WHAT IS THE ME2B ALLIANCE: A Safety Standard for the Internet

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#SDO #SSO #SafetyStandard #RespectfulTechSpec #IndependentTesting

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The Me2B Alliance is a 501c3 nonprofit creating a safe and just digital world through standards development and independent technology testing. We are a new type of Standards Developing Organization (SDO) - involving everyday people in creating the standard for safe and respectful technology. We also perform independent testing and audits of connected technology, like websites and mobile apps.

What are standards and who develops them?

Standards are norms or requirements for various industries and their products. They are usually created by Standards Developing Organizations (SDOs), also known as Standards Setting Organizations (SSOs). From Wikipedia:

> [a Standards Developing Organization] is an organization whose primary function is…producing technical standards to address the needs of a group of affected adopters…Most standards are voluntary…without being mandated in law. Some standards become mandatory when they are adopted by regulators as legal requirements in particular domains, often for the purpose of safety or for consumer protection from deceitful practices."

Industry standards grow markets and consumer choices by establishing interoperability, safety or performance norms for an existing or emerging industry. Standards take an average of three years to be developed and approved[1], and typically another one to three years before the standard appears in commercial products.

What kind of standard is the Me2B Alliance developing?

The Me2B Alliance is creating a safety standard for the internet. The world is waking up to online harms related to unfettered data acquisition and the deliberate manipulation of end users in the digital world. We need a safety standard for internet connected products and services to ensure that they treat us with respect.

Our Respectful Tech Specification is designed to objectively measure the ethical behavior of connected technology. Version 1.0 (in development) covers websites and mobile apps and focuses on what we consider to be the bare minimum of respectful behavior. In its fullest realization, the specification will include tests for every possible digital harm that's listed in our Digital Harms Dictionary, for every kind of connected technology.

What are some other safety standards?

Safety standards are often "invisible" to consumers. For example, ASTM International has over 12,000 standards ranging from from cribs, toys, and trampolines, to aircraft manufacturing. Other safety standards are better known such as Underwriters Labs (UL), which measures the safety of electrical products, visible through the sticker or tag on household appliances like toasters. The US government's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards, which keep people safe in their workplaces, are also widely recognized.

How is the Me2B Alliance different from other SDOs?

There is increasing global attention on the social and ethical impacts of technology as an integral aspect of standards development.[2] Nevertheless, SDO membership has traditionally been limited to industry representatives and experts in their fields – either independent participants or "delegates" from relevant companies. Everyday people – the "experiential experts" who use the technology regularly - are rarely involved.

The Me2B Alliance approach is different – we encourage and invite everyday people to have a voice in the standards development process. We're structured as an SDO, but we believe it is essential to bring everyday people actively into the process of creating an ethical and respectful standard for measuring technology. Interested people can become members and participate in the Respectful Technology Specifications Working Group or signing up for Me2B Research Panels and sharing opinions on critical issues through surveys and interviews that help us consistently validate our specifications.

Why does the Me2B Alliance perform independent testing?

Currently, internet technology is largely ungoverned (especially in the US), and presents many risks and potential harms to users. Safety risks are often unknowable at the introduction of new technology, but every new technology eventually gives rise to corresponding "safety standards" to ensure human safety - for instance, automobiles, televisions, telephony. The internet is overdue for a safety standard.

Our goal is to empower people—and businesses— with information about how safe and respectful a product or service is, so that people can make more informed choices about the technology they use, and businesses can know how to build respectful and safe products.

What kind of independent testing does the Me2B Alliance perform?

The Me2B Alliance performs independent testing of digital products and services, measuring risks and potential harms to people. Our current independent testing services include:

1. Analysis of public products and services, such as the work described in our Spotlight Report on data sharing in K-12 education "utility" apps.
2. Auditing services for developers of mobile apps and websites, based on the Me2B Respectful Tech Specification. Our auditing services help businesses know how to make their websites and mobile apps more respectful. Please contact us if you're interested in having your site or app audited.
3. In the future, as the specification matures, we will introduce Me2B Certification, for websites and apps that pass our rigorous testing.

Why trust us?

The Me2B Alliance is proud to have some of the best privacy, legal, technology, business and digital interaction experts in the industry leading our efforts. Restoring respect and safety in digital interactions is our unwavering passion, and our standard reflects an uncompromisingly high bar—one which most products do not currently meet. Our standard is developed by the expert volunteers involved in the working group, and we conduct ongoing validation testing with everyday "Me-s" on key parts of the standard.

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[1] https://www.iso.org/developing-standards.html
[2] The IEEE Society on Social Implications of Technology, for example. https://technologyandsociety.org/

Me2B ALLIANCE   Setting the standard for respectful technology.