology on a daily basis. IETF RFC 5545 is the standard for iCalendar, which drives calendar interoperability across email clients and devices. While you probably leverage the iCalendar standard to manage your own schedule, there may be additional opportunities to use it to increase efficiency and engagement in your organization. After all, "save the date" postcards are a thing of the past, and calling individual board members to remind them about next week's conference call isn't exactly scalable (or fun).

Attaching iCalendar invites to meeting notices has become standard operating practice in this age of always-on connectivity. If your meeting or event is not on someone's electronic calendar, bet on them not showing up. You can view the full iCal standard [here](#), particularly if you have lots of time to kill at an airport.

The examples above are just a few of the technology standards that will affect your future operations. If they're not integrated into your association, the impact could be negative. Beyond that, look around you. Standards truly are everywhere.

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