

Position paper for IOTSI workshop

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My interest in the workshop lies primarily in the dimension of promoting interoperation. The workshop organizers note correctly the considerable work that has gone into standardization efforts. Yet commercial offerings we see often seem to be less interested in interoperation than in same-vendor interoperation – often by centralization of data from devices to a centrally-managed service.

Therefore, I am most interested in understanding the answers to the following questions from the workshop call for participation:

- What functionality should online repositories for sharing schemas have?
- How can existing data models be mapped against each other to offer interworking?
- Is there room for harmonization, or are the use cases of different groups and organizations so unique that there is no possibility for cooperation?
- How can organizations better work together to increase awareness and information sharing?

In addition, I think another overarching question needs to be answered, which is whether there is market demand for the interoperation that common information models would support. There are two dimensions to that demand: whether there is demand among consumers of the products, and whether there is demand among consumers of the standards. Without the latter, the former will not be delivered. It may be that common information models have not emerged because the consumers of standards don't really have an interest in such standards.

The reason for my concern is really a concern about Internet architecture. The avowed architecture is open and interoperating. If, however, what is actually being built is a series of islands that interoperate only in quite limited ways, the practical architecture of the Internet will begin to drift from the system we generally assume (commonality and strong interoperability), and toward an architecture that resembles an archipelago. We may not desire such an architecture, but if that is the real future we are facing then it is not clear that working towards common information models is worthwhile.