



## Can you give me an example of a similar organization that I might recognize?

Are industry organizations such as the InterWork Alliance really that important in helping new technologies achieve web-scale adoption? It's useful to step outside the world of tokens for a moment and use a technology that we are all familiar with, Wi-Fi – a technology so ubiquitous today that it quietly connects virtually anything that generates or uses data, from laptops, smart phones, and tablets through to bathroom scales and refrigerators... over 30 billion devices! – to understand the true criticality of industry organizations in bringing acceptance to emerging markets.

Let's start by looking at a poll conducted in 2016 that asked 1,500 U.S. adult smartphone users what they would be willing to give up for a month rather than lose Wi-Fi access. The answers covered pretty much the entire range of life's indulgences and pleasures, including wine, fast food, coffee, sex, friends, a partner, and showers. Now that is market acceptance! Consumers today have complete confidence that any product sporting the Wi-Fi logo will just work. But this wasn't always the case.

When the IEEE 802.11 Working Group issued its first specification in 1997 it was not at all a fait accompli that this would become the dominant wireless access technology. Early 802.11 products suffered from interoperability problems in large part because the IEEE simply had no mandate to ensure interoperability or compliance with its standards.

To bring order to this market, a group of wireless equipment vendors formed what is now known as the Wi-Fi Alliance to derive an industry perspective from the IEEE standards, develop additional specifications as necessary, and guarantee through certification programs that the products of member organizations would interoperate. Wi-Fi has been successful because – thanks to the efforts of Wi-Fi Alliance members – it fulfills a promise to enable anyone, anytime, anyplace to construct a cost-effective solution to solve real consumer problems. Something the IEEE spec on its own could never achieve.

Their formula was simple. First, use an understanding of what customers really want and derive an industry perspective from the work of the technical innovators. Then, with this industry perspective in mind, develop additional specifications as necessary to fill any gaps. Second, guarantee through certification programs that the products of member organizations would interoperate. It's this combination of market-driven specifications and certification testing that ultimately drove the web-scale adoption of Wi-Fi, making it a household word and something that people value more than their morning cup of joe.

Of course, the Wi-Fi Alliance was not the only industry organization to make a market out of technical innovation. Wireless broadband, mobile broadband, Bluetooth are other technologies that we routinely use today that only became household staples through the efforts of industry organizations. Technology stewardship needs to be matched with market stewardship in order to bring the market for a new technology to life. As the newest member of this industry organization club, the InterWork Alliance's responsibility is to bring this form of market acceptance to the world of tokenized assets and applications.