

# THE ROLE OF Standards Management Technology in Mitigating Counterfeits Risk

Tools that enable a practice known as ‘standards management’ can reduce total cost of ownership, risk, and inefficiency when implementing a myriad of standards designed to thwart counterfeits

By Editorial Staff

New standards being issued by SAE International are providing a valuable framework for managing counterfeit risk for companies involved in the supply chain for electronic components (see the article “Setting the Standard(s) in the Fight against Counterfeits” on page 8). However, to get the most benefit from a standard like SAE’s AS5553, “Counterfeit Electronic Parts; Avoidance, Detection, Mitigation and Disposition,” companies must ensure that they have an effective standards management process in place.

SAE established the G-19 committee as a response to the growing problem of counterfeit electronic parts entering the supply chain, and an increasing number of companies are applying the standard in the context of counterfeit mitigation initiatives. However, standards management provides many benefits beyond

explicitly managing counterfeits, such as preventing the blind referencing of standards, duplicate purchasing of standards across an organization, lack of version control and the risk of using outdated standards, and the potential for copyright abuse – as well as the quality and liability risks associated with improper application of standards. Standards like AS5553 each include primary and secondary references to other standards and standards organizations. When compared to manually seeking out each and every individual standard and revision being referenced, the ability to store, cross-reference, and manage these in a central location can boast tremendous organizational efficiencies, while reducing total cost of ownership. Additional benefits can be found by preventing the blind referencing of standards, avoiding duplicate purchases of standards across an organization,

enforcing version control, and minimizing the potential copyright abuses, as well as putting a stop to the use of outdated standards. These all ultimately increase the probability

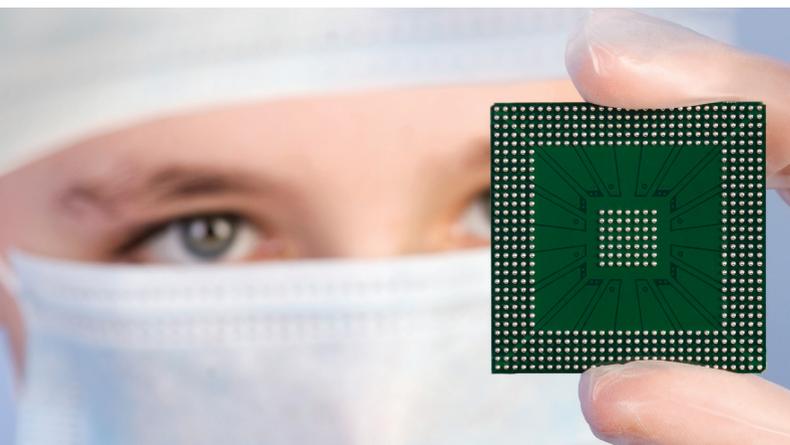
of steering clear of quality and liability risks associated with improper application of standards. Version control, for example, is one serious potential consequence of poor standards management. Without a system in place to ensure that only the most up-to-date standards are employed, companies run the risk of additional redesign cycles for compliance, putting new product launches – and revenue – in jeopardy, not to mention the costs associated with rework.

## Six Steps to Effective Standards Management

As an organization looks to apply standards management to its counterfeit mitigation program, the following six objectives can provide a roadmap for effective deployment:

**1 Ensure access.** This means that those who *need* access to AS5553 and related standards in fact *have* that access where and when they need it. If people don’t have what they need, they will find some other way to cope, whether or not they are in compliance with the standard or the organization’s policies.

**2 Keep standards use consistent.** Dating back to the days of Eli Whitney and Henry Ford, manufacturers have recognized that consistent, repeatable processes are the key to efficiency and productivity on the plant floor. Similarly, you should



ensure that employees have consistent, repeatable processes to access the standards content they need. This kind of consistency breeds productivity, quality and speed that businesses need in order to react to a changing environment.

**3 Purchase standards from a reliable source.** Make sure that you have the licensing in place that you need, that you are covered legally and from a copyright standpoint, and that you are able to get the updates that you need in a timely manner. Your standards provider must be a good partner to your business and support your goals.

**4 Avoid copyright abuse.** Violating the copyright on a standard like AS5553 can present legal challenges to your company, and those problems are only made more serious when a lack of proper controls leads to systematic, unchecked abuses. Again, ensuring access is crucial to avoid having employees “do it their way,” which exposes the company to the risk of copyright abuse.

**5 Understand usage.** Business intelligence is increasingly important to all companies. With regard to standards, doing business intelligently means being able to answer questions like: How is the information being used, who needs it, and how frequently do they need it? Do they immediately need updates, or do they need historical information throughout the lifecycle?

**6 Stay current.** This means having a reliable source: Your standards management partner must know when things change and be able to react quickly by providing the right information at the right time to the right members of your team.

### Choosing the Right Standards Management Capabilities

With those six steps in mind, what do effective enabling technology capabilities for standards management

look like? Chip Geisthardt, a product manager with IHS Inc., a global information company, says that today’s capabilities available in its standards management solution IHS Standards Expert, are far more robust and feature-rich than libraries of documents. “Five years ago, it was a way to deliver content. Now it has become a comprehensive standards management platform – with advanced project management capabilities,” Geisthardt says.

Walking through the functionality necessary for effective standards management, Geisthardt says that the breadth of standards covered in a solution should include comprehensive, up-to-date standards from multiple standards development organizations (SDO). AS5553 refers to more than 20 other standards and documents, and users should be able to access those related publications when necessary. Fast, intuitive search and discovery capabilities ensure that users have access the “right” content at the right time, and this requires robust filtering options, full-text search and redline capabilities, and the ability to mark “favorites” within the system. The system also should provide the ability to set up automated e-mail alerts when changes are made to a standard. Finally, to enable a consistent process, Geisthardt advises that a standards management tool should provide for uniform shared access to standards in way that ensures that even globally dispersed teams are able to “work off the same sheet of paper.” Team members ought to have the same process for how they obtain and apply standards, and that process should be built into the tools that the team uses. IHS Standards Expert, for example, allows a team to associate standards to process documents or other project-related documentation. ““The real Significant value of the tool,” Geisthardt notes, “can be found in is its project management capabilities.”

### Where to Get Started

Upon deciding to implement an anti-counterfeit program involving standards, organizations can follow three simple steps to deploy additional standards management capability to compliment the effort with improved efficiency and other benefits enabled by available technology:

**First, establish a formal priority around standards management.** That means enlisting executive sponsorship that can drive this initiative within the organization, sell the importance of the standards management to other functions or business units, and endorse funding of the project at an adequate level.

**Next, engage with internal specialists and external experts** like IHS to look at current standards use, inventory the current library of standards, and understand how staff members access standards. Determine current and future needs for standards within the company.

Finally, the road to better standards management will involve **eliminating paper from the process, and digitizing and automating access** at the desktop level from a single reliable source (or as few sources as practical), and investing in a corporate-wide standards management tool suited to the requirements of your company and its industry.

Counterfeits represent a “real and present danger” in the electronics supply chain, and experts have argued elsewhere in this special supplement that companies must apply a range of tools in the fight against fakes. Those tools today include new and developing standards. However, companies looking to leverage standards to mitigate their exposure to counterfeit and suspect parts should also embrace effective standards management, based on a robust technology platform, in order to ensure that their risk mitigation initiative is maximally effective. ■