Straight Talk: JSP vs. ASP

Relatively young, **JavaServer Pages (JSP)** is becoming a strong competitor to the established **Active Server Pages (ASP)**. Most organizations have taken on ASP to some level, but as the web becomes more pervasive many have reviewed their approaches.

JSP is a specification managed by **Sun Microsystems**, and can be implemented by any vendor. Because of this open specification, JSP can be written once and run on many web servers, avoiding dependence on a single vendor.

When ASP was created, no one gave a second thought to cramming both logic and presentation code into a page. However, as web applications have grown into enterprise, mission critical systems, *n*-tier approaches become more imperative. Fortunately, ASP has grown to use ActiveX components.

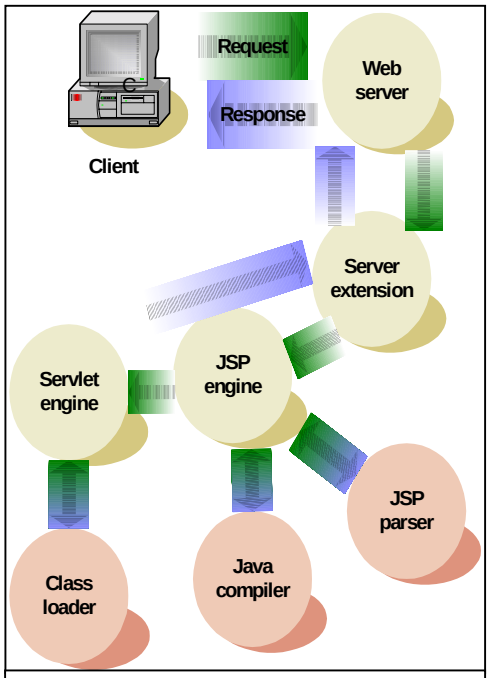
JSP's component solutions, **JavaBeans** and **Enterprise JavaBeans (EJB)**, provide very graceful implementations. First, JavaBeans are pure Java, so they have the same portability as any other members of the Java family. Second, JavaBeans can be accessed through custom HTML and XML tags, which can be easily and cleanly utilized by a web designer.

Speaking of XML, JSP integrates perfectly with XML. Of course, ASP can be used with XML, but JSP's specification explicitly states JSP supports generating XML and ensures that generated dynamic content doesn't violate any XML recommendations.

Now, let's take a look under the hoods of ASP and JSP. ASP is an interpreted scripting language. In other words, the page is processed from its raw state each and every time it's accessed. Alternatively, JSP is first compiled into a Java servlet and then run in the Java Virtual Machine (JVM). This may seem like quite a bit of overhead, but the compiled servlet is saved after it's first access making subsequent accesses quite fast.

From a functionality standpoint, JSP is the winner by far. ASP's functionality is greatly limited by VBScript's capabilities, whereas JSP has all the functionality in **Java 2 Platform, Enterprise Edition (J2EE)**.

So, what exactly are the disadvantages of JSP? JSP has a larger learning curve than ASP, being a Java language and adhering to object oriented methodologies. Also, because JSP is a newer solution, the development environment is much less than ideal. There are not really any great Integrated Development Environments (IDE's) and debugging is painful at best.



JSP Architecture *– shows the path of a request and response. Red objects only run the first time the page is accessed.*

Although JSP is a new technology and many of the growing pains with a new technology are still being worked through, it's a very portable and robust solution. In contrast, ASP is a great option for smaller projects with less experienced developers.

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