

Short Position Paper: How to Remake the JSPA

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In discussions I had with members of the community and the other executive committee members at the recent JavaOne conference, the JSPA is in serious need of rewrite. Unfortunately, there is a lot of concern among the SE/EE and ME executive committees about rewriting the JSPA because it is a legal document and, as such, will receive heavy scrutiny. I believe there are some good ways to break up the JSPA into components that can be passed incrementally. After having done that, I believe we should insist on plain English translation of the legal terms using boxes that describe what the text means (similar to what is now required by law from credit card companies). I also believe that we should include use cases and examples from the real world to describe how the JSPA relates to different entities.

I propose that we rewrite the JSPA in three deliverables—member, expert group member, and spec lead. These three deliverables should be tackled in order from easiest (member) to hardest (spec lead).

The most pressing deliverable is the part of the JSPA that applies to simply joining the JCP (member). We could reform the member application in about 8 weeks and we would not even have to modify the original JSPA. I envision a simple agreement that cover basic membership and a web-based form where the member simply clicks on Agree. If we were able to do this simple part first, we could remove the substantial barrier to joining the JCP. I met many people who were interested in simply joining but who were put off by the form. When we accomplish this first simple deliverable, we should announce it to the Java world because I bet that membership will increase substantially.

The Expert Group and Spec Lead documents will take longer but should strive to simplify the language and provide the use cases and examples. We should also strive to explain to JCP members the benefits of joining an expert group or becoming a spec lead. There are many advantages but these are never laid out clearly.

While reforming the JSPA is not a glamorous task, I believe that if we do so, we can have a profound effect on Java and the JCP.

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