

How to Get Your Web Site Content Syndicated

By Kalena Jordan

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[Kalena] Following our successful experiment of setting up a news feed for my site, search engine marketer Dan Thies and I have joined forces to write this article to show other webmasters how they can do the same for their own sites.

But before we get ahead of ourselves, let me set the scene...

Being the web-mistress of a resource site about search engine marketing, I'm always on the lookout for new ways to promote my site. Like many other web site owners, I don't have an enormous marketing budget and must rely on my own resources to spread the word about my content.

As you would expect, one effective method of promotion that I utilize is search engine optimization. This ensures the search engines regularly visit my site and update my pages in their indexes. Another is the circulation of a regular newsletter. But the real secret to attracting more traffic is to add bucket loads of fresh content. Providing you promote this new content effectively, it can act like a magnet on your site, pulling in new visitors every single day and giving you the opportunity to turn those visitors into loyal followers or, (if you sell products and services), paying customers.

Fresh content improves the "stickiness" of your site too - giving visitors a reason to return to your site on a regular basis. And of course the search engines reward popular sites with more link popularity and a higher search ranking. Adding new site content is one thing, but just how do you spread the word about this new content and place it in front of potential visitors?

Well take my site for example. I had recently added a web log (http://www.high-search-engine-ranking.com/search_engine_news_blog.htm) (known on the Internet as a "blog") about the search engine industry, which I updated daily with news and articles. I had seen similar sites having their content syndicated on industry news portals such as Moreover (<http://www.moreover.com/>), ClickZ (<http://www.clickz.com/>), ZDNet (<http://www.zdnet.com/>) etc and I wanted a piece of the action. Problem was I had no idea how to go about this.

A fellow moderator in the ihelpyou search engine forums (<http://www.ihelpyouservices.com/forums/>) (Dan) told me I required an "RSS Feed" - a special file containing the content I wanted syndicated - so that the news sites could grab it from my site instantly. Dan offered to give me a hand to set up the file and so began our quest! I'll let Dan take over from here and explain exactly how we did it and how you can set up your own news feed. Here's Dan...

[Dan] Thanks Kalena. An RSS news feed provides information about your site's content that enables other sites to effectively link to it. There are actually a few different flavors of RSS - for purposes of this article, we'll work with RSS version 0.91, which is the most commonly used on the web today. We'll also focus on the very basic elements of a news feed, and leave the advanced stuff for another time.

The RSS file itself is a fairly simple text file. Although it uses an XML language format, the code will be pretty familiar to anyone who has worked with HTML to edit web pages.

Let's look at a simplified version of the RSS file we created for Kalena's site:

```
?xml version="1.0" encoding="ISO-8859-1" ?
```

```
rss version="0.91"
```

```
channel
```

```
titleSearch Engine News Blog/title
```

```
linkhttp://www.high-search-engine-ranking.com/search_engine_news_blog.htm/link
```

```
descriptionsearch engine news web log, tracking daily developments in the search engine optimization industry/description
```

```
languageen-us/language
```

```
copyrightCopyright 2002./copyright
```

```
webMasterinfo@high-search-engine-ranking.com/webMaster
```

```
image
```

```
titleSearch Engine News Blog/title
```

```
urlhttp://www.high-search-engine-ranking.com/senblogotiny.jpg/url
```

```
linkhttp://www.high-search-engine-ranking.com/search_engine_news_blog.htm/link
```

```
width90/width
```

```
height52/height
```

```
descriptionSearch Engine News Blog/description
```

```
/image
```

```
item
```

```
titleGoogle Defines Ethical SEO/title
```

link<http://www.high-search-engine-ranking.com/GoogleDefinesEthicalSEO.htm/link>

/item

item

titleYahoo Offends Gay Community in UK/title

link<http://www.high-search-engine-ranking.com/YahooOffendsGayCommunityInUK.htm/link>

/item

/channel

/rss

An RSS feed consists of one or more "channels." A single channel will be sufficient for the majority of sites. Each channel, in turn, contains information about one or more news articles.

A channel consists of the following required information:

- Title: the name of the channel (in the above example, Kalena's channel title is called "Search Engine News Blog")
- Link: the URL for the channel's main web page (the page on Kalena's site where the news items are displayed)
- Description: a description of the channel's purpose and content

The first two lines in our RSS feed example define this as an RSS feed. The channel tag comes next and contains the required information about this news channel (as listed above). Optional information follows these items and includes language, copyright info, contact email addresses, and an image (logo) that can be displayed with the channel's headlines. The above example contains all these options, but you can leave these out of your own feed if you prefer.

In addition to the required information, the channel must contain at least one news item.

News items consist of the following:

- Title: this is the headline that will be displayed for the news item
- Link: the URL where the full news item can be found (for best results, each item should be on its own unique web page)
- Description: a description of the news item - sometimes referred to as a "teaser."

The first two elements are the minimum expected by nearly all sites that carry headlines. The description field is optional, as some syndicators will ignore this field altogether, posting only the item headline. Because of this, Kalena's RSS file does not include item descriptions.

Below that, you'll see two news items listed, "Google Defines Ethical SEO" and "Yahoo Offends Gay Community in UK". Additional news items would follow the same format and be listed directly below within item /item tags. Finally, the last two lines of the feed are closing tags - XML, like HTML, requires opening and closing tags.

To preview what Kalena's RSS feed looks like when syndicated, visit here:

[http://www.wc.cc.va.us/services/news/preview.asp?
c=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.high-search-engine-ranking.com%2Fsenb.rss](http://www.wc.cc.va.us/services/news/preview.asp?c=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.high-search-engine-ranking.com%2Fsenb.rss)

You can create your own simple RSS file with just about any text editor - I set up the sample above with Notepad. Once you've created the text file, do the following:

1. Save the file with .rss as the extension (example: mynews.rss) and upload it to the main folder of your website.
2. Validate your RSS feed by running it through the RSS Validator <http://feeds.archive.org/validator/> to make sure it's set up correctly.
3. Display the "valid RSS" logo on your site (available from the link above) and provide a visible link to your feed (link: <http://www.mydomain.com/mynews.rss>) from your site page/s. You could say something like Kalena uses on her site: "Webmasters! Click below to feature our Search Engine News Blog headlines on your site. link: RSS Feed For This Page."
4. (optional) Create a javascript version of the RSS feed to enable other webmasters to syndicate your content on their sites (the Wytheville Community College News Center <http://www.wc.cc.va.us/services/news/default.asp> provides this service for free).
5. Submit your feed to content aggregators. Some sources are provided below.
6. Update your feed regularly by adding new items to the .rss file and ensuring each item has it's own link on your web site.
7. To keep your feed fresh, try to keep your channel items to a maximum of five, deleting older items from your feed as you update it. The dates next to your news items will adjust depending on when content aggregators pick them up.

So, that's the basics of RSS! We have only been able to scratch the surface in this short lesson, but it's enough to get you started. A complete description of the RSS 0.91 format can be found at <http://backend.userland.com/rss> , and more resources on creating your own newsfeed can be found here:

Set Up Your Own Newsfeed <http://www.internet-tips.net/Homepages/newsfeeds.htm>
RSS: Lo-Fi Content Syndication http://www.econtentmag.com/r4/2002/bannan1_02.html
Blogify Your Page <http://logicerror.com/blogifyYourPage>
Content Syndication With RSS (Blog about RSS) <http://rss.benhammersley.com/>

[Kalena] Thanks Dan. Ok, so your feed is created, you've verified it works and you've set up the code and Javascript on your site so that webmasters and content syndicators can grab it easily. But you're not finished yet! Now you need to spread the word about your feed. Here are a few content aggregators where you can register your newsfeed:

Syndic8 <http://www.syndic8.com/>
Moreover <http://www.moreover.com/>
Aggregator Userland <http://aggregator.userland.com/>
News is Free <http://www.newsisfree.com/>
News Knowledge <http://www.newsknowledge.com/>

You only need to do this once and then syndicators tracking your feed automatically pick up your new feed items as you update them. You can also download one of these RSS readers to examine your own newsfeed:

<http://www.feedreader.com/>
<http://www.headlineviewer.com/>

So there you go. Not as difficult as you thought huh? With a little effort, your site can be rubbing shoulders with the big players on major news portals. Enjoy the traffic!

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