

Reaction to John Waclawsky's Titan vs titan lecture

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Overall, John Waclawsky's talk was very enlightening from our groups varied perspectives. While our group believes standards are generally positive, we typically approach this topic from a consumer's perspective where we are searching for economical solutions. John approached this subject by contrasting two different perspectives, open and restrictive competition; which gave a negative impression for standards. Restrictive competition does not want standards as it opens the market and reduces profits. Open competition requires companies to forge ahead offering consumers more products or services to maintain their customer base.

Following the OSI model presented in the talk and the semi-permeable membrane analogy, standards are the base of the model. At one point these lower layers (physical through transport) were not standardized. Infrastructure and protocols were proprietary and companies could make money off of them. Once the infrastructure was in place, markets became competitive and it made sense to develop standards for interoperability throughout the network, such as all phone companies using a common communication protocol.

So, where is the equilibrium point for standards in the OSI model? Will the Session Layer have a standard? What implications would this have? A common session protocol could allow for interoperability among several applications through a central session provider, such as the UM common login (CAS). This implies that users could subscribe to a common carrier that would provide verification to sites requesting user credentials, eliminating individual user names and passwords for each individual website.

Standards take time to develop and implement, and require a large entity to utilize and enforce the standard or else it has no meaning. We feel standards are positive for consumers since they aide development of new applications rapidly and cheaply with existing technologies; however, we empathize with John on how standards can slow advancement and economic growth.