

READY NET GO ... NEWS

August 2005

<http://www.readynetgo.net>

610-856-0990

Tip of the Month

RSS ... Wave of the Future?

RSS (Really Simple Syndication) was first introduced in 1999 but hasn't gained acceptance until the past couple of years. Originally, die hard news junkies or bloggers were the only ones who were using RSS but now that corporations have seen the advantages, **RSS is going mainstream.**

Apart from being really easy to use, one of the best advantages of RSS is that it can potentially **free up** your email **inbox** of newsletters and company updates. When you add an XML feed to your feed reader, the **user is in control** of managing the information via a standalone application or as a plug-in for a browser. Network administrators could, therefore, see a noticeable decrease in the amount of email traveling over the network.

Another advantage is that as you begin adding feeds and find that some don't provide the information you want, deleting feeds is as simple as clicking the delete key (try that with an email newsletter).

Finally, **Microsoft** is a big proponent of RSS and is planning on using this technology in their next operating system (Vista). Microsoft, as well as many other companies, sees great potential in this technology for sharing information and not just for downloading news headlines.

So jump in and get acquainted with **RSS**. It's going to be around awhile!

What are Blogs and RSS Feeds?

Have you ever dreamed of being a nationally recognized author? Are you looking for a simple way to stay on top of the news?

These desires can come true with blogs and RSS ...

Blogs

A blog is a **personal weblog** or journal that is viewed over the internet. Anyone can create a blog and it can contain **ANY** information you want. If you want to recount your favorite trip to Italy, comment on political, social or economic issues, or tell people a neat little trick you figured out over the weekend, blog away....

If you know HTML, you can create your own blog on your own website (but many people may not read it). An alternative is to create a blog on one of the many blog sites such as **bloglines.com** or **blogger.com**. It's free and only requires an email address and password to get started (and you don't need to know HTML). Share stories and poems, post photos, get feedback and more. Just as **eBay** has revolutionized the way we trade goods, **blogs** may revolutionize how we share information.

For a sampling of different types of blogs, check out:

Time's 50 Coolest Blogs for 2005

<http://www.time.com/time/business/article/0,8599,1072872,00.html>

WWW (Websites Worth Watching)

1. www.bloglines.com – click on the Directory tab and then click on any link that looks interesting. You can just read the headlines or click on the links for the full story from the publisher.
2. www.blogger.com – Create and read blogs
3. www.newsgator.com – RSS reader; basic version is free
4. www.pluck.com – RSS reader, two free versions; one plugs into IE, the other plugs into any other browser

Why are blogs so popular?

Some blogs are pretty outrageous while others are merely mundane. Creativity knows no bounds on the web; people are constantly searching for that "it" factor. Blogs aren't relegated to individuals though. Many companies will create a blog in order to incite buzz over a certain service, person, or product. In effect, they are becoming the new marketing tool for our constantly online society. Word of caution: Many budding journalists can write anything they want so be careful what the source is before you start passing on your newfound information to others. Remember that everyone has an opinion (no matter if it's truthful or not). And once they post their opinion, it's on the web for anyone to read indefinitely.

RSS - Really Simple Syndication

 or [RSS Feeds](#)

RSS provides an easy way for publishers to get their stories and articles to as many people as they can. Publishers realized a long time ago that not many people will sit and read a newspaper or magazine from cover to cover anymore. **The Solution?** Create a recognizable button (see above) that people will click on to get the stories that interest them most. RSS feeds are similar to a table of contents of all your favorite news articles and blogs in one neat little package. If you're familiar with Windows Explorer for finding and organizing files on your computer, you will be quite comfortable learning how to use RSS.

There are two parts to RSS:


- 1) An RSS document (webpage) must be created and placed on a website. This webpage will usually be accessed by clicking an orange XML button. In order to read the RSS webpage though, you need an RSS reader.
- 2) If you click on an XML button, a webpage will open full of XML coding (similar to HTML). The RSS reader converts the XML code to understandable text (just like browsers do, e.g., Internet Explorer, Firefox, or Netscape). Once you download an RSS reader, right click the orange XML button on a site and click Copy Shortcut. Then paste the URL of the RSS feed into the correct location of your reader. When the publishers update information on their site, your reader will automatically show the most recent additions.

How do I get an RSS reader?

There are two types of RSS readers: **standalone applications** that process feeds from a link on your desktop or **plug-in applications** that work within a browser or email client. If you get a reader that plugs into Internet Explorer, for example, you will be able to add a site's RSS feed quickly while you're browsing. Many readers are FREE; others cost under \$30. If you don't want a lot of features, try one of the free readers like **NewsGator** or **Pluck**. Both work well and provide ample help screens for those just starting out. After you download a reader, start adding feeds either from the built in options or go to your favorite sites and see if they have an XML link. If they do, then add these links manually to the reader.

How do I put an RSS feed on my own website?

To create a feed on your website (so that other people can read your information) you need to create an RSS webpage (similar to html but with an .rss extension) with regularly updated links and information. We stress updated because if the content doesn't change often, your RSS feed will be quickly deleted. Most RSS Feeds are updated daily if not hourly. Then, create an XML link on your home page (like the one listed above). When people view your site, they can add your RSS link to their reader. Contact us for more information or if you need help with this process.

Tip: If you use an RSS reader that plugs into the browser, click on an  button on any webpage and the reader will open and display the headlines automatically.