

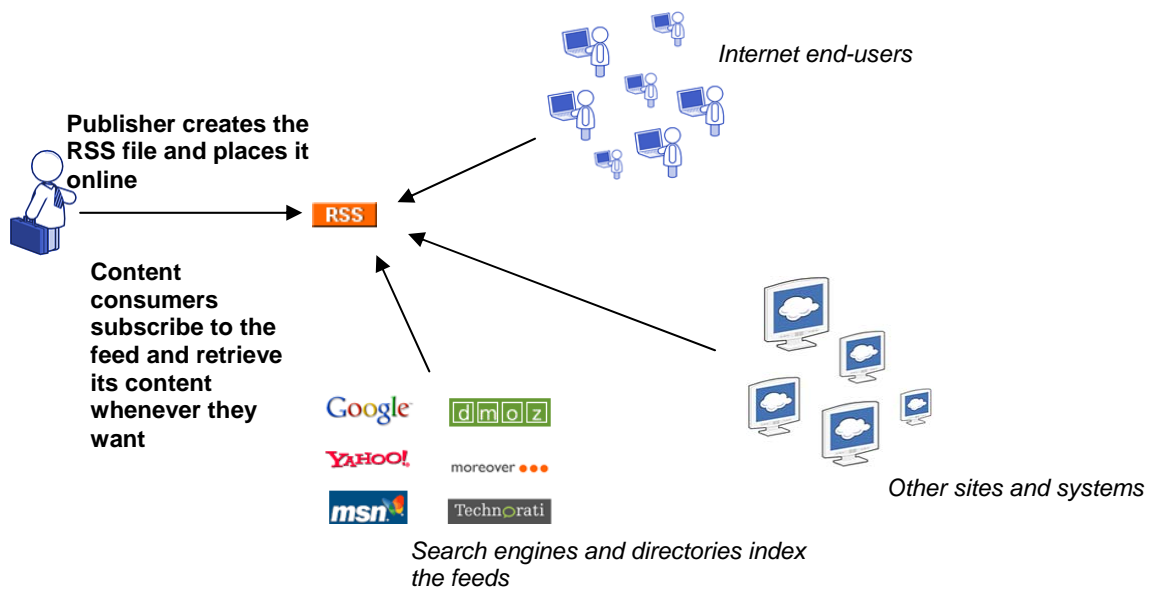
## Definition of RSS Feeds

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RSS stands for “Really Simple Syndication”.

Also called web feeds, RSS is a content delivery vehicle. It is the format used when you want to syndicate news and other web content. When it distributes the content it is called a “feed”.

Originally created by Netscape, the technology behind RSS is well tested. It is a format that describes different kinds of information. RSS feeds (or files) include some **basic information about the RSS feed**, such as its title, description, logo etc, and the actual content you want to deliver.



Typically the RSS document is made available on a web server and can be pulled down by an RSS “reader” (sometimes called an “aggregator”).

RSS is a simple technology that allows you to easily get your new online content updates delivered to your target audiences (*general audiences, subscribers, bloggers, journalists, employees, investors, and other key influencers*), other websites, specialized search engines, directories and other online systems.

RSS easily gets your content delivered, bypassing all types of spam filters that can be so bothersome with e-mail marketing.

**In essence, RSS is the key enabling technology that stands at the forefront of the new world of marketing and PR.**

**Syndication**, enabled by RSS, is the process of making your online content available for re-publication by other websites and actively distributing that content to anyone or any website of relevance for your business.

It makes you distribute your content, makes it more visible online, and you can also use incoming RSS feeds to collect business intelligence and data that helps you understand and quickly adapt to new market situations.

### **Is RSS readily available to the general public?**

Firefox, Safari (the Mac browser), MyYahoo, MY MSN and the personalized Google pages include an RSS reader. In a recent Yahoo survey people who were identified as RSS users by their clickstream were asked about RSS and 82 percent did not even know they were using RSS feeds.

Microsoft's IE 7 due out later this year will include an RSS reader and this will be the tipping point. In the same way as the background technology of email (SMTP) is not known to most people, the acronym RSS will drop out of use as more and more people use the feeds in browsers and personalized pages. "News feeds" or "web feeds" will become a part of our everyday online reading experience.

***"Even if it is something as simple as putting your press releases in an RSS feed, marketers will benefit from early exposure to distributing information via RSS feeds." Forrester Research***

A web feed can be used for any updated content on your website or blog. It is particularly suited to the travel and hospitality industry because they have a wealth of information and news about destinations and activities as well as news about trips, hotels and special offers.

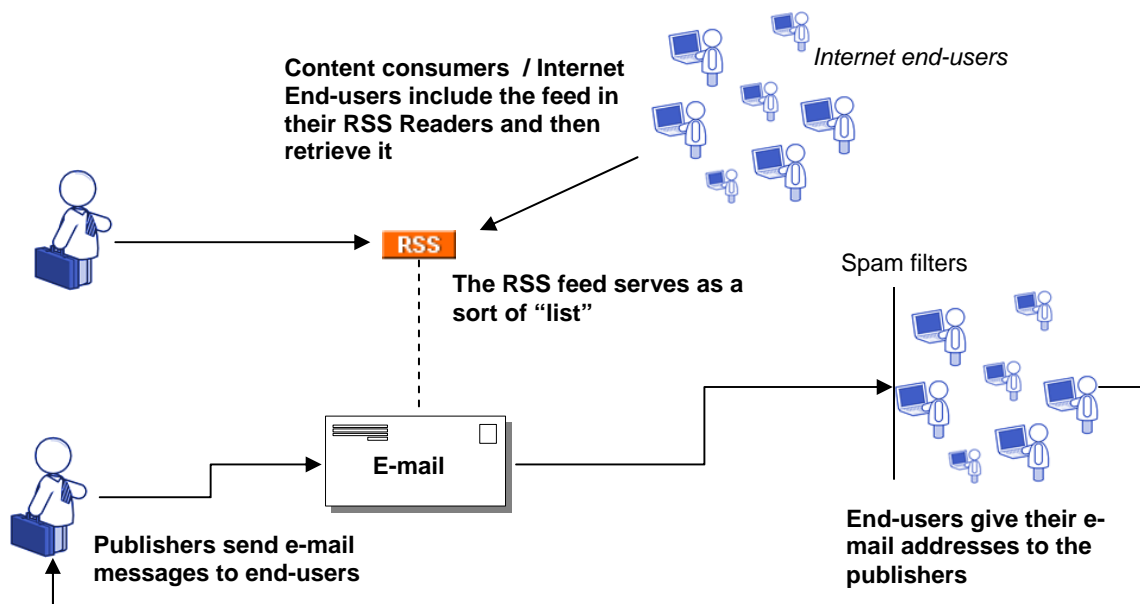
### **Corporate benefits of RSS feeds**

Why should corporations promote the adoption of RSS technology?

This debate has so far focused on the benefits of RSS versus e-mail. The increasing tide of junk mail is giving rise to ever-more draconian anti-spam measures.

It is getting hard for corporate managers to decide which scenario is worse – a flood of unwanted emails each day or the risk of anti-spam software blocking a vital message.

For anyone wanting to send or receive a regular report, message or electronic newsletter, RSS is looking like an increasingly attractive - and secure - option. The end-user can control the flow, both in terms of what is received, its frequency and whether it alerts the users to the arrival of the message. This "pull" aspect of RSS technology fundamentally differentiates it from the "push" of e-mail.



## What can a web feed do for you?

### For the content recipient:

The Internet has provided us with access to information at the touch of a keyboard. However, it is an overwhelming amount of information.

Feeds make it easy to manage this flow of information. Feeds can keep you updated. You get all the latest news right away without having to search the web. And you get only the content you want. You set up your preferences once and the content comes to your desktop. Your subscription is anonymous. You don't have to give out your email address. Feeds allow you to read content updates in your reader – not online. In our fast-paced world with tons of information available, feeds are a great time saver. How many websites have you intended to go back to and then forgotten about them? Even those we bookmark don't get re-visited.

### For a website publisher/company:

Feeds keep your audience constantly updated. It keeps you in communication with your audience. It is the ultimate permission content delivery vehicle.

News is perfect content for a feed. The Internet is now the number one choice for news in the 18 – 54 year old age group. There are so many sources of news that your visitors, and the journalists who cover your industry, won't come to your site every day. But if you offer an RSS feed of your news it pops right into their reader. Journalists use the Internet to research stories. Your feeds could get picked up on multiple sites and come to the attention of journalists when they do an initial search.

If they are already RSS savvy and they use a reader to do their online research, your news feed can be right on their desktop.

Let's say you update your website with product news regularly. If a visitor doesn't come back to your site and see all those updates, she won't know about them. But with a feed she automatically gets the content updates she wants. She may not purchase immediately, but at least she has seen each update. When she does want to buy, she will come to your site.

For a software company, tech articles or support updates get posted on the site. Unless the users remember to visit the site regularly, they could miss important data. Feed it to them and they get it every time. If the headline catches their attention, chances are they'll click through and read the article.

### How RSS Affects Search Engine Visibility

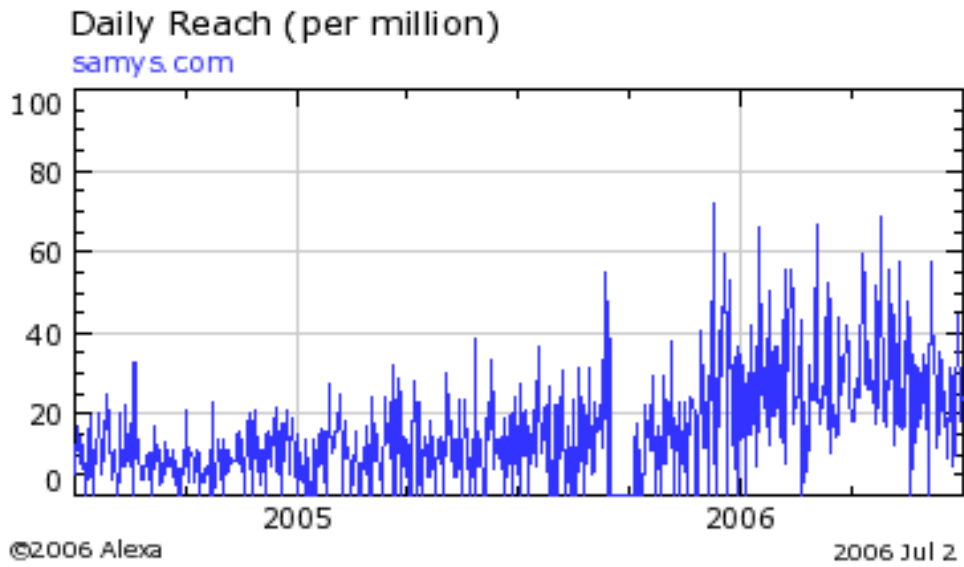
Search engines take note of regularly updated content. A feed brings your site to their attention. Because a feed is machine-readable, the search software doesn't have to figure out which parts of the website are important and which parts are just the navigation and presentation. By registering your feeds with the search engines, news aggregators and feed directories you increase your search visibility.

Search engines such as Google, Yahoo! MSN and AOL are currently making it easy to add feeds to their index via the personalized pages. They are paying attention to feeds and it shows in the increase in search ranking once you add a feed to your content. In most cases within a few months the feed is the number one driver of traffic to the site.

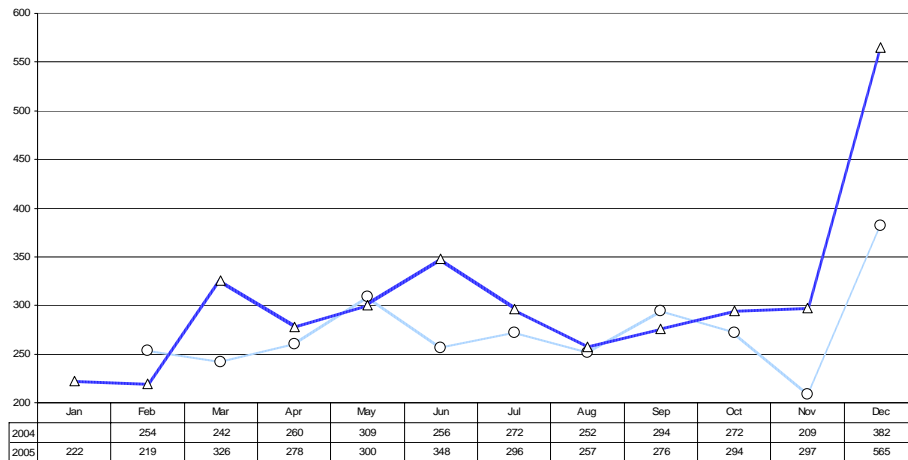
### How RSS Increases Traffic

Once your content is available in a feed it gets picked up by news aggregators like Technorati, Syndic8, Moreover, PubSub and many more. These sites have audiences who may not have seen your content on your site. By syndicating the content you are making it visible to new audiences. They click on links in the articles and come to your website.

This website added RSS feeds in Q1 2005. This is their traffic graph from Alexa.com



Not only did their traffic increase their conversion rate increased dramatically as well.



The light blue line is 2004 and the dark blue line is 2005

## Where Are Web Feeds Headed?

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*"Consumers are adopting **Really Simple Syndication (RSS)** at an astounding rate. Their recent report states that some 30 percent of businesses surveyed added **content syndication** in feeds due to customer demand. Now is the time to implement a feed strategy." **JupiterResearch***

*"Even if it's something as simple as putting press releases in an RSS feed marketers will benefit from early exposure to distributing information via RSS — and receive valuable feedback from key constituents on what types of content they would like to have." **Forrester Research***

*"The most compelling use of RSS is that it lets users read dozens of websites, all on the same page. The sites can be scanned in seconds rather than having to be laboriously loaded individually." **BBC Magazine***

*"With thousands of sites now RSS-enabled and more on the way, RSS has become perhaps the most visible XML success story to date. RSS democratizes news distribution by making everyone a potential news provider. It leverages the Web's most valuable asset, content, and makes displaying high-quality relevant news on your site easy. Soon we'll see RSS portals with user-rated channels, cool RSS site of the day, build your own topic-specific portal, and highly relevant search engines."*  
**Web Reference**