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In my work, I often ask companies about the standard(s) they follow. Most will cite IEEE, ASTM, EASA, IEC, UL, CSA, etc. Generally, the language and standard(s) are correct and the companies appear to be complying. Sometimes, however, they aren't— *either accidentally or, in enough cases to be annoying, deliberately*
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What is the impact when a standard isn't followed? For the buyer, the price of products/services can be lower than those from companies that perform to actual standards. Conversely, not following standards can result in a very costly product or service—*something that may put people in danger, damage equipment, lead to lost production, expose the buyer's organization to litigation and/or the denial of insurance coverage*
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How do you avoid these problems? Remember this: any company that truly follows standards or certification processes will be proud of the fact. Compliance with standards is not just something to protect you, the buyer; it's also a sales and marketing tool for the vendor. If you run into a supplier who objects to showing you its applicable standard(s) or certification(s)—*or acts insulted because you're asking*
—your next step should be to dig deeper. A legitimate company would be able to show either a referenced standard or certificate on the spot (or at least obtain it for you in short order). Company representatives also should be familiar with the parts of the standard or certification that involve their product or service.

Industry standards and certifications reflect agreed-to Best Practices. The most effective way to protect yourself and your organization is to become familiar with any standards and certifications that specifically affect you. Many standard-writing and certifying bodies maintain libraries and definitions that are available to you; some will also have standards collections that can be used. Understanding an appropriate standard and its intent will help you quickly identify questionable sales and marketing approaches. **MT**

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