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What Is RSS?

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Ever wondered how some people always seem to be so informed on the latest news and events? Well, there pretty good chance that they are using RSS feeds to bring them news and information live as it becomes av

Keeping up with the Joneses.com

RSS, or Really Simple Syndication, is a technology which allows your visitors to subscribe to the content on website without giving out their email address. Your subscribers use an RSS client such as Mozilla Thunder My Yahoo! or Google Reader and get instantly notified of new items on your website.

As the name suggests, RSS is really very simple. An RSS feed is just a web page in a special format (XML) containing the headlines, post dates and summaries of all the latest content on your website. An RSS client understands this format periodically checks the feed for new items and displays them to the user.

Making an RSS feed available on your site is called *syndicating* your site because of the way RSS feeds car aggregated by feed readers.

101 Things to do with an RSS Feed

Since an RSS feed is in a machine readable format, software programs have been written to do some pretty innovative things with them beyond simply notifying the user of new items. Here are some examples of our favourites:

- Mozilla Thunderbird makes reading RSS feeds indistinguishable from reading emails. Each item in the f appears in the inbox panel like a regular email, and when you view it the web page it links to is displaye where you usually read your mail.

- Mozilla Firefox allows you to bookmark RSS feeds such that your bookmarks are updated whenever ne content is available.

- Apple's iPod uses RSS to fetch and download podcasts automatically from the web. A podcast is really RSS feed.

- Websites such as Bloglines, Google Homepage and My Yahoo! allow you to aggregate RSS feeds so th the latest news from your favourite sites can be viewed on a single page.

- Some RSS clients make it simple for the user to email articles to a friend or automatically submit them t bookmarking and voting websites such as Digg and del.icio.us. Google Reader even allows people to c new composite RSS feeds containing their favourite articles from other feeds. This can drastically increa your readership.

- Google Blogsearch is a search engine which only indexes sites from RSS feeds. This makes searching more efficient and current since the search engine only checks RSS feeds for updates. Additional inform such as post date and article author is also available to an RSS based search engine.

- Many websites use RSS to display headlines from other sites. Often you'll see them scrolling past in a ' on the sidebar. Sometimes the entire website is dedicated to aggregating RSS feeds from various other

- FeedBlitz, Squeet and rss2email are RSS to email gateways which enable people to subscribe to syndi content via email much like a traditional mailing list.

Our most innovative award goes to Google Blogsearch for its feature which syndicates search results using This means you can you can make a search today and be notified for the rest of time when new articles app the web which match your original search query. Very handy!

Tips for Implementing RSS on Your Site

- <u>Syndicate your content!</u> If you have any regularly updated content such as news, blog posts or newslett you'll find that RSS can massively increases your readership levels.

- <u>Advertise your feed with a LINK tag.</u> (This is done automatically by our software) Browsers and other so programs can automatically detect your RSS feed if you add the following tag to your HTML head sectic

```
<link rel="alternate" type="application/rss+xml"
      title="My RSS Feed" href="myfeed.xml"/>
```

- <u>Choose a single feed format.</u> There are a number of different RSS standards currently in use. So as no confuse your visitors and to prevent your readers getting duplicate content, just provide your feed in a s format (e.g. RSS 2.0).

- <u>Burn your feed.</u> FeedBurner (www.feedburner.com) is a service which tracks subscriber levels and help visitors subscribe to your feed, bookmark and Digg your articles.

- <u>Rewrite FeedBurner URLs.</u> When you burn a feed you get a new feed URL from FeedBurner. You can some Apache mod_rewrite magic to allow you to distribute your original URL instead of the FeedBurner

```
RewriteCond %{HTTP_HOST} www.example.com
RewriteCond %{HTTP_USER_AGENT} !FeedBurner
RewriteRule ^/myfeed.xml$ http://feeds.feedburner.com/example [R,L]
```

You can also configure FeedBurner's BrowserFriendly page to advertise your original URL.

- <u>Ping when you post.</u> Most major RSS aggregators and search engines provide a ping tool which allows notify them when you make new posts rather than waiting for them to revisit your site. FeedBurner can l you do this automatically.