

BEGINNERS GUIDE TO RSS FEEDS

Secrets And Tips From Many Experienced
RSS Professionals



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Rss And History

By Mark Raport

To uninformed Internet users, RSS may seem to be a set of letters that could scare them away. But it doesn't.

RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication. It could also mean Rich Site Summary or RDF Site Summary that allows Internet users to send information through "feeds" that show up either in an RSS reader or other e-mail programs.

The RSS is also known as web feed formats in XML (also known as extensible markup language, which lets users identify information more accurately and flexibly) and is commonly used for web syndication.

Through the RSS, users can receive new content and allow them to easily subscribe to the latest contents of the website you're interested in. By doing so, users will be able to control the rate and volume of data that they will receive online. That way, people who use the Internet on a regular basis can do away with problems related to heavy usage, like gathering and distributing news, and increasing site traffic.

Using RSS also lets you save time because you no longer need to visit the sites of your choice individually. And what's more, your privacy is ensured because you don't have to sign up for the newsletters being offered by your favorite sites.

History

It was UserLand which first used RSS in 1997. Other Internet giants like Netscape followed shortly after.

But before RSS was fully developed, other similar forms – like Backweb and Pointcast – of syndication already existed. However, none of these were able to attain the popularity RSS is enjoying now because most of them were designed to work for only a single service.

RSS' first version – the RDF Site Summary of RSS 0.9 – was created by Netscape's Dan Libby in March 1999 for the My Netscape portal. This was modified four months later to incorporate suggestions from users.

However, Netscape lost interest in the RSS/XML at a time when its use became widespread. This abandonment of some sorts prompted various users to set up a working group and mailing list just to keep the usage of RSS going. Since then, several modifications have been introduced to make RSS better.

How it works

To make RSS work, a website owner maintains a standard list of notifications, commonly called the RSS Feed, on their site.

The RSS Feed allows users interested on the particular site to find out what's new or what have been changed by simply checking out the list. One can then automatically access the list and have it organized with the help of special computer programs known as the RSS aggregators.

The next thing you need to do is to start producing an RSS feed, a feature now commonly provided in websites especially of major news organizations.

Once you have an RSS feed, it's already very easy to provide the basic information – all arranged chronologically – that your frequent website visitors would need.

The items found on the list contain a title that would describe the item, a detailed description and a link to the web page that contains the actual information you initially stated. There are times, however, that the detailed description is already the actual information of the website.

Why RSS?

When frequent visitors to your website know you are using RSS feeds, it gives them a sense of security knowing that you are concerned about their privacy.

This is made possible by the RSS' incorruptible opt-in feature, where consumers are always given the last say on whether they want to subscribe to a specific RSS feed.

Another good thing about RSS feeds is that it allows you to save time in doing online marketing, in the same way that new technology does for both marketers and consumers. This is the case especially when coming up with a subject line for the feed. It has to be worded in such a way that it would catch the attention of your users.

Finally, the good thing about RSS feeds is that they are measurable, in different ways, though, in the same manner that there are different ways of telling whether an e-mail has been read or not.



It's Becoming A Rule "to Rss" Information

By Alex Falcon
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RSS is a family of web feed formats, specified in XML and used for Web syndication. RSS is mostly used by news websites, weblogs and podcasting but the tendency shows that everybody is trying to keep his information as RSS.

Web feeds are widely used by the blog community to share the latest entries headlines or their full text, and even attach multimedia files. Since mid-2000, use of RSS has spread to many of the major news organizations, including Reuters, CNN, PR Newswire, Business Wire, and the BBC.

Using RSS helps you to feed yourself with all kinds of information instead of constant surfing the internet for needed content. It can also help you generate unlimited content for your websites very effectively.

More and more information is distributed to the users as RSS. For some Internet users the orange symbol with abbreviation 'rss' or 'xml' is a sign of professionalism of the webmaster. It's becoming a rule "to rss" information.

To gather data wanted you obviously need a program or service which can help. One of them is RSS Feeds Generator (rssfeedsgenerator.com) by MG Way Corp. RSS Feeds Generator gives a unique opportunity to create all possible RSS feeds for any keyword from almost all available search engines and services such as Google, Yahoo, MSN, Feedster, Blogdigger, Icerocket and others.

If you are a webmaster you probably want to place RSS feeds on your website. You can convert all the feeds you have into HTML, PHP or JavaScript on your choice. Moreover, in order for rss feed to better blend with your website's design, RSS Feed Converter has advanced formatting where you can specify number of items to display, type of channel info, fonts, text colors, link colors and more.

If you are involved into internet business or just would like to get some additional cash you can do it with the help of RSS feeds and generator. RSS Feeds Generator among all has additional services to generate ClickBank and Amazon feeds - two well know internet marketplaces. They are also known for their affiliate programs. All you need is affiliate or associate ID with them, website and a bit patience. Using ClickBank or Amazon FeedsGenerator.com get their inventory converted into RSS feeds with your affiliate ID embedded into each feed. Using RSSFeedConverter.com add those feeds to your website in the form of Javascript, PHP or HTML. Every time somebody buys something from your website you receive commissions. Piece of cake, isn't it?

RSS feeds exchange is rather new and fast growing service and if you still don't know what is that it is time to learn. Visit rssfeedsgenerator.com and try this free services. You can use it as for your personal needs or for business matters or just for fun. No chance it will leave you indifferent.



Top 10 Rss Do's And Don'ts

By Sharon Housley

RSS is not quite a household word, but technically astute individuals are adopting the use of RSS feeds at an alarming rate. If you are interested in jumping on the bandwagon, but not quite sure of where to start, consider following these simple RSS feed tips to maximize feed compatibility and make your feed stand out from the crowd.

RSS DO's

1. Titles and Descriptions.

Always include meaningful keywords in your RSS feed's Channel title and description. Many readers will view or search for topic specific RSS feeds using keywords or keyword phrases. If you have descriptive keywords in your RSS feed's title and description the feed is more likely to be located and subscribed to by interested parties.

2. GUID Format.

Always include a GUID with each feed item. The GUID is a globally unique identifier. Each post should use a different GUID. The GUID will in some cases assist RSS news readers and aggregation software in determining when new content has been added to the RSS feed or when existing content in an RSS feed has been modified. If you do not use GUID's, the software used to aggregate the feeds may have difficulty detecting changes to feed items or the software may not always recognize new content.

3. Publish Dates.

Always include a publish date on feed items. The publish date should be used even if the content is timeless. The Publish Date will help readers determine that status of the content contained in the feed item.

4. Polish Your Feed.

Consider including images within your RSS feed. While the added images will not necessarily improve ranking, they will add a polished look to your RSS feed and help brand your feed.

5. Feed Hosting.

Either host your own feed, or set it up to forward to a third party from your website. This will allow you retain complete control over the RSS feed. You will not need to rely on the stability of another company. If you control the forwarding and at any point you are dissatisfied with the service provided by the third party, you can redirect the feed to another location.

RSS DON'Ts

1. Plagiarize.

Do not plagiarize content in your RSS feed, there is little more to be said. Written words are considered protected in most countries. Posting someone else's work and taking credit for their words is wrong and will damage your reputation as a credible source.

2. Splog.

Do not create splogs by automating feed creation. Splogs just clutter the search engines and directories and make it difficult to locate RSS feeds with meaningful content.

3. Violate Copyrights.

Do not violate copyrights by republishing an RSS feeds contents. If you quote content from another RSS feed, credit the source and provide and link to the original source of the content. As a rule of thumb, editorial content should exceed the length of the quoted material in the post.

4. Violate TOS.

Do not republish RSS feeds without confirming that feed syndication is allowed. The terms of use are not always apparent, so it is important that you check the terms of service on the publisher's feed subscription page prior to syndicating the contents of another publisher's RSS feed.

5. Provide Multiple Feed Formats.

Do not provide multiple feed formats for the same content. As far as the subscriber is concerned, the version of RSS that you are using is irrelevant. Multiple versions of the same feed simply cause confusion. Almost all RSS readers and news aggregators support all versions of RSS, simply choose a version and provide a single feed.

By adopting good feed practices, you can reap the benefits of having an RSS feed. Following these simple RSS do's and don'ts will get you started on the path to RSS success.



Rss Feeds And Security

By Joshua Miller

The growth rate of RSS is amazingly fast. RSS when first made its appearance was recognized as a techie device but nowadays it has become so popular that the general mass is using this tool. But remember that RSS, a blessing for us doesn't come for free but often with carrying some unwanted gift for us! – The RSS spam. This spam which contain dynamically generated balderdash feeds stuffed with keywords created by the content publishers are not headaches because of their nonsense but they often endangers the security. Spam included in RSS is not only irritation to the search engines but also feeds pales compared to the probable security concerns that might have been in the future of the RSS.

RSS related security implications

If RSS increases, the security gets more endangered. While the publishers are fast in innovating new uses for RSS feeds, the hackers are watching it all. Even in its raw form, the extendibility and the power of RSS can make it very vulnerable. The very abode of these vulnerabilities is the expansion abilities of the specification of RSS, mainly the enclosure field which is the launcher of podcasting phenomenon. Basically, this enclosure field is not a headache, since the enclosure tag is not used by RSS feeds. The tag is generally used in linking file types such as word documents, mp3 files, images, and executables and in the same terms in email attachments.

RSS Distributing these file types has helped the immensely the syndicate standard users but long with that it has also created problems. But we don't take these problems as risks since we select the content received which limits spreading of viruses, spyware through RSS; still we run at a risk if an infected file is spread.

This risk is the effect of technology and our poor education.

Several RSS readers, pod catchers, news aggregators automatically download the information from the enclosure field even if they don't know their sources or file types. This ignorance often calls for dangerous insecurities for our computers.

Generally speaking almost all the RSS developers admit the risks that are attached with the enclosure field but a very few developers don't care to equip the RSS feeds with screening, filtering and authentication abilities and a myriad of automatically download enclosures.

It is very unfortunate that every RSS readers or aggregators or pod catchers ponder over the probable security implications related with RSS feeds or podcasts. Usually some work automatically downloading enclosures sans any warning or any concerns about the security. So ensure to introspect the handling of files by your RSS reader.



Tips For Promoting Your Rss Feed

By Sharon Housley

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There is little argument from webmasters and publishers that RSS brings in traffic. So once you've made the leap and created a feed, how do you tell your visitors about the feed?

1. Submit Your RSS Feed to RSS Directories.

This will not only increase the number of sites linking to your website and increasing your link popularity, it will also increase the RSS feeds profile. A number of RSS search engines and RSS directories exist that allow you to freely submit RSS feeds. Feeds are generally categorized and grouped together by subject. Web surfers looking for RSS feeds about a specific subject will often search the RSS directories, to locate a feed that matches their specific criteria. Topic specific RSS feed and podcasting directories are also emerging. Choose a web feed's category carefully and only submit relevant feeds to topic specific directories.

A large list of directories is located at <http://www.rss-specifications.com/rss-submission.htm>

Example of Topic Specific - <http://www.realty-feeds.net> or <http://www.religious-podcasts.net>

2. Explain RSS

While you have finally figured RSS out, some of your visitors may not have. The concept while brilliant, can be a bit confusing for the beginner. The concept of RSS feeds might be completely new to some of your website visitors. Hence it is generally good practice to walk website visitors through the steps of locating, subscribing and reading an RSS feed. It is generally a good practice to include a page on your website that contains a general explanation on RSS and details how website visitors can subscribe to an RSS feed.

Sample Explanation page that can be used to on your website: <http://www.rss-specifications.com/rss-subscriptions.htm> . RSS specifications has authorized the replication of this webpage. It can be republished, simply insert your RSS feeds or otherwise customize the material to explain RSS to your website visitors.

3. Graphic on Website

Since the conception of RSS, bright graphic flags have been used to denote the location of an RSS feed. Now instinctively, website visitors frequently look for a colorful flag on websites. The looks of the flags have changed but a variety of options exists. When you add the image, be sure to link to the location of the RSS feed. Some webmasters use chicklets to indicate the presence of feeds, web surfers click on the chicklet that relates to their RSS feed reader or news aggregator and the feed is added to their list of feeds. Others feel that the volume of chicklets simply add confusion, and opt for a

single relevant RSS graphic.

4. Press

As with any important addition to your company, it is completely appropriate to send a press release to let the media know you have RSS feeds available for specific content. This will often garner a little attention. Additionally, key news editors may opt to subscribe to your RSS feed in order to stay abreast of your latest corporate news. Considering the possibility of these subscriptions, makes a press release to signal the availability of an RSS feed simple common corporate sense.

5. Newsletters

Include a mention in your e-mail newsletter that content is now available via an RSS feed. Many newsletters subscribers appreciate an alternative subscription method and will subscribe to a web feed as well.

6. Auto Discovery

Some of your website visitors might be web savvy. Be sure to include an auto-discovery tag in the HTML header of each web page. Many RSS Readers will automatically discover that an RSS feed is available for specific content and notify the website visitor and ask them if they wish to subscribe.

7. Brand a Newsreader

Distribute pre-loaded RSS readers branded to your company name. The big benefit to brandable newsreaders is that you can include all of your RSS feeds in it. Any downloaders will have immediate access to your RSS feeds in the branded news reader.

Brandable Readers - <http://www.deskshare.com> or <http://www.customreader.com>

8. Blog

If you have a blog or know bloggers, be sure to share with them that you have added an RSS feed for specific content. Blogs are a great vehicle to spread the word. Marketers instantly understood the power of word of mouth, but few marketers understand the movement of blog to mouth. This growing phenomenon has added credibility to online blog endorsements.

In order to reap the benefits of an RSS feed, it is important the feed be properly publicized. Taking simple steps to promote an RSS feed will go a long way in ensuring a feeds adoption.



Advertising In Rss Feeds

By S. Housley

In learning anything new there is always a sharp learning curve, and you're sure to make a few mistakes a long the way, we all do. However in an effort to save you some grief and embarrassment along the way I've compiled a short list of some common mistakes and how to avoid them. So read on, and enter the podcasting arena a few steps ahead of the competition.

Number One – Reading from a script. While I strongly recommend writing out an outline of what you want to cover in your podcast it isn't necessary to read verbatim from a script. When most people try reading directly from a script they wind up sounding like Ben Stein. "Bueller?" It isn't entertaining and you'll lose your audience before you even have a chance to get started. So unless you have a background in acting or extemporaneous reading it's probably a good idea to forgo the script.

An easy solution is to make a list of talking points, note cards, or even a more detailed outline of what you intend to say in your podcast. So long as the format leaves room for improvisation it will come across as more friendly and conversational. It may take a few tries to get used to "winging it," but you'll sound much better. It's still advisable to rehearse and edit your podcast whenever possible you not to the point where it sounds too scripted or contrived.

Number Two – Sound. While not everyone can afford really slick production values it is important to appear at least somewhat professional. This means investing in a good quality microphone, some headphones, and an editing program of some sort.

This doesn't necessarily involve a large investment though. The mic and headphones can be obtained for a reasonable amount, and you can download a free program like Audacity which will allow you to edit your show. Audacity will allow you lay down tracks of music, edit out coughs, "ums", or even portions of the podcast that you aren't happy with. It's also worthwhile to do a sound check before spending 15 to 30 minutes recording a podcast that is unintelligible. Check that the mic volume is properly adjusted and that there isn't any background interference.

Number Three – Infrequent episodes. No one wants to subscribe to a show if it only airs sporadically. Why? Mainly because it's hard to get into and maintain interest in a show if it isn't on enough to keep you engaged in the content. At the very least try to have shows broadcast ever other week if not weekly. It's true that some shows are only released monthly but generally the more frequent the show airs the higher its ratings are.

Number Four – No call to action. It's rare that a listener will come to find your podcast in the context of your site. Most people will probably stumble across your podcast via podcast directory that's why it's important to make sure you include a call to action at the end of your podcast. The fact is that if you don't provide a clear way for people to interact with you then they won't.

Number Five – No album art. This really only applies when submitting your podcasts to the various podcast directories and podcatchers. iTunes, for example, allows album art and more often than not

people don't even take a second look at the podcasts without it. It doesn't have to be anything fancy, and you can even use your logo as the album art so long as it communicates something about the podcast.

Potential customers are looking for you through search engines, directories and forums. We help them find your website. How? Check out our marketing techniques at <http://www.itsontarget.com> and sign up for our podcast and we'll let you in on some interesting internet traffic solutions.



Cashing In With Rss Feeds

By P. Wolbers

You may already know that RSS stands for Remote Site Syndication, but what does that mean to you and more importantly, how can you use RSS to help you make more money?

Simply put, RSS feeds are written in a computer language called XML, a special mark up language much like HTML. This means that they have mechanisms included that identify structures in a document. The structures define the content and how that content will be displayed within that document. RSS is what makes big news websites possible: RSS files are used to create a data feed which will deliver headlines, links or virtually any other piece of information to a channel viewer application, commonly called a news reader.

These readers are subscribed to certain RSS feed URL's and constantly monitor them over the Internet, alerting the user when ever any new information has been added to the feed. So, how can you use this to your advantage as an internet marketer?

Here are the most popular ways to integrate RSS feeds into your marketing effort:

You can use RSS to supplement any email marketing you are currently doing, take advantage of RSS feeds to drive traffic to your blog or sales site or create your own RSS feeds so your messages and information show up on thousands of websites, blogs and desktops online.

Although many marketing gurus will claim that email marketing isn't dead, with the advent of increasing spam complaints and filters coupled with the threat of viruses originating from an email, more and more people are leery of even opening your email. So even if you have a large email list, the likelihood of your emails being opened is becoming increasingly slim.

With RSS, your messages won't ever get filtered and they will have a much higher chance of actually being read vs. email. Your marketing results can only be better when people actually read your message. You can even incorporate autoresponders in conjunction with RSS.

Including RSS feeds on your content site or blog allows you to add fully dynamic theme-related content to your web pages making your site or blog very popular with the search engines. The constantly updated content is exactly what the search engines crave and helps increase your search engine ranking, driving more traffic to your page.

Probably the best way to use RSS to help your online marketing efforts is to create your own RSS feed. This way your information will be published on any website that is using the RSS feed you are supplying that information to. There's even automated software to submit your RSS feeds to the various directories that supply the feeds to marketers using them on their websites as described above.

RSS is still a relatively unknown method of driving traffic to websites, but is becoming more popular every day. As an internet marketer, this is a great opportunity to take advantage of this new technology before the rest of the online community jumps on the bandwagon.



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