

# AJAX: Is it the face of SOA?



Lori MacVittie, 2007-28-03

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*That depends on who is looking in the mirror*

David Linthicum recently pondered the question, "[Is AJAX Really the Face of SOA](#)".

As the oft quoted proverb goes, *beauty is in the eye of the beholder (not an eye tyrant, WoTC, so don't unleash the lawyers) and the value of SOA is derived based on the ROI of the investment of those from whence the initiative is funded.*

Or something like that.

Basically, while there is inherent value in distributing services to provide efficient, cost-effective, interoperable system-to-system communication (as is the goal of SOA for IT) it is often the case that at least a portion of the budget used to implement said services comes from the business side of the house.

While the business derives value and a measurable ROI even when they can't **see** the results, there is something to be said for proving the value of SOA through an AJAX-based user interface.

David says:

*While it's easy to draw a lot of service and place a user interface on them, that's really not SOA. A SOA lives to provide an orderly and changeable interaction among systems, that's its primary role. Serving a user interface is clearly second. So, while I'm seeing a lot of AJAX user interfaces on SOA clouds this week, the fact is the value still resides in the cloud.*

True, AJAX is not SOA, but that's not what people are saying. People are saying that AJAX is the **face** of SOA. That's a very different statement. System to system communication is rarely visually stimulating, nor are business stakeholders able to **see** the value in that communication because it is, by definition, system to system - no human in that equation. They can see the columns in a financial ledger, sure, but it doesn't have the same impact.

With AJAX, which by its very nature seems to be a logical choice in many situations for building a user-interface for SOA composed applications, well, **that** the business stakeholders can see. It makes their investment **tangible**. If a picture is worth a thousand words then a user-interface is worth the thousand lines of code it takes to implement it.

Yes, you could use other technologies to implement the same user interface but there's something that happens when you show a business stakeholder a user-interface **in a browser** that takes advantage of the SOA infrastructure. Their eyes light up and suddenly they see the value in that SOA - not just the user-interface, but in the entire ecosystem. Because you couldn't have done it without SOA or you already would have, right? Business folks are willing to accept at face value (sorry, pun only sort of intended) that an AJAX-based user interface shows the value of their investment in corporate SOA initiatives.

And hey, a user-interface *is* - the last time I checked - a system. Therefore the user-interface is, technically speaking, part of the SOA ecosystem, particularly when using something as closely tied to SOA principles as AJAX. And because AJAX-based interfaces happen to be what the user sees when interacting with those systems, it really is one of the faces of SOA. It's just not the only one.

*Imbibing: Coffee*

Technorati tags: [SOA](#), [F5](#), [application delivery](#), [AJAX](#), [XML](#)

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