

Classic ASP Myths Debunked!

The Renaissance of Classic ASP

*Why New Users are Choosing Classic ASP, and
Why Old Programmers are Coming Back*

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Classic ASP Myths Debunked

Classic ASP, it's no secret, has been overshadowed the last several years. However this has been more about politics and perception than functionality and real-world truths. In fact it has become quite fashionable for professional programmers to shun Classic ASP, saying that it is dying out, unsupported, costly, and hard to work with.

But today, Classic ASP is entering a renaissance. Beginner and veteran programmers alike are returning to this simple-but-powerful programming platform to produce robust web applications.

We've identified at least five myths about Classic ASP, which we'll debunk in this book:

Myth #1: Classic ASP is dying.

Myth #2: It costs more to run Classic ASP.

Myth #3: It is hard to get tutorials or help using Classic ASP.

Myth #4: Microsoft no longer supports Classic ASP.

Myth #5: Google and other search engines rank ASP websites lower

We'll go into greater detail about these myths in the next section. But first, here's what you should know about Classic ASP.

Classic ASP is beautiful in its simplicity. It generally uses VBScript, one of the most popular programming languages that is relatively easy for new programmers to modify and use. In fact, many of our customers over the years have told us that they learned how to program simply by modifying our open source code. (We even maintain an online knowledgebase that provides pointers; there are also dozens of other resources on the Internet about how to use VBScript.)

Classic ASP is also flexible. It's true that in the past, it required a Windows server to run, but today more hosting companies are switching to cloud servers that can run all programming languages including Classic ASP, PHP, and others. In fact website owners can run both .asp and .php pages within the same website and domain name.

It is also flexible in the fact that you can use AJAX, JQuery, XML, and other Web 2.0 technologies inside your ASP pages.

Classic ASP is supported by programmers, websites, and resources around the world – including DMXReady. It is undergoing a rebirth with old programmers coming back and new ones learning the old ways.

Most importantly, it works. Whatever you can do in PHP and other languages, you can do in Classic ASP.

Bottom line: Classic ASP is regaining popularity. If you are a new web designer or programmer, take some time to really compare. We think you'll be surprised by what you find.

A Note About This Book

We're not here to convert the PHP programming faithfuls into Classic ASP lovers (though if it happens, so be it...) We're not here to knock PHP, or say that it is a "lesser" web solution. Really, it does come down to personal preference in many cases.

What we are here to do is show that there is still a place for Classic ASP, either for those website owners who currently use Classic ASP, or for those who are looking at different programming options. You might find that PHP or some other language will actually work best for you. That's fine.

But there are many of you reading who will find they prefer Classic ASP, and many instances why it is the best web scripting solution because of its ease of use, power, flexibility, and other benefits.

In the next section, we'll bust that myth, along with many others.

One final note: Classic ASP is not a language strictly speaking, but a scripting engine. VBScript is the main programming language used in Classic ASP. For the sake of simplicity, we'll refer to Classic ASP as an umbrella term for this versatility and functionality.



Myth #1: Classic ASP is dying

Not true. As mentioned above, in recent years professional programmers have moved away from Classic ASP and VBScript into other languages like PHP. However, that is not quite the same thing as “dying.”

Classic ASP is still supported on all Windows servers (and cloud servers, see below) – and will be for years and decades to come. There are too many websites, including big corporate websites and government agencies, that have built websites with Classic ASP for it to be just dumped overnight.

Professional programmers may have their own personal views on Classic ASP, but those views do not necessarily reflect the reality in the world today.

Classic ASP is here to stay.

From a development philosophy perspective, I still hold this resolute belief: The User Doesn't Care... What are web applications really? Nothing more than a framework for putting data in and getting data out.

The only people who care about what language is used are developers (because they have a skill and they want a job), and management (because they read in some magazine that language XXX is the thing to use and all the industry is going to it or already on it).

Retro Web Dev

<http://retrowebdev.blogspot.com/2009/03/inevitable-move-to-net.html>

Myth #2: It costs more to run Classic ASP

Now this myth did have some merit, though for the average website owner it doesn't any longer.

Many programmers like to tout Linux as the next thing, largely because it is "free." That is to say, unlike Windows Vista, Windows 7, Windows Server, etc., you do not need to pay a licensing fee to use it.

Which is fine for professional programmers who know their way around bare-bones code. But for those of us who are used to Windows, moving to Linux can be a daunting task.

Really, most of us do not have to worry one way or another anyway – that's all up to the hosting company to worry about. Windows packages used to cost more than Linux packages, but these days the better hosting companies offer Linux and Windows server plans at the same price (like GoDaddy, for example: <http://www.godaddy.com/Hosting/Legacy.aspx?ci=9009&isc=hos3gca02a>).

Cloud servers, which can host both Windows-based technology like Classic ASP and Linux-based like PHP, are becoming more popular rendering the whole point moot anyway.

If you are with a major corporation looking to run its own servers, cost may be an issue. But even in that instance, when you look at the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO), there is a good case to be made that Linux might be more expensive to implement in the long run.

For the typical small business web owner though, there no longer any difference in cost.



Myth #3: It is hard to get tutorials or help using Classic ASP

Entirely untrue. In fact there are many places on the web to get help. But rather than just tell you that, here are a few:

Popular Resources

<http://www.codango.com/asp/>
<http://www.alistapart.com/articles/kickasp/>
<http://www.asptutorial.info/>
<http://www.stardeveloper.com/articles/display.html?article=2000041601&page=1>
<http://www.tutorialized.com/tutorial/ASP-Tutorial-for-Beginners/2150>
<http://www.w3schools.com/asp/default.ASP>
<http://www.xposition.co.uk/ASP-tutorial/>
<http://www.tizag.com/aspTutorial/>
<http://www.codedcode.com/asp/>
<http://www.lookpdf.com/7151-asp-tutorial-for-beginners-pdf.html>
<http://www.aspfaqs.com/aspfaqs/>
<http://www.bigwebmaster.com/ASP/>
<http://www.aspmessagelboard.com/> (Message Board/Community)
<http://www.herongyang.com/VBScript/>
<http://bytes.com/serversidescripting/asp/tutorials/aspbasics/index.html>
<http://www.devaguru.com/technologies/asp/home.asp>
<http://www.elated.com/articles/cat/asp/>

Microsoft's Own Resource Section:

<http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/aa286483.aspx>

DMXReady Resources

http://dmxready.helpserve.com/index.php?_m=knowledgebase&_a=view
<http://blog.dmxready.com/>
<http://www.dmxready.com/?page=bulletin-archive>
<http://www.dmxready.com/?page=support&product=cms-lite&display=customization-guide>
<http://www.dmxready.com/?page=support&product=cms-lite&display=skinning>

Once you get through that lot, you can also Google “ASP tutorials” or “ASP tips.”

Myth #4: Microsoft no longer supports Classic ASP

Like Myth #2, this myth is based on a kernel of truth – but that kernel does not represent the whole truth.

According to Wikipedia, Microsoft released its latest version, ASP 3.0, in November 2000 and has no plans to release any other versions. However not planning further development is different than “dropping” Classic ASP. Microsoft continues to include full functionality for Classic ASP on every new version of its Internet Information Services (IIS) server software. This is also true of its main scripting language, VBScript.

Further, Microsoft hosts a whole resource section for Classic ASP at:
<http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/aa286483.aspx>

Besides the official Microsoft support resources and the third-party resources listed under Myth #3, there is also a Classic ASP forum hosted by Microsoft IIS engineers:
<http://forums.iis.net/1032.aspx>

As mentioned above, too many websites use Classic ASP. It is too entrenched for Microsoft to just “drop” it.



Myth #5: Google and other search engines can't crawl web pages ending in .asp

Again, totally untrue. Google itself says that it can crawl any type of web page as long as it is visible in a web browser. It also tells you exactly how to test your pages – if it passes the test, Google will crawl it:

<http://sites.google.com/site/webmasterhelpforum/en/faq--crawling--indexing---ranking#non-html>

You can also use the “Fetch as Googlebot” tool in your Google Webmaster Tools to see exactly what the Googlebot will see.

Related to this myth is that using Classic ASP will affect your page rank. Again, false – as long as your code is clean and your website is shown up in a browser (see those tests above), Googlebots don't care how the page was generated. In fact, they might not even know that it is an .asp page since the ASP is simply generating HTML code for website visitors to view.

Matt Cutts, an official Google blogger, also confirms that Google will effortlessly crawl .asp pages:

<http://www.matcutts.com/blog/dont-end-your-urls-with-exe/>

Also related is the fear that Google can't crawl dynamic URLs, those long addresses that use symbols like “?” and “=” and “&” to specify different parameters. However this myth was also busted by Google itself:

<http://googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com/2008/09/dynamic-urls-vs-static-urls.html>

That being said, there are some reasons why you might want to have “friendly URLs” – namely, so that your website visitors can better identify and remember your web page.

For example, www.yourdomain.com/page=about_us looks a lot better than www.yourdomain.com/page.asp?id=123 or even www.yourdomain.com/aboutus.html

One way you can create friendly URLs is by using the web.config file on your Windows server. We won't go into the details here, but it is not difficult to do – just do a Google search for

“web.config file” and you should find some resources on how to use this.

If you are using DMXReady v2 applications, you can create friendly URLs even faster and easier within the settings of each page. All you have to do is enter your unique URL in the space provided, and the application will automatically convert the page name.

What really sets DMXReady apart is that it doesn't use file extensions (.asp, .html, .htm, .php, etc.) at all. This makes it even easier for your website visitors to remember your web pages.

Bottom line: no matter what approach you take to displaying your page URLs, Googlebots will have no problem crawling your pages – at least not due to your URL structure.

Conclusion

There are many myths surrounding Classic ASP – and many sources for those myths. But today designers and developers are seeing through the myths and realizing that Classic ASP really does have a lot to offer.

Classic ASP may not be everybody’s cup of tea. But then most of us using Classic ASP aren’t necessarily hardcore programmers. We’re web designers, website owners, or even just someone in the office in charge of managing the company website.

For those people, Classic ASP gets the job done – and often it gets it done more efficiently simply because it doesn’t involved advanced programming techniques.

DMXReady, an ASP software provider, can help make it even easier. Since 2003, we have provided easy-to-use web applications to people just like you. Many of our customers have commented that they learned basic programming simply by modifying our open source code to their own needs.

If you are a beginning programmer, a web designer looking for database-driven web software, or even a website owner looking for an easy way to run your website, take a closer look at Classic ASP and DMXReady. With our advanced applications, numerous resources, and our Professional Services available to help you out of any jam, Classic ASP and DMXReady just might be your best bet.

Find out more at:

<http://www.dmxready.com>

“Web designers are not programmers, and that can often be a problem when you need to create an active element in your web site using server side scripting. Programming is no light task, it seems, and most designers whimper and cower away when faced with even a small snippet of Perl or C.

“Fear not, however, because Active Server Pages and VBScript make it easy to deliver effective server side scripting...”

by BRIAN GOLDMAN

A List Apart

<http://www.alistapart.com/articles/kickasp/>

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