

COVESA Community Guidelines

Introduction

Every organization has a set of core beliefs upon which it operates and makes decisions. This document describes these core beliefs through definitions and illustrations of right and wrong ways of working within the COVESA collaborative community. This document is intended to evolve with additional illustrations added and will be revisited regularly to ensure the core beliefs remain aligned with how COVESA works.

The following sections describe three pillars of how COVESA operates and then set out to illustrate a set of non-negotiable principles that COVESA participants should be aware of and adhere to.

How COVESA Operates

A [separate paper](#) entitled “Solving Challenges Through Member-Driven, Business-Focused, Open Collaboration” was published by COVESA and details three primary pillars upon which COVESA operates. This paper does not need to recite the details, but understanding these pillars is a necessary foundation for our guidelines.

COVESA’s three pillars are:

- **Member-Driven** – COVESA members participate in leading, steering, and developing COVESA outputs (e.g., Vehicle Signal Specification).
- **Collaboration on Business and Technical Topics** – COVESA’s technical activities are based on business challenges faced by the members and by the industry at large.
- **Open Contribution Models** – COVESA’s output is developed by members in an open and collaborative context, and outputs are openly licensed.

These pillars serve as guidelines for individuals and companies engaging in COVESA activities.

Guidelines and Illustrations

The following list of guidelines is illustrated in the examples below.

1. **Respect the Community Approach** – Seek first to understand.
2. **Respect Contributors and their Contributions** – Diversity of thought can lead to better results.
3. **Recognize When and When Not to Market a Company or Product** – Marketing is for Showcase events only.
4. **Respect the COVESA Brand and Name** – It’s hard-earned and not for individual company gain.
5. **Not all Automotive Challenges are Solved by Open-Source Solutions** – Complexity may require proprietary approaches.
6. **Do What is Best for COVESA and its Members** – Take off your company “hat” and cooperate.
7. **Technology Works Best in a Business Context** – The key question to ask is: What problem is being solved?
8. **COVESA Balances Organic Contribution with Thoughtful Leadership** – Planning and prioritization helps.

[Illustration 1: Respect the Community Approach](#)

Setting: John attends a COVESA group with the intent of contributing.

Wrong Way: Without understanding the background, John immediately puts forth his organization's solution for the problem being discussed by the group. John is welcome in any COVESA group or project, but his first step should not be to push his company's solutions. He's assuming he knows what has been previously discussed and agreed upon by the group and that his company's solution is the perfect solution, but only if everyone buys it first.

Right Way: John's first step is to listen and understand what the group has already discussed, and any previous decisions taken before he puts forth his own ideas. John should respect that COVESA is a community of experts jointly building open and industry-driven approaches. While his company may have a great solution, the best contributions come in the spirit of doing what's best for COVESA and not just what is best for his company. John should realize that a COVESA group is not a place to market his company's products or services (see Showcase Illustration 3 below). The sooner John realizes that he's collaborating with technical peers and not marketing targets, the better John will find a way to contribute well to the group.

[Illustration 2: Respect Contributors and Their Contributions](#)

Setting: John regularly attends COVESA project meetings but struggles to agree with the input from other contributing members.

Wrong Way: John is unwilling to accept any ideas not originated by his own company - let alone a competitor, so he disagrees with any viewpoint that is not his or his company's. In some cases, John simply dislikes another active participant in the project and disrupts their suggestions whenever voiced.

Right Way: The goal is to develop a community-driven consensus through respectful dialog and decision-taking. While we all have bad days, John should recognize the value of diverse opinions, especially in situations where no clear solutions exist. Different perspectives may lead to a better approach. John should respect both the individuals contributing and their ideas, recognizing that he does not have all the answers, and that valuable input may come from others, including those outside his organization and who may be competitors.

[Illustration 3: Recognize When and When Not to Market a Company or Product](#)

Setting: John's primary role in his company is product marketing, and he wants to participate actively in COVESA member meetings and technical discussions.

Wrong Way: COVESA accepted John's proposal to speak on-stage at a COVESA All Member Meeting (AMM) about a technical topic currently under discussion in COVESA. He's also been invited to give input to a follow-up workshop tackling the same general technical topic. Because of his company role, John sees his involvement through the primary lens of making marketing contacts, describing his product, and winning business. John spends 20 of his 25 minutes on stage introducing his company and product line, leaving five minutes for the COVESA technical topic. He later continues to push his product in the context of the workshop.

Right Way: John is aware that COVESA welcomes participation by marketing representatives from member companies. He's also aware that COVESA has a "no marketing" policy during technical discussions and during AMM presentations, except during the Showcase events, and sticks to the technology topic based on his company's expertise on that topic. He steers away from product marketing "on stage" and in technical discussions, knowing that Showcases are designed to allow for buyers and sellers to meet, discuss, and perhaps set up business-related meetings afterward. John respects that while COVESA is a rich field for business networking, technical discussions need to stay focused on the topic and not on products.

[Illustration 4: Respect the COVESA Brand and Name](#)

Setting: John has an opportunity to receive significant government funding for his company if he can use the COVESA name as part of his grant application.

Wrong Way: John asks COVESA's Executive Director for permission to include COVESA in a grant proposal and obtain a letter of support to secure funding for his company. In return, he promises that if he gets the funding, he will help COVESA, including recruiting new members and increasing the market visibility of COVESA.

Right Way: John recognizes that the COVESA name and brand have been established through significant member effort and funding over a long period. It is not an asset to be used for his company's sole benefit. John acknowledges that his company is the primary beneficiary of the grant if approved, and that promises made to support COVESA are empty if the funding is not received. John only engages in COVESA unless there is a clear and measurable value to COVESA members for the funding, and not just for his company.

[Illustration 5: Not All Automotive Challenges are Solved by Open-Source Solutions](#)

Setting: John is a strong believer in open-source software solutions and drives for an open-source solution to every known problem discussed in COVESA.

Wrong Way: In the context of discussing a known technical problem, John adamantly drives for a fully open-source solution to the technical problem. John ignores the complexity of the problem, including potential regulations or geopolitics that OEMs and their suppliers must consider when building a product.

Right Way: John understands that while open-source software is a great starting point for many products adopted by OEMs and their suppliers, some problems cannot be solved completely by open solutions. John first seeks to understand the complexity faced by OEMs in resolving the problem and then works collaboratively with OEMs and others to identify and develop useful components that may solve a portion of the complex problem. He doesn't assume that a regulated or geographically sensitive portion of that problem must be solved by an open-source solution.

Illustration 6: Do What is Best for COVESA and its Members

Setting: John's company is by far the industry leader in an area under development in COVESA, and he uses that position to sway COVESA from advancing an industry-driven approach.

Wrong Way: John's company joins COVESA at the highest membership tier, which provides his company with a platform to influence Board decisions and organizational strategies. John leverages his company's seat to pressure other Board members who supply products or services to his company to vote against directives that may not favor his company's industry-leading position. John also disrupts strategic discussions when they appear to lead to actions that do not align with his company's interests.

Right Way: John recognizes that serving on the Board of COVESA is both a privilege and a responsibility to act in the best interests of COVESA members. He can "take off" his company hat and "put on" a COVESA hat during Board decisions and strategic discussions. He sees a successful and productive COVESA as benefiting his organization, even though his company currently enjoys an industry-leading position.

Illustration 7: Technology Works Best in a Business Context

Setting: John represents a start-up business with an innovative technical solution looking for a business purpose. He convinces a couple of COVESA members to join him in proposing a project to COVESA.

Wrong Way: John interprets COVESA's member-driven core belief to impose his ideas for a new group or project on the community, expecting them to sign up and support the activity. While John's description of his innovative approach sounds appealing to engineers looking for fun projects to work on, John has no answer when pressed for its business value or the problem it solves.

Right Way: John recognizes that COVESA works hard to ensure that the technology discussed and produced by members fits into a well-understood business context and solves a relevant business problem facing at least a portion of the COVESA membership. He positions any proposed group or project in the context of that business problem to be solved and communicates the business context of the technical solution he is proposing to other members.

Illustration 8: COVESA Balances Organic Contribution with Thoughtful Leadership

Setting: John leads a project in COVESA, but both progress and participation are lower than he expected.

Wrong Way: John enjoys leading an organic, technical development activity in COVESA. He wears the "Free" t-shirts and generously welcomes contributions from his favorite 2-3 developers. However, the project makes slow progress. When asked by the Community Director for project milestones and a delivery cadence, he replies, "We have to do things organically, and I can't commit to a plan."

Right Way: John recognizes that while moving at the pace of organic contributions is how open-source projects often work, he also sees the value in exerting leadership by prioritizing tasks and planning release cadences and content may result in his project being more valuable to adopting parties. John knows that a successful project, as measured by adoption and a growing contributor base, requires thoughtful leadership to set and meet priorities and release milestones. John works with the Community Manager to set milestones and a release cadence and leads the project toward those goals. Because his project grows and is broadly adopted, he gets to print his own "Free" T-shirts.



Conclusion

In conclusion, the core beliefs outlined in this document are foundational to how COVESA operates and the collaborative community it fosters. By adhering to the three pillars—member-driven leadership, collaboration on business and technical topics, and open contribution models—COVESA ensures its activities are aligned with the goals of its members. As this document evolves, it will continue to reflect COVESA’s commitment to fostering an environment of innovation, respect, and shared progress. All participants are encouraged to embrace these guidelines and contribute to the ongoing success of COVESA.