DRAFT

July 15, 2008

Discussion on Dominance, 802 EC Ad Hoc Meeting

Two kinds of dominant activity were identified:

1. When a group (WG, TG, etc.) is comprised by more than 50% of one company, type, classification etc., and it is obvious. Need to supervise and be aware and know under what conditions the 50% or more are from one company. The group leadership needs to keep an eye on such a situation and see if problems evolve.
2. TGs that don’t have a formal voting membership criteria, e.g., if you are in the room and feel competent to vote, it’s okay. Makes it easy to sometimes pack the room or identify a concern that packing the room is happening.

The question then becomes—what tools exist that can be used to deal with these concerns.

The following topics were identified as discussion points:

1. Is there a clear definition for dominance and criteria for determination?
2. What meetings behaviors are considered to be poor?
3. What meeting behaviors can be corrected at each level?
4. Where do p&ps need to change to address these issues?

A task group represents a subset of a working group and can sometimes get off track. Tools for checking that what the task group is doing must be acceptable to the working group. A working group doesn’t always need to determine whether dominance is occurring, but should monitor whether the task group is doing what the working group requested.

The group focused on discussing the definition of dominance and identifying characteristics and behaviors.

The IEEE-SA Bylaws define dominance as:

Dominance is normally defined as the exercise of authority, leadership, or influence by reason of superior leverage, strength, or representation to the exclusion of fair and equitable consideration of other viewpoints. Dominance can also be defined as the exercise of authority, leadership, or influence by reason of sufficient leverage, strength, or representation to hinder the progress of the standards development activity. Such dominance is contrary to open and fair participation by all interested parties and is unacceptable.

See Clause 5.2.1.3 of the IEEE-SA Bylaws for additional information.

Clause 1.2 of the ANSI Essential Requirements states:

1.2 Lack of dominance

The standards development process shall not be dominated by any single interest category, individual or

organization. Dominance means a position or exercise of dominant authority, leadership, or influence by reason of superior leverage, strength, or representation to the exclusion of fair and equitable consideration of other viewpoints.

Dominance may not always be easy to determine. Other characteristics of dominance, such as negative dominance (block voting) and showing up just in time to vote while not having engaged in the discussion are also attempts to influence voting decisions.

Tools to mitigate possible dominance and undue influence in a WG/TG are (some items only apply to a TG or WGSG):

* Chairs can indicate they will lock the door when a meeting begins;  
  There were comments that this may be unacceptable as it conflicts with the principle of openness.
* Take additional vote counts to test for dominance
  + A count with one vote per entity
  + In a TG or WGSG, take a count of WG voters
* Formally minute the persons who walk in the room, especially those after the debate on the topic begins
* Chair can voice concerns about what they suspect might be happening, put it in record (abrupt arrival of people)
* Take a TG decision and push it up to the WG
* Following trends beginning with study groups
* Close voting once the discussion has begun; contained to those present at onset of discussion
* Take roll call votes and review the record over time to determine if there is a pattern of dominance. This is burdensome but may sometimes be necessary
* Some TGs only have WG members vote
* A WG could approve the creation of TG rules – e.g. tracking voting membership in a task group – this is a burdensome alternative
* Reviewing the rules; it has been suggested but not verified that the rules in some groups help efforts at dominance in task groups; WG rules should be reviewed to check for this.

A chair should be able to pick the right tool. Rules should establish binding decision. The nature of a topic might create a need for different solutions.

A meeting chair has a tremendous amount of latitude. A chair can take additional vote counts; they just need to be clear that when the binding decision is being made, that it conforms to a well-defined rule. Robert’s Rules leaves a lot of latitude to the chair.

A roll call was discussed as part of the data set to address TG/WG concerns. A chair may determine that entity voting is the best way to deal with possible block voting. The chair would need to bring the documented concerns and entity voting recommendation to the Executive Committee for approval. The tool kit items were discussed as an escalating set of applications; i.e., an example of this is that if dominance is suspected, that documented evidence be presented to individuals, with the intent of raising the issue to the EC, usually resulting in behavior modification.

Summary

The tool kids ideas will be put into a guideline or educational presentation for the November Plenary (and possibly September wireless interim).

Harmonization of rules and practices between WGs was discussed, to identify and compare best practices and commonalities, for development of a matrix.

Next steps

Short term:

Pat Thaler will give a presentation perspective on dominance tools to 802.11 on Friday at September wireless interim meeting

Bruce Kramer will socialize the issues and tool kit with 802.11

Long term:

Need to develop a chair’s guideline by next plenary and a tutorial.

It was suggested that buy-in from the WGs be sought in the development of a guideline. Steve Mills indicated that best practice is to do appropriate due diligence up front (by utilizing as many of the tools as necessary), rather than dealing with the consequences of a dominance issue that has gotten out of control in later stages of the process.

All allegations of dominance need to be investigated. Full reports on any suggested issues need to be brought to the EC, and summaries provided to the WGs.