

ACCURIS

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Heroes

OF STANDARDS AND CODES

EXCLUSIVE

INTERVIEW WITH
THE DIRECTOR,
STANDARDS
PRODUCT
DEVELOPMENT
AWS

GET TO KNOW HIM
PETER PORTELA

STANDARDS GUARDIAN BY DAY
FAMILY MAN BY NIGHT



“EVERY word matters”

TAKE A PEEK INTO THE LIFE OF AWS DIRECTOR OF STANDARDS PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND HOW HE BALANCES THE CONSENSUS PROCESS.

MEET PETER PORTELA

PETER, THE DIRECTOR OF STANDARDS PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AT THE AMERICAN WELDING SOCIETY (AWS), HAS BEEN DEDICATED TO THE STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATION INDUSTRY FOR OVER A DECADE, BUT HIS PATH BEGAN IN THE CLASSROOM.

Originally a Mechanical Engineer, Peter became a teacher of Math and Science. It was in this role that he saw the critical link between clear instruction and reliable outcomes. However, as time went on, Peter sought a different path to apply his skills and fulfill his desire to help people. He met an AWS employee who told him about the organization and the work involved, inspiring him to apply. He quickly realized that the precision required in standards was a perfect fit for his engineering and teaching background.

Now, as Director of Standards Product Development, Peter directs AWS's organizational digital transformation related to Standards Development, overseeing strategic projects like XML integration and new authoring tools. His ultimate mission is to ensure the consensus process - the cornerstone of American National Standards - is upheld by optimizing the systems and managing key partner relationships. He believes that just like in teaching, "Every word matters" when creating life-saving codes and documents.

"Every word matters" when creating life-saving standards, codes and documents.

PROCESS. PEOPLE. PURPOSE.

FEATURE

Can you pinpoint the moment or the initial job that first introduced you to the world of safety-critical documents and standards development?

Answer: "It would have to be my first day as a Program Manager. I was overwhelmed reading the governing rules for our Standards Committees and was even more surprised reading the first document I picked up for Robotic Welding. The amount of detail in each requirement was incredible, and the meetings reinforced that. Every word matters."

If you had to explain the work of a standards professional to a high school student, what would you say is the ultimate goal of your efforts?

Answer: "The goal of a standards professional is to help make the world a better place. I know that sounds like a lofty and broad goal, but by supporting the amazing volunteers and staff working to put the standards together, you help support a process that has end results all over the world. If you look around the U.S. at skyscrapers or bridges, all the way to planes and lasers, you are looking at the direct impact of the standards work within, and in collaboration with, AWS."

Describe the single most rewarding moment you've had in your current role.

Answer: "This year, both the launch of our Standards authoring and review tool built on FontoXML, and the launch of the 12th edition of our Standards Committee TAC Rules of Operations. Both of these endeavors have been under development for several years. The vision behind the process and procedure changes that underly it, even longer so. These two changes will impact the Standards development process forever, and after some challenging years, it feels gratifying."

How does your background and the work you do directly align with the core mission and values of your current organization?

Answer: "AWS strives to be the preeminent global resource that enables welding professionals and the industries they serve to protect and improve lives. We work hard to keep that focus at the forefront of our minds as we work with our Committees, systems, and processes to make each day better for our volunteers, members, customers, and staff."



PROCESS.
PEOPLE.
PURPOSE. (CNT'D)

FEATURE

What is the number one misconception people have about the job of a standards professional (or administrator) when they first get involved?

Answer: "That you need to be an Engineer or a welder. While that is vital for a volunteer, a program manager that works for AWS needs certain organizational and people skills, but you will build relevant technical knowledge as you work with Committees."

Beyond simply following due process, what is the most valuable intangible contribution you believe your role makes to the committee and the quality of the final standard?

Answer: "We help guide the Committee work by improving the processes and systems used to create and update Standards. If we do our job well, people's most valuable asset – their time – becomes better utilized."

Who are the different people or professional groups you rely on the most (e.g., the Technical Committee Chair, the Reviewers, etc.), and what makes their input so valuable?

Answer: "Our volunteers. Our staff can guide the process and procedure, but all of the technical expertise comes from our volunteers. They are the true technical experts and holders of the specific knowledge that makes our Standards what they are. Whether it's your first day as a guest or applicant, or you are the Chair of a Committee, as part of a 30-year career in standards, your opinion and expertise makes the standards world go around."

CURIOUS, NOT CRITICAL

IF YOU COULD SUMMARIZE THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON YOU LEARNED IN THE FIRST FIVE YEARS OF YOUR CAREER, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Answer: "In the words of Ted Lasso, 'Be curious, not judgmental'. It's easy to criticize the opinions and thoughts of others...but you never know the path that brought them there and formed their opinions. Find common ground and move forward together."



(Left to Right) Peter Portela, Jennifer Padron, Stephen Borrero, Jennifer Molin, and Jennifer Rosario. The "D1 Team" and part of the AWS Standards Team - Lake Tahoe, CA

GET INVOLVED EARLY

What advice would you give to a young professional who is considering getting involved as a volunteer technical expert?

Answer: “**You do not need to have 20 years of experience** in the field to make your voice heard in Committee meetings. I have personally seen impactful changes come from new or early career volunteers that were not as close to the content as long-time members. **Get involved early!**”

What emerging technology or trend do you believe will require the most critical standards development over the next five years?

Answer: "It sounds cliché, but **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**. As LLMs and AI tools become more advanced, and companies are investing billions in hardware architecture, we have only begun to scratch the surface on what AI can do. Disruptive is an understatement – we are on the cusp of a wave that will change the world forever, and Standards Development is an industry in line to benefit greatly. "

THE ART OF COLLABORATION

What keeps you coming back to this demanding work, month after month, year after year?

Answer: “I am blessed to be a part of a team that shares a vision of what the future of standards could be at AWS. We support, challenge, and trust each other and it allows us to walk together into the future. Being able to build this future with our volunteers makes every day worth the work.”

What is the most challenging aspect of collaborating with a diverse group of stakeholders (academics, industry competitors, government bodies)?

Answer: “The most challenging aspect is reaching a consensus. Everyone comes to the same table with their own experiences, preconceptions, and goals. Coming together for a shared and agreed upon future is incredibly challenging and takes true compromise.”

Please take a moment to describe your role in detail, walking us through your core responsibilities and explaining how your work directly supports the Technical Committee and the standards creation process.

Answer: "My focus is improving the processes and procedures within AWS standards and working with the standards team to align our vision for the organization. This involves work on our current and future standards development systems, keeping in contact with other SDOs, coordinating with ANSI, working with our standards sales partners."

LIFE'S TRUE STANDARD



When you finally step away from managing complex timelines, how do you recharge? What's your favorite thing to do or see?

Answer: "I love spending time with my **FAMILY**. My partner and I have 4 amazing kids and there's never a shortage of activities. My absolute favorite are our family trips and experiencing the beauty of nature through their eyes."

Outside of your professional life, what is one skill or hobby you have that people would be surprised by, and does it ever unexpectedly help you in your standards work?

Answer: "I enjoy **cooking and baking**. I am relaxed and Zen when I am in a kitchen, and the creativity, attention to detail, and trial and error that comes with food creation are transferrable skills to every facet of life."

If your consensus committee was meeting at your house, what food would you serve, and why does it feel appropriate for a consensus-driven group?

Answer: "**Pizza and wine**. I've never seen anyone have a bad time with pizza and wine, and I would like everyone to relax and feel welcome."



RAPID FIRE Q'S WITH PETER

Last great book? Remarkably Bright Creatures

Favorite comfort food? Pizza

If you could instantly become fluent in any one language, which would it be? Japanese

Best advice received? The day you're living today is a day you dreamed of years ago.

Morning person or night owl? Morning; I love a quiet coffee and sunrise before the world is awake.

Favorite way to exercise? Running and lifting weights.

Personal theme song? You'll never walk alone – Gerry and the Pacemakers (but Marcus Mumford has a great remake)

Small ritual to make day better?

Morning coffee and positive affirmations.

Top travel bucket list destination?

Canary Islands, most of my heritage is from there, and I've not been able to visit yet.

Historical dinner guest? Winston Churchill.

Presented by:

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*Accuris is proud to champion the efforts of every individual who dedicates their expertise and time to the standards community. Our **SDO Hero Campaign** is dedicated to recognizing the profound societal value of consensus-driven standards - the essential foundation for a safer, smarter, and more sustainable world. We believe the true strength of this industry lies not just in the documents themselves, but in the **human commitment** of the staff and volunteers who create them. By spotlighting their stories, we aim to elevate the dignity of standards work, boost involvement by demystifying the process for future engineers, and reinforce the professional prestige associated with this vital craft.*

Accuris thanks the heroes of yesterday, today, and tomorrow for their unwavering dedication to integrity and innovation.

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