

Content Management Systems and Internet Marking

This document provides support information for the University of Houston Small Business Development Center workshop on Internet Marketing given on February 23, 2005. The topic for the evening was Content Management Systems and how this type of solution can be used to help us take our Internet Marketing further, and make our work easier.

Really Simple Syndication (RSS)

RSS is a technology that allows website information to be syndicated for use in other websites, or to individuals through news reader software. For the website owner that is adding new content frequently, syndication offers many opportunities for increasing traffic to the web site. Before getting into how RSS can help us increase traffic to our website, lets consider just the basics of how RSS works.

RSS Sample Code

Below is a very short sample of the data you would find in an RSS feed file without a news reader. One can get the contents of an RSS file on a website using a URL in the similar manner in which we would get a standard HTML file. For example, let us assume that the RSS file below was read by accessing the feed at "http://www.DParsons.com/dpo_rss". If we did not have RSS reader software installed as an add-on to our browser, we would get back similar data to the example on the next page. An RSS feed file contains plain text, and it follows a very specific set of format rules.

NOTE: People that have RSS news reader software don't have to know anything about the RSS code in those files. Also, website owners that have websites that can generate and read RSS data don't have to worry about the technical details of RSS formatted data. The only people that do have to concern themselves with those technical details are those that are writing the software that reads or creates RSS data. The example below is presented to to help demystify the whole RSS mechanism. The important point for us is that we know to turn RSS on in our website, and that we publish content with the knowledge that it will automatically be made available to anyone that is interested through an RSS feed file.

NOTE: The highlighted fields in the RSS code below represent information that can contain valuable target key phrases for SEO purposes.

```
<rss version="0.92" xml:base="http://www.dparsons.com">
<channel>
  <title>Website Title Here</title>
  <link>http://www.dparsons.com/</link>
  <description>Website Description goes here.</description>
  <language>en</language>
  <item>
    <title>Article 1 Title Here</title>
    <link>http://www.dparsons.com/article_1_url/</link>
    <description>Article 1 description goes here.</description>
    <pubDate>Wed, 16 Feb 2005 16:19:36 -0600</pubDate>
  </item>
  <item>
    <title>Article 2 Title Here </title>
    <link>http://www.dparsons.com/article_2_url/</link>
    <description>Article 2 description goes here.</description>
    <pubDate>Fri, 18 Feb 2005 10:49:36 -0600</pubDate>
  </item>
</channel>
</rss>
```

The sample above is an abbreviated example of a real RSS feed. Every piece of information in the file is delimited by start tag and end tag. The main content of the file is inside off the <channel> start tag, and <channel> end tag. The RSS feed has its own <title>, <link>, and <description> these come right after the start <channel> tag. They would be the Title, Description for the overall file, and the Link is to the website that provides the feed data. This particular example also has two <item>s. Each of those items could be representing new blog entries, new pages added to the site, new products that have been posted, announcements of a sale on the web site, or any one of several other possibilities.

Individuals can subscribe to your website's RSS feed with some form of RSS reader software. One good example of one of these programs is the ThunderBird e-mail and news reader client software (<http://www.mozilla.org/products/thunderbird/>). Yahoo also lets users add RSS news feeds to their MyYahoo pages. The next major revisions of Microsoft Windows XP (code named Longhorn), and Apple Macintosh OS X (code named Tiger) will have RSS reader functionality built in. As a result, getting information through RSS feeds will become mainstream before long.

Other websites can subscribe to your RSS feed, displaying content that you set up for syndication. They would typically list each of the items from your feed. They would display the article title (which should contain your target keywords), a short description of the main article on your website (which should also contain your target keywords), and a link to the page that has the complete article, which you are working to rank in the search engines.

Other RSS Reader solutions include:

<http://www.rssreader.com/> - Standalone Program Dedicated to Reading RSS Feeds

<http://www.pluck.com/> - RSS Reader plugin for Microsoft Internet Explorer

<http://my.yahoo.com/s/about/rss/index.html> - Web Based Reader Through Yahoo

The following article was copied from the [rss-specifications.com](http://www.rss-specifications.com) website at

<http://www.rss-specifications.com/blog.htm#132>

RSS News You Choose

Why is RSS So Magical?

The answer is simple: RSS is news you choose.

How Does it Work?

Publishers and webmasters provide content and news in an RSS feed. Users view the content of interest in an RSS reader or news aggregator. The aggregator or reader contains the collection of feeds that are of interest to the user. As the RSS feed is updated the content in the reader or aggregator updates with the new information. At any point, users can remove a feed from their aggregator or reader and no longer receive information from that source. Ultimately, the user is choosing the news and content they wish to view.

As RSS has increased in popularity more and more webmasters and publishers have adopted RSS as an alternative communication stream. Webmasters use an RSS graphic to indicate the content is available via RSS.

RSS Aggregators and News Readers

Generally, there are three types of RSS readers that users use to view feeds that they've subscribed to. Feeds can be viewed in a desktop application, web-based aggregator, or plug-in aggregator.

Desktop RSS Readers

Standalone desktop applications generally run in the background, similar to an e-mail client, automatically refreshing headlines as news feeds are updated. The RSS readers collect the feeds and refresh items in the feeds each time they are updated. An example of a popular standalone desktop RSS reader is: FeedDemon - <http://www.feeddemon.com>

Web Based Aggregators

Web-based news aggregators are online services. In simple terms, you can personalize a web page. Each time that page is accessed or each time you login to the service, the web page news headlines from feeds that you have selected will refresh. Examples of popular web-based RSS aggregators are: SurfPack - <http://www.surfpack.com> , FeedScout - <http://www.feedscout.com> or ActiveWeb Reader - <http://www.deskshare.com/awr.aspx> . My.Yahoo even has the option of including RSS feeds on My.Yahoo start pages.

Plug-in Readers

Plug-in news aggregators expand the functionality of existing applications to allow users to view RSS feeds from within an existing program. Some plug-ins work with web browsers; others work with e-mail clients. An example of a plugin is: NewsGator Outlook -

<http://www.newsgator.com/outlook.aspx>

Websites containing RSS feeds usually have a colorful graphic indicating the availability of an RSS feed. The graphic is usually marked 'RSS' or 'XML'. Simply click the graphic and enter the URL of the file into the reader. Regardless of the RSS reader or news aggregator used by web surfers, the process of adding feeds is generally simple. Web surfers need only to enter the URL of the RSS feed that they wish to view into their news reader. Each time the reader refreshes the feed the information contained within the feed is updated and new content in the feed will appear in the RSS reader.

Finding Feeds

In order to find topic-specific feeds, conduct a search on the RSS search engines available at RSS Specifications - <http://www.rss-specifications.com/rss-directory.htm> or try RSS Locator - <http://www.rss-locator.com>.

About the "RSS News You Choose" Author:

Sharon Housley manages marketing for FeedForAll <http://www.feedforall.com> software for creating, editing and publishing RSS feeds and NotePage, Inc. <http://www.notepage.net> a wireless messaging software company.

NOTE: Although Sharon Housley does not go into how she is using RSS News to help promote her own websites, she is using the technique extensively. The article by Robin Good covers some of those points.

http://www.masternewmedia.org/news/2005/01/27/smart_online_marketing_promotion_tactics.htm

Finding RSS Feeds:

Searching for RSS Feed Articles by Keywords, Results Can Be a Feed:

<http://news.search.yahoo.com/>

<http://search.msn.com/news/>

Directories:

<http://www.syndic8.com/>

<http://chordata.geckotribe.com/>

<http://www.hebig.org/blogs/archives/main/000877.php>

<http://www.2rss.com/>

http://dmoz.org/Reference/Libraries/Library_and_Information_Science/Technical_Services/Cataloguing/Metadata/RDF/Applications/RSS/News_Readers/

http://dir.yahoo.com/Computers_and_Internet/Data_Formats/XML_eXtensible_Markup_Language/_RSS

<http://my.yahoo.com/s/publishers.html>

RSS Tools & Info:

<http://www.rss-specifications.com/>

<http://www.feedforall.com/index.htm>

<http://www.create-rss.com/>
<http://www.make-rss-feeds.com/>
<http://www.blog-connection.com/>

CMS Information Resources

Most of the information presented in this report can be applied to many of the other CMS solutions that are available. Since Drupal seems to fit our SEO requirements better than most of the other solutions, the information I present here primarily focuses on Drupal.

Below are some links to websites that can be helpful for gathering information about the Content Management Systems that are available, and for facilitating the comparison process.

- [Http://www.OpenSourceCMS.com/](http://www.OpenSourceCMS.com/)
- <http://www.CMSMatrix.org/>
- <http://www.Drupal.org/>

Some websites that were developed with Drupal include:

- <http://www.spreadfirefox.com/>
- <http://www.debianplanet.com/>
- <http://www.blakeross.com/>
- <http://www.DParsons.com/>
- <http://daisy.dparsons.com/> to be moved to <http://www.daisysoap.com/>
- <http://www.mplsparkwatch.org/>
- <http://biggertent.com/>
- <http://www.democracyforwashington.com/civicspace-0.5/>
- <http://www.brewingbooks.com/>
- <http://www.lisbon-guide.info/>

Some websites developed with other CMS Solutions:

<http://www.creativair.com/cva/> - osCommerce
http://mamboserver.com/cat/Demo_Site/ - Mambo (demo site)

Wikipedia Links to Related Information

- Content Management System:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Content_management_system
- Drupal:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drupal>

- List of Content Management Systems:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_content_management_systems

Options for Starting a Drupal CMS Based Website

There are several ways in which you can start a website based on the Drupal CMS solution. Three options are listed below.

Drupal Host Account

Find a host provider that specifically sells Drupal Host Accounts. With this solution, you get a virtual host account with Drupal already installed and ready to go. Once the account is activated, you log in and start configuring & customizing Drupal to meet your website needs. From there, you start populating your website with content.

Requirements: None. The account will have all of the requirements built into the account.

Advantages:

- No installation and basic setup configuration needed. Once logged in, you start configuring the website to meet your needs.

Disadvantages:

- Difficult to find providers that offer this service.
- Monthly fee likely to be more (start at about \$25/mo and go up from there).

Use Host Account that includes Fantastico Script Installer

Find a host provider that includes cPanel with Fantastico for managing your account. cPanel is the utility that allows you to control your host account, and it usually comes with the Fantastico module. Fantastico allows you to install any one of several CMS solutions that the host provider offers. Fantastico handles the technical details of installing the CMS for you. Usually Drupal is one of the CMS options.

Links:

- cPanel: <http://www.cpanel.net/>
NOTE: Most host providers that have cPanel also offer Fantastico as part of the package.
Example cPanel Host Provider: <http://www.vizaweb.com/compare.php>

Requirements:

- ✓ Virtual or Dedicated Host Account
- ✓ cPanel and Fantastico Included with the Account
- ✓ Should be based on Linux OS (not Windows)
- ✓ Should be based on Apache webserver (not MS Internet Information Server)
- ✓ Allows using PHP scripting in the account

- ✓ At least 1 MySQL database

Advantages: Very simple to get setup. The least expensive solution possible. Virtual host accounts are typically available in the \$10 - \$20/mo price range. The requirements are commonly available in a large percentage of host accounts on the market.

Disadvantages: None

Hire Consultant to for Install, Config, Customize

If you are certain that you will not be able to set up a Drupal website on your own, you might consider finding someone that is experienced in setting up a Drupal website for you. This solution will have the most expensive start up cost of the options listed here. This will also likely

Requirements:

- ✓ Consultant, Preferably with knowledge of SEO methods for Taxonomy module setup
- ✓ Virtual or Dedicated Host Account
- ✓ The account will need to be on Linux OS
- ✓ Apache as the webserver
- ✓ Allows using PHP scripting in the account
- ✓ comes with at least 1 MySQL database.

Advantages: Easiest and most likely the fastest of the solutions listed here.

Disadvantages: Most expensive start up costs of all of the options presented here. However, this should be considerably less than hiring someone to develop a complete website from scratch.

For People With Established Websites

If you have an established website, switching to a CMS solution would be a major project on its own. To get blog and RSS functionality, you might consider adding the blog within your existing site. In addition to everything else you have on your website, you can have a link to <http://www.yourdomain.com/blog/>, and your blog solution would be in the blog folder on your website. For this, you could easily use Blogger which is free. A Blogger account is also easy to setup.

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