

'RSS'

If you have heard about RSS but are not sure about what it is then you are not alone - so let's look at some of the basics of RSS.

RSS stands for Real Simple Syndication (or sometimes Rich Site Summary).

RSS is basically just another way of distributing information over the web. On a more technical level it is a method of communication that uses a mark-up language (XML) to allow a "reader" (specialized software also called an aggregator) to receive published information called a "feed".

So that means an individual with the reader "subscribes" to what ever feeds they are interested in reading and want to check. When you think about this a little more deeply this is pretty much opposite to the way email currently works because with RSS YOU get to decide what you want to receive not the sender – as an aside also this should be good news for reducing some of the 'spamming' that goes on – if you don't want to receive the information then you simply turn it off.

I think RSS is not as popular as it is going to be very soon basically because it is not a standard feature in some popular web browsers such as Internet Explorer (IE). I understand the next version of IE will have RSS as a standard feature and then I expect it will take off quickly indeed – so be prepared.....

On that note I think that in future it is likely that syndicated, up to date content/information delivered direct to our desktop will overtake email as the preferred electronic method for distributing news and information.

As a result, it is not surprising that RSS is gaining popularity daily from online marketers, corporations, PC manufacturers and publishers who are recognising that embracing RSS technology helps address the two major challenges for web based information distribution:-

1. Driving new, high-volume traffic to their sites; and
2. Efficiently supplying critical, up to the minute information to customers

Do I need RSS on my website?

Well maybe – to find out ask yourself:-

- 1) Do you have constantly changing content on your website?
- 2) Do you send email newsletters and wonder if they arrive?
- 3) Would you like to give a "passive nudge" to your site visitors to "come back, soon"?

If so then you might consider RSS as a useful tool to use for your business.

From a marketing perspective there are several ways you could consider using RSS, for example here are two:-

1. Research – by ‘subscribing’ to RSS feeds (at no cost) that provides information on an area of interest; and
2. Supplying Information of interest to your customers - without worrying about the non delivery of emails.

How do I create an RSS feed?

First you need an RSS Reader. As a starting point supplied below are a few different RSS Readers you could have a look at if you are interested in this topic – I use Feedreader (it is free) and below is a link to an ‘RSS Demo’ using this Blog (webpage) if you would like to see an example of how RSS works on a webpage.

Still not sure how it all works – Well don’t worry here is a Demo Link that might help some more.

Just click on the link and it will take you to BizToolz.com.au home page, go to the ‘Links’ section and click on the ‘Resources’ link then click on the demo link.

Click Here for a RSS Demo using ‘Feedreader’.

Here are some RSS Readers (with links) you can start to look at:-

- **Feedreader** — Windows (open source); freeware
- **Amphetadesk** — Windows, Mac, Linux (open source); freeware
- **Bloglines** — Web-based news aggregator; free
-
- **NetNewsWire** — Mac OS X; Lite version is free
- **NewsFire** — Mac OS X; freeware
- **Rocket RSS Reader** — Web-based RSS reader; free
- **RSS Reader** — Windows; freeware

Kevin Richardson
webmaster@Biztoolz.com.au
www.BizToolz.com.au

Kevin Richardson is a webmaster specialising in small businesses. If you would like a website built or learn how to build one yourself then contact Kev via email: webmaster@Biztoolz.com.au or Ph: 07 3102 4534