

standards are published each year and some 1,350 technical committees and working groups covering 20,000 standards are supported.

How standards are used

The use of standards is becoming more and more of a prerequisite to worldwide trade. A very large percentage of export is influenced by the European and international standards business. For instance all European Union standards are automatically adopted as British Standards.

Although standards are designed for voluntary use and do not impose any regulations, by law many industry bodies and trade associations require products (e.g. motorcycle helmets) to conform to a British Standard or a European Directive before they can be offered for sale in the UK or EU. This is to ensure that countries and companies can compete on equal terms.

Standards are also used as flexible alternative to regulation. Through the development and adoption of best practice guidelines companies and organizations can make sure they are meeting consumer concerns and keeping up with best practice.

In fast-moving industries and sectors standards can also offer huge savings in Research and Development costs. Where common platforms for technological advances are established, tested and shared

with all interested parties this can ensure commercial viability and consumer confidence.

Standards are essential to trade in increasingly competitive markets. They ensure any business offering products, services or processes is:

- cost-effective and time efficient
- commercially viable
- credible
- safe.

They can also make significant impact on society at large. For example, as purchasers or users of products we would soon notice of they turned out to be of poor quality, do not fit, are incompatible with equipment we already have, are

unreliable or dangerous. We are usually unaware of the role played by standards in raising levels of quality, safety, reliability, efficiency and interchangeability - as well as in providing such benefits at an economical cost.

A standard that illustrates this is:

BS 8300:2001 Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people - Code of practice

Above all, any business, large or small, can benefit from the conformity and integrity that standards will bring. Management standards, in particular, can be of benefit to any organisation.

Mark Wasmuth joined the Technical Information Department of BSI in 1994, becoming Department Manager in 1999. In 2001 he was promoted again to his current position as International Development Manager. In this role he advises international companies and overseas governments on standardization technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures. He has tendered and managed multi-million £pound projects in Turkey, Russia and Albania, as well as Ethiopia, Romania, Egypt, Morocco and many others.



Mark gained an MSc in Innovative Design of Production Machines from Cranfield University, UK. He is a Chartered Engineer and Member of the Institute of Electrical Engineers. Prior to joining BSI, Mark worked as an Engineering Designer for Molins PLC, as Manufacturing Consultant for Automated Manufacturing Technology Ltd and Engineering Project Manager for Instron Ltd.