



**RSS and Content Syndication
in the
Social Media Environment**

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Educate Your Readers About RSS

RSS – What It Is and What It Does

RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication.

Also called web feeds, RSS feeds are a content delivery vehicle - a method of getting new content out on the Internet and sharing it with others.

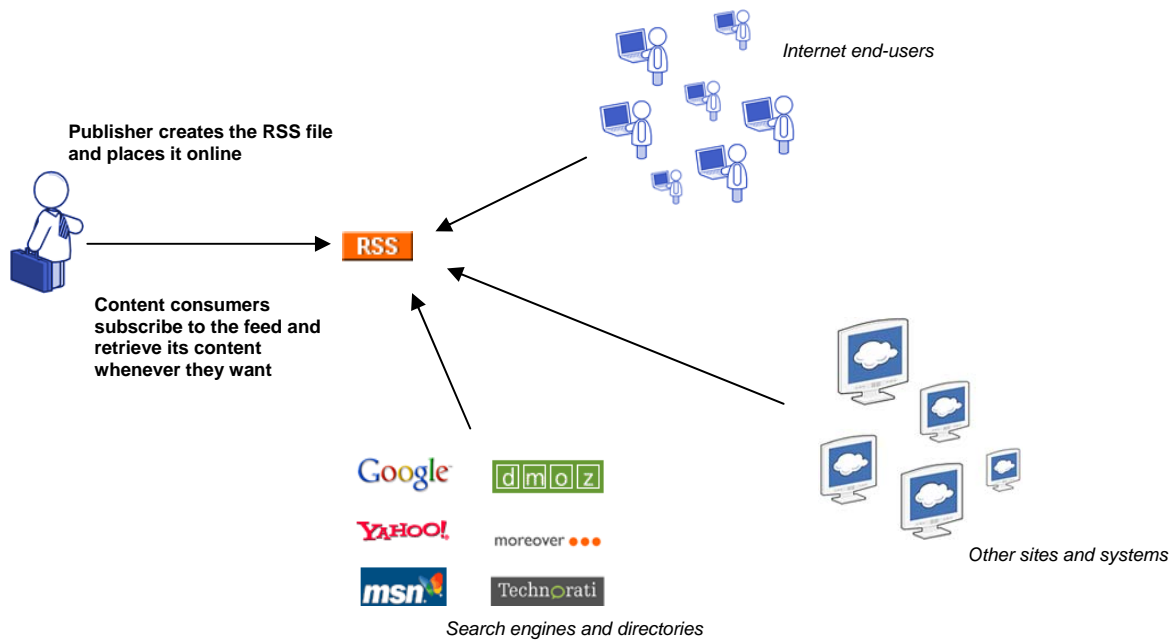
Originally created by Netscape, the technology behind RSS is well tested. It's a format that describes different types of information. RSS feeds (or files) include some basic information about the content, such as the title, description, logo etc, and the actual content you want to deliver



RSS is a simple technology that allows you to easily get your new content updates delivered to your target audiences (subscribers, bloggers, journalists, employees, investors, other key influencers), websites looking for good content to publish, specialized search engines, directories and other online systems.

More than 20 percent of permission-based commercial email gets blocked or filtered before it reaches the inbox. (Source: iMediaConnection) RSS on the other hand, gives you 100 percent guaranteed delivery. In essence,

RSS is the key enabling technology that stands at the forefront of the new world of marketing and PR.



Syndication, enabled by RSS, is the process of making your online content available for republication by other websites and actively distributing that content to any website of relevance for your business.

It makes your content more visible online, and at the same time helps you to better conduct your business intelligence activities to quickly adapt to new market situations.

"Online visibility and online traffic are, quite naturally, of paramount importance to everyone and anyone marketing or conducting business online, period. While RSS may not be the key tool to improve your online visibility and traffic, its importance in helping you do this cannot be disputed," says Rok Hrastnik author of [Unleash The Marketing Power of RSS](#).

Why do people use Feeds?

Like TiVO, with RSS you get only the content you want, when you want it. It can be pulled into your email inbox with a reader like [Newsgator](#), you can [install a desktop reader](#) to keep your news content in a separate space or you can organize and keep it in a web-based service like [Bloglines](#).

With the overwhelming amount of new content available online today, a system like

RSS and feeds makes it possible to stay abreast of the news, information and research you need to keep your finger on.

There is no possibility of spam. You only get the content you subscribe to and you can organize it, file it and read when you are ready to do so.

Who is reading RSS?

Is this still a 'techie' application that most businesses need not worry about yet? Not at all. RSS adoption has moved way beyond that point.

Firefox, Safari (the MAC browser) My Yahoo, MY MSN and the personalized Google pages all offer an RSS reader. Earthlink just added one to their personalized pages. This means millions of ordinary people are using RSS feeds to gather and read their news and information online. And it's not only the 18 - 34 year olds. Even the AARP uses feeds to update their members.

A Yahoo! survey identified people who were RSS users by their clickstream, yet when they were asked about RSS 82 percent did not even now they were using RSS feeds! They just know they use the Add Content feature to read their news online.

Microsoft's IE 7 has a built in RSS reader. Since it was released the numbers of people using RSS without even knowing has skyrocketed. Predictions are that within six months it will be a fully mainstream application for consuming content online.

We believe that in the same way that the background technology of email (SMTP) is not known to most people, the acronym RSS will drop out of use as more and more people use the feeds in browsers and personalized pages. News feeds or web feeds will become a part of our everyday online reading experience.

"Even if it is something as simple as putting your press releases in an RSS feed, marketers will benefit from early exposure to distributing information via RSS feeds." Forrester Research

But don't restrict your **content syndication** to your press releases - a web feed can be used for any content that gets updated on a regular basis on your website or blog.

Every business has content that they want to get out to their audiences. Up till now your choices have been a web site and email. With the new social media tools powered by RSS - blogs, podcasts, syndication of articles - your options are wide open. **Get started with RSS feeds** syndicate your content and join the online conversation.

What Syndicating Content Will Do For Your Business

If you do a search for RSS and marketing in either Yahoo News or the blog and feed search engine Technorati, you'll very soon realize just how fast the use of RSS is growing. Here are just a few of the comments made recently in the mainstream media and blogs:

30% of marketers surveyed said that they have implemented RSS feeds because of customer demand. Jupiter Research study Feed Marketing: Use of RSS as an Alternate Messaging Medium

"RSS is a brand-new medium, as distinct from the Web as the Web is from newspapers, radio, and TV. Like the Web 10 years ago feeds have reached a tipping point." Business 2.0

"If you are not up on RSS, you aren't paying attention! Content is syndicated and shared all over the web with RSS and it is fast becoming the backbone of the web. As important as html? Soon, very soon." The Friday Traffic Report

So why should you offer your content in feeds?

- **RSS feeds syndicate your content** and make it available to other news outlets, websites and blogs
- By syndicating your content you can reach a much wider audience
- Feeds are the perfect solution for time-sensitive information – like special travel packages, meeting notices or tech updates
- RSS is a secure channel that can't be spammed
- RSS feeds allow your subscribers to control the flow of information they receive. According to a recent study users trust marketers more when they can control the information they receive.
- RSS feeds are compiled according to the user's choices
- RSS does not involve you in privacy issues- subscription is anonymous

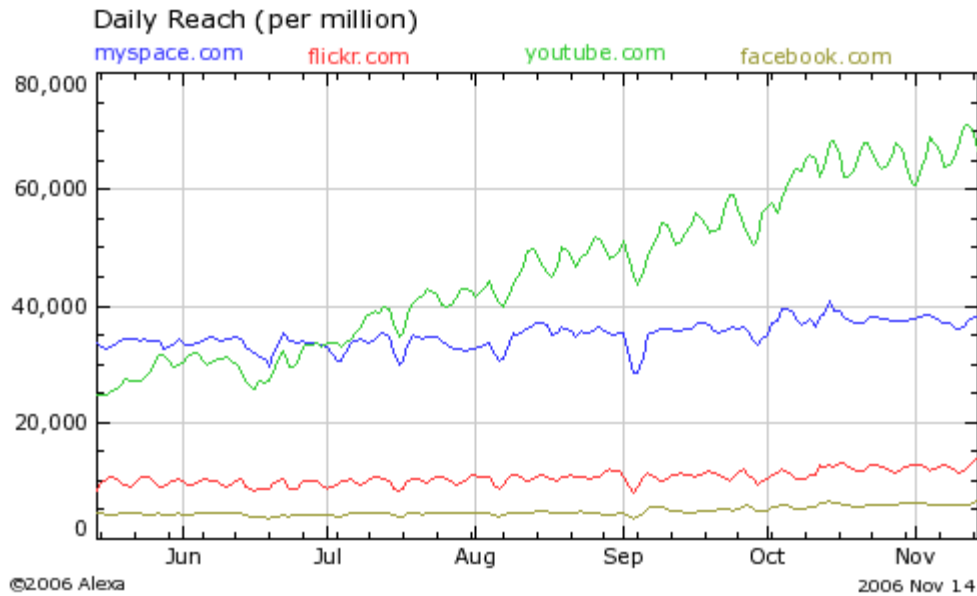
What will this do for your business?

- Syndicating your content builds up inbound links and this positively affects your search engine rankings
- Higher search rankings increase your online visibility
- More visibility will bring new, qualified visitors to your website
- Your visitors build up a relationship with you and they tend to trust you more
- You have direct access to your subscribers and guaranteed delivery of your content
- You can use RSS feeds to streamline and improve your internal content syndication for corporate communications and providing information to remote employees and sales teams
- RSS feed enclosures can be used to provide your listeners and readers with podcasts and video news
- Keyword search capabilities via RSS provide sales teams with immediate competitive intelligence tracking

- Automatic updates via RSS also serve as a critical public relations function for the latest news on brands, executives and external content.

Creating RSS feeds so you can syndicate your content is no longer some new-fangled idea. Sharing content online is one of the fastest growing trends.

Sites like MySpace, Flickr and YouTube have conclusively shown that there is power in content sharing and syndication.



We have reached the tipping point – make RSS a part of your strategy in the coming year.

Where do you start?

30% of marketers surveyed said that they have implemented RSS feeds because of customer demand.

Jupiter Research study "*Feed Marketing: Use of RSS as an Alternate Messaging Medium*"

"Marketers must begin to plan their RSS strategies now," says the report's lead author, Jupiter analyst David Daniels

Internet Marketing is moving away from traditional search engine tactics - search engine optimization and page rankings are no longer so dependent on meta tags and on-page elements.

Content syndication using an RSS feeds can increase your search engine visibility and drive qualified traffic to your website. But to get results, you must start with a sound RSS strategy.

RSS feeds by themselves won't do much for you or your marketing. Feeds are a delivery and distribution system for content. And the world is fast moving from a push-based information delivery (where you send information via emails) to a pull-based information delivery (where the subscriber accesses your information, as and when he wants). Customers want good content – and they are demanding it in feeds.

The success of your RSS strategy depends on the quality of your content and the availability of that content in feeds.

What Is an RSS Strategy?

Take a look at the types of content you are currently, or could be, delivering to your audiences and stakeholders. Establish top-level messaging that will be used in all areas of your search engine optimization and online marketing

Where Are You Now?

- Are you maximizing the reach of your current content and online PR initiatives?
- Are you distributing your content via RSS channels?
- Do you own your natural search real-estate with all related content pointing back to yourbrand.com?
- Are you leveraging your content to maximize your overall SEO strategy?

What Do You Want To Achieve?

- Set goals for the RSS feed strategy
- Set up metrics to track the results

Identify Opportunities

- What audiences/verticals should you be communicating with?
- How can you reach to the people you currently communicate with and educate them on RSS
- Identify resources and topics for RSS article content

Setting up the feeds

- Identify what method of implementation will best integrate with your current web system
- Do you need content management with your feeds?
- SEO elements included in the feed templates

- Ongoing support and technical assistance

Promote your feeds

- Ensure the RSS system you use has automatic notification to RSS search engines and news aggregation sites of updates to the feeds
- Create a linking strategy to and from your feed content.
- Submit the feeds to top RSS search engines and news aggregator directories

- Choose a system that has social media features such as tagging and bookmarking, like 'add to del.icio.us' buttons
- Set up monthly reporting on search engine visibility and feed usage

“The simple moral here is that even if you don't want to go 'full RSS' just yet, you need to set up your RSS feeds. Results will follow. People are in fact in need of the content consumption solution offered by RSS ... you just need to present it appropriately.”

Rok Hrastnik [Marketing Studies and the RSS Diary](#)

How to categorize your content

Now that you have a strategy for your RSS feeds, let's take a look at what content you might like to syndicate.

First look at the audiences you want to reach. Start by listing the target audiences you want to deliver your content to via RSS. Each of your audiences has different content needs, resulting in different groups of RSS feeds that need to be created.

One group for the media, another for your employees, one for the general public, one for your existing customers and so on. You can even go further and divide your master groups into sub-groups, based on their prevailing interests. Here are some examples of how this could be done.

The Media:

1. Company News release, segmented by topic.
2. Breaking news that you'd like to go to a restricted audience of preferred journalists and bloggers
3. News and expert commentary about your industry
4. The latest product news
5. Interviews with corporate officers, developers, analysts and other interesting people the media would want to hear from. Do this in both text and podcast format
6. Case studies
7. Other press mentions

Customers and Prospects:

1. Customer service updates
2. New ideas and uses for the product
3. New inventory (cars, houses, retail)
4. Questions from customers with answers from your in-house experts
5. How-to articles with data that actually helps your readers improve their lives.
6. Peer product reviews
7. Customer product reviews published on other websites than your own
8. Whitepapers
9. Case Studies

10. In the News press mentions

Owners and investors:

1. Annual reports
2. Internal reports
3. Press mentions about the company
4. Latest comments from customers

Break your content down only as far as it makes sense. It's all about giving your subscribers a choice – let them subscribe to the content they need and want.

And it all depends on your business. You might find that you have only a few audiences and you need to deliver just one or two content types and topics to them. But the benefit of RSS feeds is that you can offer the exact content they are looking for in a way that they want it –clean, guaranteed delivery of the content they really want to receive.

The New York Times has a page that lists all the feeds available:

NYTimes.com RSS feeds

Really Simple Syndication (RSS) is an XML-based format for content distribution. NYTimes.com offers several RSS feeds for use in news readers and Web logs (blogs). These feeds include headlines, summaries and links back to NYTimes.com for the full article. RSS feeds are free and NYTimes.com currently uses RSS 2.0.

For more information about RSS and descriptions of various news readers, read the New York Times article, "[Time-Tuning Your Filter for Online Information](#)."

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Click on the below content area(s) you're interested in subscribing to, and follow the instructions to add to your news reader or your personal My Yahoo! or My AOL page.

NYTIMES.COM HOMEPAGE [RSS](#)

NEWS	FEATURES
BUSINESS RSS	ARTS RSS
» Media & Advertising RSS	» Design RSS
» World Business RSS	» Music RSS
» Your Money RSS	» Television News RSS
CIRCUIITS RSS	AUTOMOBILES RSS
» Popur's Posts RSS	BOOKS RSS
EDUCATION RSS	» Book Review RSS
HEALTH RSS	DINING & WINE RSS
» Fitness and Nutrition RSS	FASHION & STYLE RSS

How to access RSS feeds

There are a number of ways to access RSS feeds. You can install a news reader that displays RSS feeds from the Web sites you select, enabling you to view hundreds of headlines at once. After installing the news reader, you can add each feed manually from the Web site by clicking on the "Subscribe" or the "XML" orange button next to the feed.

An alternative to downloading a dedicated news reader is to use a Web-based news reader. For example, My Yahoo! or My AOL users can now add RSS feeds directly to their personal page.

NYTimes.com RSS feeds by category

If your news reader supports OPML, NYTimes.com RSS feeds are available that group content by various news categories. [RSS](#)

[Terms for NYTimes.com](#)

Here is the page on Intel

Feed	Description	Feed link
Intel® Products	Updates and information on Intel products	RSS
Intel Press Room	Intel news releases	RSS
Intel Investor Relations	Stock updates and financial reports	RSS
Software at Intel	What's new for software developers	RSS
Networking and Communications	The latest information about Intel's networking communications and embedded products	RSS
Intel® Reseller Center	Important information and updates for resellers (login may be required)	RSS
IT@Intel	A look inside Intel's IT operations	RSS
Intel Technology and Research	Stay current on Intel's latest technologies, research and standards activities.	RSS

Intel RSS feeds from other regions:

- [Asia-Pacific](#)
- [Brazil](#)
- [China](#)
- [France](#)

Note: The data in this article has been excerpted from the new book, *The Power of RSS and Content Syndication in Public Relations*. I am co-authoring this book with the RSS guru, Rok Hrastnik of www.marketingstudies.net. The book will be available early in 2007.

Adding Social Media Elements to Increase Syndication

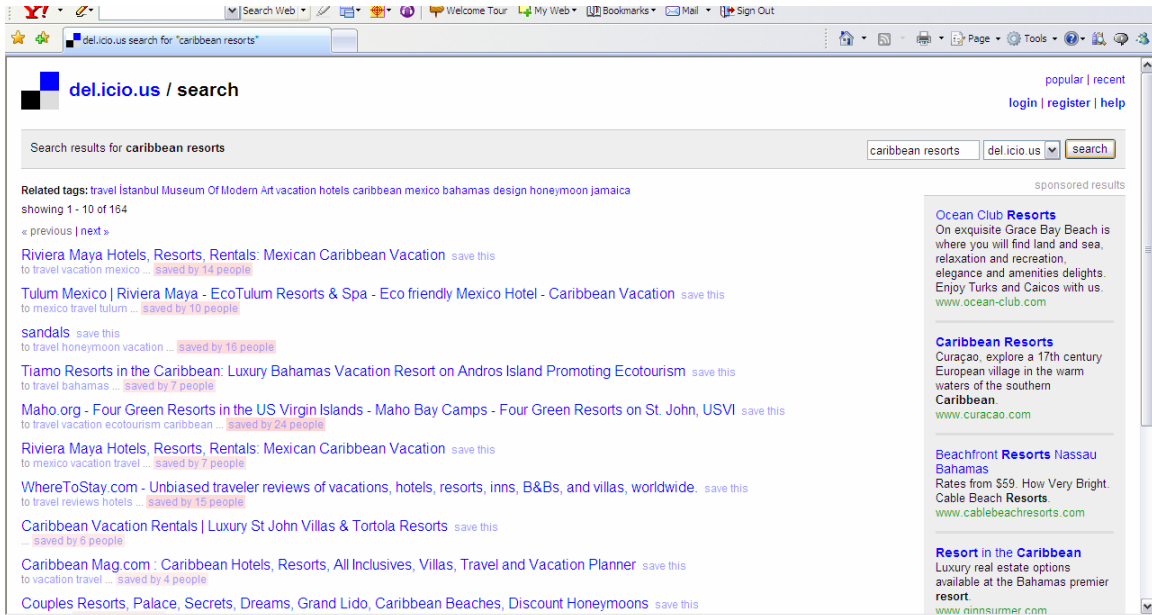
Content syndication means getting your message out in as many ways to as many qualified audiences as possible. Using social media sites can increase your distribution.

Social Media is a term used to describe websites that let users contribute to the content, and tag and rate content that is posted there. These sites also encourages users to share the content with others.

You can add social media elements to the articles you want to syndicate in RSS feeds.

1. **Add Technorati tags:** Technorati is a social media search engine. It indexed blogs and feeds. Tagging is a way for users to label the content in a specific category. Technorati has a system of tagging that allows you to label your content for easy search indexing and using these tags also alerts Technorati to the fact that you have new content on this subject. Technorati rates new posts in blogs and feeds and tags help your content to show up sooner, and higher, in the Technorati rankings.
2. **Social Bookmarking:** Make it easy for readers to share your content. They can post and tag your content on social media sites like del.icio.us and digg. These sites allow users to create a page of their favorite sites on a subject - a

virtual library, if you will. Because these pages are so focused on a subject, they are showing up high in search rankings. If your content makes it onto these well indexed and ranked pages it can bring you lots of traffic.



3. **Tell a friend:** Offer other ways to share content. Many people are not yet social media savvy. Add a Tell a Friend button that allows them to email the article to others.
4. **Make it easy to find and subscribe to your feeds:** Just creating a feed is not enough. You have to make it easy for the people to find and subscribe to your feeds. Include the auto-discovery code in your feed set up, so that any browser will see there is a feed on your site. Place RSS icons on your homepage and on every page that has a feed. Offer the easy-subscribe buttons so that someone who uses a well known RSS reader or a MyYahoo or Google personalized page can subscribe with one click.

Here are some examples of websites that are using these ideas.

[SkinMD Natural](#)

[Paradise By Marriott](#)

Mouse over the RSS icon for a drop down menu of 'easy subscribe' buttons.

At the end of each article there are Technorati tags and the options for posting to the social media sites.

RSS, Content Syndication and SEO

Success in online marketing depends to a large extent on being found in the search engines. If you don't get found no matter how stellar your website is, no one will see it. And getting good organic search ranking (natural placements on a search results page, not the paid listings) is getting harder all the time.

Content syndication pays off in search results. And when readers like your content enough to bookmark it and share it with others, you'll soon see the results in your traffic.

There are only ten spots on page one for any keyword. How does Google, or any search engine, decide which the ten best websites for that keyword are? The secret lies in the inbound links to your website on that keyword or phrase. For years Internet marketers relied on reciprocal links – I'll link to you if you link back to me. But Google soon saw that this was being manipulated and downgraded these links. The links that are so highly prized by Google and other search engines are one-way, quality inbound links from relevant websites with a good page rank score.

Content syndication using RSS is one easy and effective way to build these one-way inbound links. When people like your content and share it, it builds links back to your website.

RSS is fast becoming a mainstream application. Adoption is rocketing and sites using RSS report excellent results: an increase in search ranking, more qualified traffic on the site and even increased sales.

If you don't have an RSS feed already, and you don't have the in house know how to install one, services like [PRESSfeed](#) can do all the heavy lifting for you. Once the feed is installed you can be syndicating your content in mere minutes. You'll be able to upload content to your website without learning any programming skills or computer languages like HTML.

Any search engine will only give you a maximum of two results on a search page. If you want to dominate the top half of the search page for your keywords, (and you should) you have to have your content on more than one site – and that means syndication. You can get extra placements in the search engines by having your content on many other sites as articles, press releases, tips or news headlines. Each article has links that lead back to your website.

Many business sites report substantial increases in traffic when they put RSS feeds on their site. The blog and feed search sites – called news aggregators – gather syndicated content and have growing audiences who visit their sites to find new content. The search engines are paying a lot of attention to RSS Feeds. A fast way to get your content indexed in Yahoo! is to add your feed to a MyYahoo page.

You can often get better placement in feed directories and in Yahoo's RSS Directory than you can from regular search engines, and inclusion is instant.

See our list of sites where you can [submit your feeds](#).

Read the [Case Study on content syndication and search](#)

Educate your readers and keep your audience updated

Let your website visitors know you have RSS Feeds. Apart from the obvious action of putting the orange RSS icon, along with the easy subscribe buttons for major RSS readers on all pages that have a feed, place a prominent link on the home page letting your visitors know right away that you have feeds and that you offer content syndication.

Use your email list to promote your feeds. Put a short paragraph on RSS and the feeds you offer at the bottom of each email newsletter or promotion you send out.

When Travelocity offered feeds to their email list two-thirds of those who opened the email subscribed to the feed!

Encourage your readers by educating them on how to use a newsreader. Offer suggestions for the different types of applications that are available.

Business and website owners have to change the way they think. In addition to running a business, you also have to be a publisher of content. There are people in your company that have a lot of knowledge that would be useful to your customers. Getting this knowledge out into the marketplace and encouraging your customers to share this content with others can boost your marketing and PR efforts in a way we've not seen previously.

Provide your evangelists with the tools to crow about how great your product or service is. With new media tools, every one has the power of voice. Take advantage of it and start by RSS enabling your content.



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