

Syndication is a new way to deliver and gather content over the Internet. It a way to provide subscribers with frequently updated content. Syndication uses web feeds to publish frequently updated content, such as a blog post, podcast, online forum (see chapter on online community), and any kind of traditional media such as news, press releases, articles, audio or a video stream.



While there are several syndication formats, the most common is known as RSS, “really simple syndication”. This symbol representing syndication is often shown on sites to indicate a web feed is available.

Syndication is a standard way to send out an alert that you’ve published some information, maybe an update to your blog or a news announcement. It typically includes a brief summary of the content being sent, the name of the author and the date of the update.

You can also use RSS to send out a software or security update, product bulletin, speech, video or audio clip. Any kind of information or news, such as a new real estate listing, weather alert, coupon, or even an invoice. How cool is that?

Web or News Feeds

These alerts are sent in the form of web or news feeds, which signal readers that you have published something new on your blog or website. They allow companies to publish information and automatically syndicate, or send it, to interested readers. Readers who subscribe to updates receive them automatically as they become available.

Web Feeds Are like TIVO for the Web

Why would you want to do that? Well, busy people have no time to surf the web to find out when a competitor, thought leader, or anyone else, has made a news announcement.

Wouldn’t it be amazingly cool if the information, or at least a short form of it, came automatically to your email or to a news aggregator (a separate site you reserve to collect your feeds and read at your convenience). And what if all the headlines of all the topics you were interested in flowed directly to you, without your having to hunt for

RSS is the most commonly used standard for syndication. Syndication feeds, however come in a range of “flavors”.

Here are a few more symbols:



them. Syndication, or RSS, does precisely that. It captures all of the most current information from all of your favorite websites and blogs and puts them all in one place where you can read them at your convenience.

RSS is a “Pull” medium

RSS is not just a time saving device. As a publisher, you can reach a more targeted audience of people who are really interested in what you have to say. RSS is a “pull” medium – the user must sign up.

Companies often hate this aspect. They would much rather just blast the information out over email and not ask anyone’s permission. I remind the companies that hire me that these days, customers use spam catchers to filter out unwanted email, so the effectiveness of email blasts is diminishing. Moreover it may intensely irritate the receiver. With RSS the user must agree to sign up, and that means you have an

interested reader. RSS is a respectful request for permission. It helps the publisher to create a more loyal user base.

Television advertising by comparison is a “push” medium where companies push their messages out to viewers who have no choice but to receive.

Another Three-fer

When you use RSS, you automatically engage the search engines, and drive online visibility. So, if you have a news release and you send it out via RSS from your online press room, it will deliver a three-for-one benefit. You get the benefit from Google when you send the release out using RSS (not email), when you post it to your site and every time someone searches on the topic.

Read at your own convenience

As a RSS user, you control the information you receive. Unlike email, it can not be spammed. Also the information is “time shifted”. You can read it whenever you wish. The beauty of this is that you can glance over your news feeds at your leisure – and not during a time when you are busy.

All word-of-mouth media (blogs, microblogs, podcasts, videoblogs, social networks and other online communities), use RSS to distribute any kind of update. So if you use any one of them you are using an RSS feed.

Some Business Examples of RSS

Here are some examples from companies that use syndication:

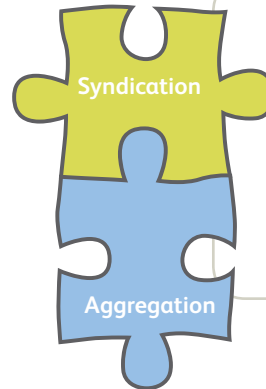
- Information by category at [Walmart](#)
- News alerts by [Yahoo](#)
- Product updates by [Adobe](#)
- Dog and cat advice by [Purina](#)

Syndication

Feed or News Aggregators

You can sign up to get your web feeds straight to your email box or to a separate site which aggregates the information. I prefer the news aggregation site, also called a news reader, which costs no money and has the added benefit of not clogging my email with things that are interesting but not a priority.

I use [Bloglines](#) with which I am very happy. Here are a few others which also come highly recommended: [NewsGator](#), [Feed Reader](#), and [Google Reader](#). All popular browsers also have feed readers as well, including Firefox and Safari.



Syndication and Aggregation or “feed readers”

Syndication and feed readers go together like interconnected pieces of a puzzle. They complement each other and make a whole system.

Resources

Tutorials

- [RSS in Plain English](#), Common Craft
- [Google Reader Tutorial](#) (also by Common Craft)

Articles

- [Fine-Tuning Your Filter for Online Information](#), The New York Times
- [RSS for Non Profits: The Web on Your Terms](#), Tech Soup
Nonprofits in many ways have been more active users of the new word-of-mouth tools than for profits. Why? They have to do more with less. Sound like anyone else you know?
- [Social Media Marketing: A Beginner’s Guide](#), Robin Good’s Master Media blog