

ACCURIS

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ISSUE 02

# Heroes

OF STANDARDS AND CODES

**EXCLUSIVE**

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INTERVIEW WITH  
THE SENIOR  
MANAGER OF  
STANDARDS

**AIA**

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**GET TO KNOW HIM**  
**DRAKE MCGREGOR**

CONSENSUS CONDUCTOR BY DAY  
NATURE LOVER BY NIGHT



**“INTEGRITY  
matters”**

TAKE A PEEK INTO THE LIFE OF AN AEROSPACE STANDARDS LEADER AND HOW HE HELPS SHAPE CONSENSUS IN A HIGH-STAKES INDUSTRY.

## MEET **DRAKE MCGREGOR**

**DRAKE MCGREGOR, AIA SENIOR MANAGER OF STANDARDS, IS AN INDUSTRY CORNERSTONE WHOSE PATH BEGAN AMIDST RESEARCH FARM CATTLE TROUGHS.**

Long before he was managing thousands of National Aerospace Standards (NAS) for the Aerospace Industries Association (AIA), Drake was studying Biology at Penn State, collecting evolutionary data as part of his laboratory assistant position in his "office" - a five-acre farm outside State College. The farm was a field of 50 cattle troughs serving as microcosms; small ponds from which differences in physical attributes were observed. It was a world of handwritten lab procedures, field mice, and leaky roofs. But as he stood amidst the tall grass of the farm, Drake realized two things: the mess of field biology wasn't as much fun as he thought it

was going to be, and he was surprisingly, deeply passionate about the process behind it all - the "how" and "why" of testing and documentation. Today, that same passion for process integrity drives the invisible infrastructure of the aerospace industry. Drake lives at the intersection of human diplomacy and technical rigor. He isn't a bureaucrat; he's a "conductor" ensuring that a diverse orchestra of global experts plays in harmony. In the following conversation, Drake opens the door to the complex, high-stakes world of aerospace standards and the human effort required to keep it all moving.

**“The integrity of the process matters just as much as the outcome.”**

# THE ORCHESTRATOR

A DEEP DIVE INTO THE DAILY FUNCTION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE STANDARDS CREATION PROCESS.

FEATURE

**If you had to choose a metaphor to describe your job - would it be an architect, a referee, a conductor, or a historian?**

**Answer:** "I think conductor - I am interpreting this as an orchestra conductor - would be the role I think best describes my job with AIA. Like any single musician can play a piece of music, our technical experts are able to write standards and practices without the help of AIA. But our best standards are written when the range of our membership is able to participate and collaborate in a constructive and organized environment. My job is simply to create that environment."

**Please walk us through your core responsibilities and how your work supports the technical committee.**

**Answer:** "As the Senior Manager of Standards at AIA, I oversee the publication of our National Aerospace Standards (NAS), a library of over 2000+ documents, ensuring that revision projects are completed and balloted daily. As the Executive Secretary, I plan and hold all virtual task group and biannual, in-person meetings; collaborate with

the committee and drive consensus on decisions to overcome technical obstacles; and develop standard revision strategy. The remainder of my time is spent developing process improvements within the AIA NAS System, looking for ways to streamline our standards development process, while increasing the quality of the standard or volunteer experience."

**What is the number one misconception people have about the job of a standards professional?**

**Answer:** "The misconception is that the day-to-day work would be mundane, monotonous, and boring - that all we are going to do is read documents and correct grammar. Some days, it's managing a logjam with a committee; other times, it's reviewing IT infrastructure upgrades or coordinating food and beverage and a/v quotes for the biannual committee meetings. Every day is something different, and the moment I feel like we have met every goal, a new challenge arrives. That is what I love about being a standards professional and why the misconception that our work is mundane is wrong."



### How do you ensure the administrative rigor never stifles technical innovation?

**Answer:** “I think this is the constant battle we as standards professionals face when developing our standards and documents. Personally, the way I approach this challenge is through both the facilitation of a risk-friendly environment and always being process critical. **If we don’t take risks in challenging the status quo, we aren’t innovating**, and I feel fostering an environment where committee and staff members can provide candid feedback and make tangible changes is extremely important. These risks could be from expanding into a new domain or innovative technology, changing a legacy platform or approval system, or even changing the way a committee meeting is structured, even though it had always been done one way. Being able to take risks, big and small, allows us to be more agile and create efficiencies that diminish the administrative burden without removing the rigor. **Separately, being critical of current processes and systems is imperative in ensuring you have stringent but simple procedures that aren’t a hindrance to innovation.** Many times, we build a new system and once it is working, we shy away from making big changes because why fix something that isn’t broken. But sometimes we need to be critical of the things we build, even when they are our personal successes. **When we create an environment where participants are able to ask themselves how things can be better, and then provide that feedback, we are able to maintain the high level of quality and rigor of a standards development program and promote technical innovation at the same time.**”

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## TRANSPARENCY SIMPLICITY FLEXIBILITY

**WHAT THREE WORDS BEST DESCRIBE THE SKILL SET YOU NEED TO MANAGE A GROUP OF DIVERSE VOLUNTEER EXPERTS?**

**Answer:** **Transparency:** Creating a clear and transparent environment where timelines, metrics, and expectations are available to all. **Simplicity:** Making the process as simple and streamlined as possible for your volunteers will allow them to spend less time on the administrative burden. **Flexibility:** Having flexibility and understanding when things may not go as planned allows the process to keep moving even when obstacles appear.

# THE GLOBAL BLUEPRINT



THE REAL-WORLD IMPACT AND SOCIETAL VALUE OF STANDARDIZED TECHNICAL SYSTEMS.

**What was your "aha!" moment that convinced you to commit to standards development?**

**Answer:** "While I worked at AIHA, ISO released an updated version of the standard to which our laboratories were being audited. **I became deeply interested in the process** by which this new revision was developed and how the language that was drafted was specifically chosen due to flexibility in its interpretation. That experience really was an "aha!" moment in that **I suddenly understood the complexity and nuance that goes into standards writing**, that it is more than just a procedure."

**Can you share a story about a standard that enabled a key innovation?**

**Answer:** "The standard that jumps out most in enabling a key innovation is the new revision of NAS410, released in December 2025. In this revision, a new appendix has been added that would

open a new pathway to NDT qualification, increasing the rate of development in our DT workforce by up to 3 years. Once this appendix was initially drafted, the language was then reviewed by both the custodial subcommittee and committee for the standard, as well as our European colleagues at ASD-STAN. Through all those discussions, numerous revisions and refinements were made until the new appendix allows for the maximum level of flexibility for NDT candidates to progress in their careers without jeopardizing the quality of their training and experience. **NAS410 Revision 6 is a point of pride within my standards career due to the change it creates in the current system."**

**Beyond safety, what is the single most important impact that standards provide?**

**Answer:** "I believe the most important impact of standards on the national and global society is interoperability. The capability to make our world interoperable has streamlined processes and made our daily actions more efficient. For example, if I were to take a trip to Japan, when I get off the plane, I can use my bank card at a local ATM to withdraw cash. An American bank card being accepted at a Japanese ATM is because of ISO/IEC 7810, a document that standardizes the specifications of identification cards, bank cards being among them. What we have come to expect as simple conveniences are the planned result of standardization!"

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# THE HUMAN ELEMENT

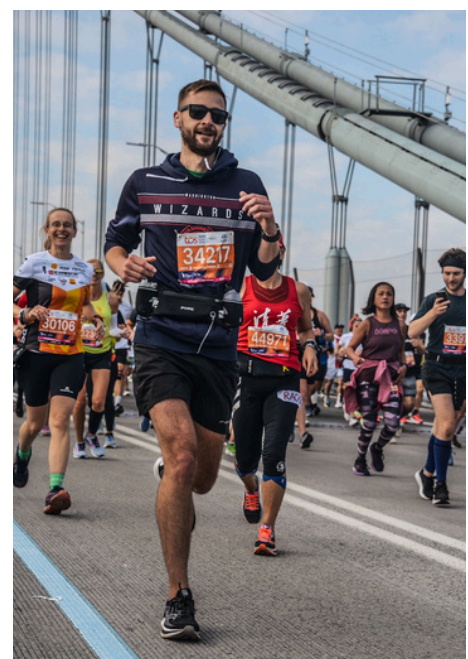
CAREER LESSONS, MENTORSHIP, AND THE PERSONAL LIFE OF THE STANDARDS MANAGER.

**What advice would you give to a young professional considering volunteering as a technical expert?**

**Answer:** “My advice to young professionals volunteering with standards organizations is that there is a reason you are in the room, that your experience and freshness is needed, and that every opportunity to participate with the organization should be taken. Institutional knowledge and relationships are fundamental to a well-run committee, but they should not overshadow the new perspective that young professionals can bring to the standards process. I would encourage new volunteers to speak with those members that have a history of working on the committee, but make sure to blaze your own trail and voice your opinion as often as you have one.”

**What is the single most important lesson you learned in the first five years of your career?**

**Answer:** “If there was one lesson that I learned, it would be to take every opportunity that presents itself to you. I think about the opportunities I passed on, big and small, because I was worried I lacked the skills to perform or felt it wasn’t worth my limited bandwidth. Now several years on, I try to take on every opportunity I can to develop my skill set and stretch myself professionally, and I feel this has led to some of my best growth with my career. So, my lesson would be to bring the new business opportunity to your boss, join the office social committee, give the presentation at the conference, or go on the last-minute business trip.”



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## THE HUMAN ELEMENT (CNT'D)

**Outside of work, what is one hobby you have that might surprise people?**

**Answer:** “My favorite hobby is gardening. The challenge of planting a garden that incorporates a number of variables including color, height, moisture, sunlight, among others to produce one harmonized landscape is something I enjoy taking on every year. With proper attention and care, the plants will grow into the garden that was planned at the beginning of the season.”

**When you finally step away from complex timelines, how do you recharge?**

**Answer:** “When I step away I like to get outdoors and away from the city. Living in D.C. I luckily have access to Rock Creek Park, but really enjoy when I am able to visit some of the national parks and forests that are just a couple hours away in Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland. Being able to get out and hike a few miles really helps me to refocus and recharge.”



## RAPID FIRE Q'S WITH DRAKE

**Last great book?** *There There* by Tommy Orange

**Favorite comfort food?** Stromboli

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

**Morning person or night owl?** Morning Person

**One thing you are surprisingly bad at?**

Basketball...I'm 6'4"...

**Your hidden talent?** Gardening

**Favorite way to stay active?** Running

**Personal theme song?** *Sunny* by Boney M.

**Small daily ritual?** I take 2 minutes each morning to spin in my office chair before starting work (ala *Veep* Season 2, Episode 2).

**Country at the top of your travel bucket list?**

Chile

Presented by:

# ACCURIS

## The Global Standard for Engineering Intelligence

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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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