

FOREWORD

When John first asked me to write an introductory piece for his latest book, I was somewhat mystified as to why he chose me. A conversation with John provided some of the rationale, and he left it to me to fill in the *rest* of the story. So, if you are willing to endure a little bit of background, I will provide the part of the story that John wouldn't provide.

I am the Director of Corporate Standards at Sun Microsystems, and manage Sun's standards portfolio. Before that, I was the Director of Standards at Netscape, which was when I met John. Before Sun, there was Digital Equipment Corporation, also standards. I've written several books on standards, and tend to observe (and occasionally help) the technical and business trends that drive standardization as a discipline. I tend to see standardization as a management tool, not as a technical discipline and this is part of the rationale that John provided.

The book that you have before you focuses on a particular standardized way of doing something, hence, it is a book about a standard. The most important thing to keep in mind about a standard is the rationale for its creation. Standards are created not for technical reasons, not for business reasons, but for a deeper and much more compelling reason. Standards are created and used to allow people to communicate in a meaningful way. Every standard, if it is a true standard, has as its entire (and only) goal set the increasing of relevant communication between people.

This primary goal cannot be met however, unless the standard is documented. I have been involved in too many standardization efforts when it became apparent that *everybody knows* was the dominant emotion of those providing documentation. *They* of the ever present *they say* and *they know* are the bane of good standards. If *they know*, why are you doing a standard?

A *good standard* survives because people know how to use it. People know how to use a standard when it is so transparent, so obvious, and so easy that it become invisible. And a standard becomes invisible only when the documentation describing how to deploy it is clear, unambiguous, and correct. These three elements must be present for a standard to be useful, allowing communication and interaction between two separate and distinct entities to occur without obvious effort. As you read this book, look for the evidence of these three characteristics and notice how they are seamlessly woven into John's text. Clarity and unambiguity without *correctness* provide a technical nightmare. Correctness and clarity with ambiguity create *maybe bits*, and correctness and unambiguity without clarity provide a *muddle through* scenario.

And this is *the rest of the story* that John couldn't (or wouldn't) bring himself to state. This book provides a clear, concise, unambiguous, and technically valid presentation of Samba to make it useful to a user to someone who wants to use the standard to increase communication and the capability for communication between two or more entities whether person-machine, machine-machine, or person-person. The intent of this book is not to convince anyone of

any agenda political, technical, or social. The intent is to provide documentation for users who need to know about Samba, how to use it, and how to get on with their primary responsibilities. While there is pride on John's part because of the tremendous success of the Samba documentation, he writes for the person who needs a tool to accomplish a particular job, and who has selected Samba to be that tool.

The book is a monument to John's perseverance and dedication to Samba and in my opinion to the goal of standardization. By writing this book, John has provided the users of Samba those that want to deploy it to make things better a clear, easy, and ultimately valuable resource. Additionally, he has increased the understanding and utility of a highly useful standard, and for this, as much as for the documentation, he is owed a debt of gratitude by those of us who rely on standards to make our lives more manageable.

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