The Business Case for
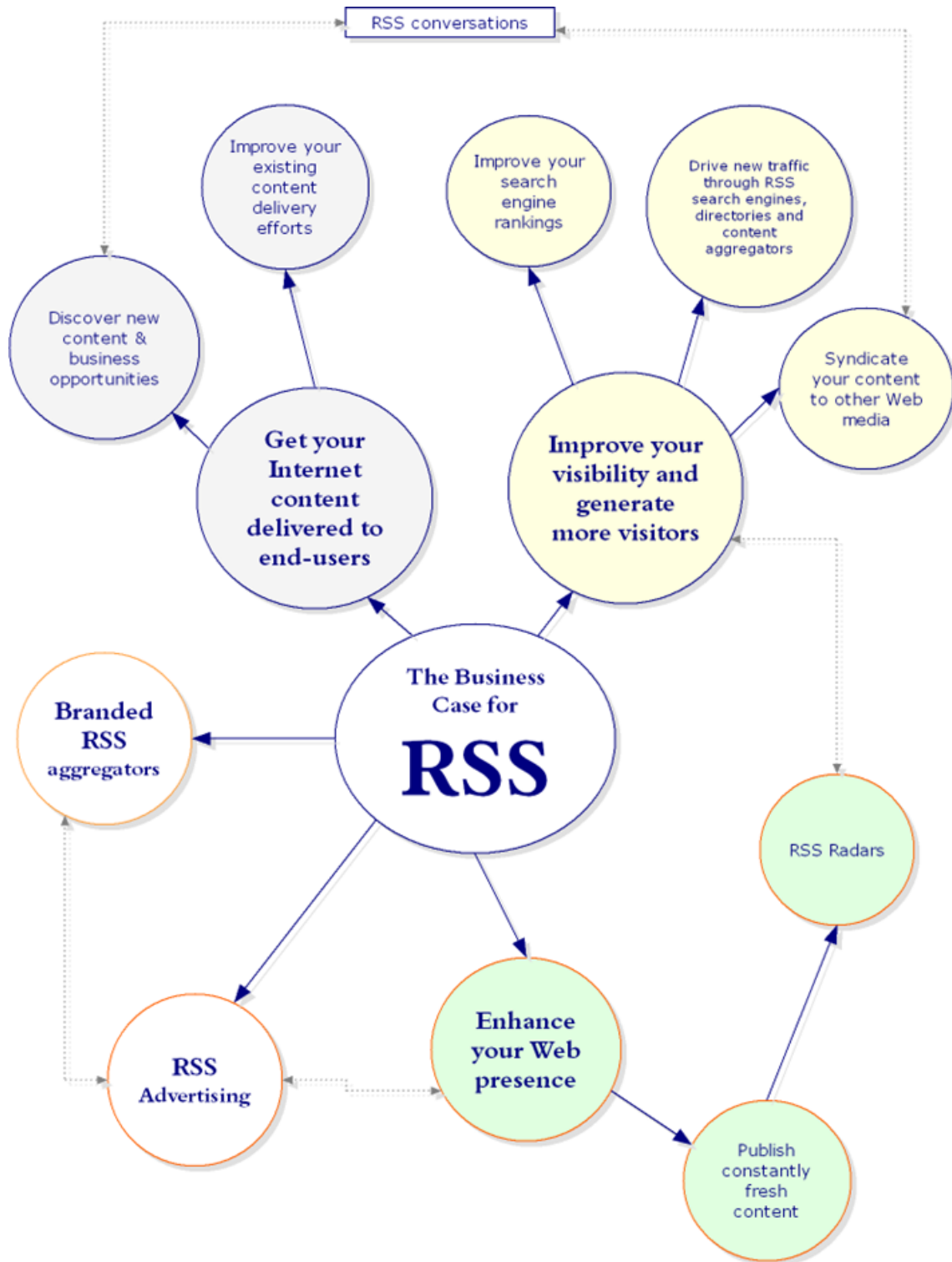
RSS

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Based on [Unleash the Marketing & Publishing Power of RSS](#)

RSS conversations

Improve your existing content delivery efforts

Improve your search engine rankings

Drive new traffic through RSS search engines, directories and content aggregators

Discover new content & business opportunities

Get your Internet content delivered to end-users

Improve your visibility and generate more visitors

Syndicate your content to other Web media

The Business Case for

RSS

Branded RSS aggregators

RSS Radars

RSS Advertising

Enhance your Web presence

Publish constantly fresh content

The Business Case for RSS: Introduction

E-mail marketing and publishing, search engine marketing and optimization, business blogging, internet advertising, digital public relations, branding, e-commerce and others ... all key elements of a strong marketing mix.

And yet each of these is often regarded nearly as a separate entity, being driven by different corporate roles and having its own proprietary set of internet tools.

True, there are some tools being used for multiple purposes, but never before has there been a single tool to improve, enhance and power all of them, without prejudice.

But RSS is such a tool. Misunderstood by most marketers, overlooked by many end-users, it has the potential to power the entire internet marketing mix. It is not the solution to all of our problems, but it is the one tool that can have the most profound affect on our internet marketing and business results in 2005 and beyond.

The purpose of this report is to demonstrate just how RSS can help you improve your bottom-line and show you how to integrate it within all of your internet marketing and publishing activities.

It aims to be the showcase of what you can do with RSS and to show you without dispute that there is in fact a strong business case behind the mystified word you've been hearing lately.

Learn to use it and learn to take advantage of it. Now, when most other marketers still misunderstand it and do not see clearly how they can benefit from it, is your opportunity.

To your success!

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Internet Marketing in Trouble

Is Your Content Getting Delivered?

- **Most of your internet content never reaches your recipients**. E-mail content is blocked by spam filters or stopped by recently changed e-mail addresses. When it is delivered, the recipients mostly don't read it. Chances are that **more than half** of your e-mail subscribers aren't getting your messages or aren't reading them.

- [DoubleClick](), a company that delivers millions of e-mail messages for its clients, reports (*Q3 2004 Email Trend Report*) that in Q3 2004 the average e-mail delivery rate grew slightly to **89.3%**, while the average open rate is **only 34.3%**. The average click-through rate is **8.3%**. The good news is that the click-to-purchase conversion rate grew to **4.2%**, but having **only 34.3%** of all internet content read is still not something to be enthusiastic about.

- If more than half of your subscribers aren't getting your content, that's more than **50% of lost sales and relationship opportunities**. How much does that amount to in losses in a few years?

- Important messages and updates for your existing customers are getting lost as well. Imagine the negative impact this is having on your follow-up sales and after-purchase relationship building activities?

- People are afraid of subscribing to your e-mail newsletters; they cannot control the inflow of information as it is, increasing it only means more trouble.

- The US CAN-SPAM legislation is putting legitimate e-mail publishers at risk, enforcing rules that instead of being dangerous for the real spammers actually threaten legitimate senders.

   This is the internet marketing reality in 2005.

The Question of Further Usefulness of E-mail

The key problem of internet marketing is that **companies are dependant on e-mail to get their internet content delivered to their target audiences**. Marketers are heavily depending on e-mail to communicate with their customers, build relationships with them and sell to them.

On the other side of the river, **consumers are depending on e-mail** to receive the content they want to receive and stay in touch with the companies that matter to them.

But while marketers and publishers are **fighting to get content delivered** to our audiences, internet users are **fighting for better control** of their content consumption … and sometimes even fighting to get the content they want.

The key problem we are all facing is the arguable inadequacy of e-mail to further serve us as the preferred content delivery and content consumption channel.

SPAM, enabled by the "democratic" nature of e-mail, has created such content delivery and consumption barriers that the entire internet content delivery process is in peril.

A] The first step in getting e-mail content delivered is acquiring the recipient's e-mail address and permission. A daunting task, considering that most internet users do not want to receive more e-mail, since their inboxes already resemble a tropic jungle.

B] After finally getting the e-mail address and sending our e-mailing, our messages are faced with various spam barricades from the recipient's Internet Service Provider.

C] After getting through the ISP barricades our message needs to "combat" the various filters in place on the user-side, such as third-party spam filters, usually partnered with an e-mail client spam filter. All this to make sure that nothing that even looks like spam gets through.

D] Then, the user still quickly scans the messages, eliminating the most obvious spam, and on top of that often also performs an in-depth scan to finally decide what messages to delete, move to the dreaded "to read" folder (which never gets read) or actually read.

There are just too many barriers on the way to make this a truly effective delivery system.

Believe it or not, people often call their recipients by phone to make sure they received their message. Sort of defeats the purpose of e-mail, doesn't it?

All of this a consequence of SPAM.

Certain solutions that might "cure" the spam problem are already in development, among those the Sender ID (intended to verify an e-mail sender's identity), being developed by Microsoft. But these are still far from being applied to everyday e-mail use.

In addition, it seems that e-mail postage via the Bonded Sender Program is also under strong consideration, which means more bad news for e-mail publishers. The Bonded Sender Program would require e-mail senders to pay a certain fee to get their e-mail messages delivered, just like traditional mail postage. If this program becomes a hard reality, what will small businesses and internet entrepreneurs do? Especially considering their midget budgets …

The future of e-mail does not look rosy.

But all of this is not to say that e-mail is no longer a valid option and that e-mail marketers should just stop using it.

Quite on the contrary.

According to a new study from the [Winterberry group](#) e-mail campaigns generate a **$15.50 return per email-marketing dollar spent**. That's roughly 17% more than in direct-mail campaigns and 73% more than telemarketing campaigns.

E-mail, regardless of its problems, still works and is still the primary internet content consumption channel for the majority of internet users. For most internet marketers and publishers, ceasing to use it would be like shooting themselves in the foot.

But we must still admit that e-mail is no longer the content delivery vehicle it once was, and that we now need to start complimenting it with other channels.

The Search Engine Dilemma

The e-mail content delivery problem is joined with the ever-growing number of websites, all competing for the attention of the same visitors and the same search engines.

Search engines are still the #1 traffic generator for most websites, but getting high rankings for our website is getting more difficult every day.

If our prospects and customers cannot find us, how can we sell to them and build relationships with them?

We could use Pay-Per-Click advertising (sponsored keywords), but Pay-Per-Click prices are getting completely out of control. Many marketers can no longer keep up with high prices and can no longer generate a positive ROI through their PPC campaigns. The demand is just too high.

The Internet Marketing Evolution

Faced with these problems, internet marketing has been quietly evolving since 2003 and 2004, since a small minority of marketers have started recognizing the marketing power of RSS.

Why an evolution?

Because RSS is like no other marketing channel up to date.

- Its ability to influence all of the key internet marketing elements, especially content delivery to end-users and improving search engine rankings, is unprecedented. RSS is a simple tool that performs a multitude of marketing functions.

- It is unique in the way it forces marketers to become more relevant and sensitive to the needs of their target audiences, as we are going to see in the following pages.

What is RSS?

RSS is a technology that has the potential of overcoming many of the internet marketing challenges we are facing today and becoming a strong, if not preferred, content delivery vehicle.

The simple RSS explanation from the marketing point of view is that RSS is a simple to use publishing tool for marketers and publishers, which allows them to get their content delivered to end-users and other "content consumers", enabling marketers and publishers to better achieve their business goals.

While achieving not more than marginal penetration, its usage is growing with astounding speed. RSS is already used by the majority of the most reputable media sites, by a satisfactory number of corporations and by almost "all" bloggers.

According to a report from the Pew Internet & American Life Project, based on two nationwide phone surveys conducted in the U.S. in November (1861 internet users), 5% (6 million) Americans online consume news and information through RSS or XLM aggregators. Source: ClickZ

RSS is a content delivery channel that allows you to **easily deliver internet content to your target audiences** (end-users), while eliminating a large part of the external noise and shortcomings of other delivery channels.

In addition, RSS content can be delivered to **other websites**; such as search engines, specialized RSS directories, special content aggregation sites and other site types. All of this using just one technology …

What Are RSS Feeds?

RSS content is delivered through RSS feeds --- simple files structured in a specific way [xml].

These files include some **basic information about the RSS feed** (such as RSS feed title, logo, description, URL etc.) and the actual content in the form of **individual content items**. These content items are individual stories or articles (usually just descriptions of articles actually published on the internet publisher's web site), **presented in a linear list**.

To better understand this, take a look at the example below, taken from MarketingSherpa's RSS feed:

```
Case Study::How Dirt Devil's Site Gets Unusually High Sales (Includes Check
Out Process Test Results)
CHALLENGE: "When I started, we spent the first several months just working on
the Internet strategy, because there wasn't really one," says Michael
Crowdes, Manager Interactive Marketing & eCommerce for Royal Appliance
Manufacturing - mak...
Last changed: Tue, 05 Oct 2004 00:00:00 EST

Interview::Is Your Yellow Pages Ad Working? Top 4 Most Common Advertiser
Mistakes
"15 billion look-ups are conducted using print yellow pages in the US
annually," says Christopher Bacey, Director Business Communications at the
Yellow Pages Integrated Media Association. Search may be the hot marketing
flavor du jour, ...
Last changed: Mon, 04 Oct 2004 00:00:00 EST

Interview::PR Interview: How to Get Covered by Electronic Design Magazine
Mark David, Editor-in-Chief Electronic Design 45 Eisenhower Drive Paramus, NJ
07652 201-845-2467 http://www.elecdesign.com mdavid@penton.com -> Reach
145,000 circulation -> David's background Mark David began his car...
Last changed: Fri, 01 Oct 2004 00:00:00 EST
```

This is what a typical RSS feed might look like if viewed with an appropriate RSS "reading tool".

As you can see, the feed example includes three individual content items, presented in a linear list. Each item has its own **title** and **description**.

When an end-user clicks on one of these titles, he is usually taken to the full-text version of the content item on the publisher's website.

There are many different RSS versions, and many different ways in which RSS feeds can be formatted, although all are more or less standardized. For instance, RSS 2.0 feeds can provide full-text content items, and so on.

But this isn't important just yet …

Reading RSS Feeds

In order to read your RSS content and subscribe to it, end-users need an RSS aggregator.

RSS aggregators are special tools that can take an RSS feed and display it to the end-user. They come in many different forms and flavors, but the most popular are desktop applications and RSS aggregation Web services.

In the case of desktop RSS aggregators, end-users need to download them to their computers and install them there. RSS aggregation Web services on the other hand are websites where users can create their own accounts and then use those websites to view RSS content directly from their Web browsers.

After installing an RSS aggregator or registering at a web-based RSS aggregator web service, the user needs to **proactively add the link** to your RSS feed in to the aggregator to view your content. The ultimate permission marketing model.

Every time you update your RSS feed by adding new content items to the RSS file, the user is notified of that through his RSS aggregator, making the content immediately available to him, without it having to face any SPAM filters and other barricades on the way.
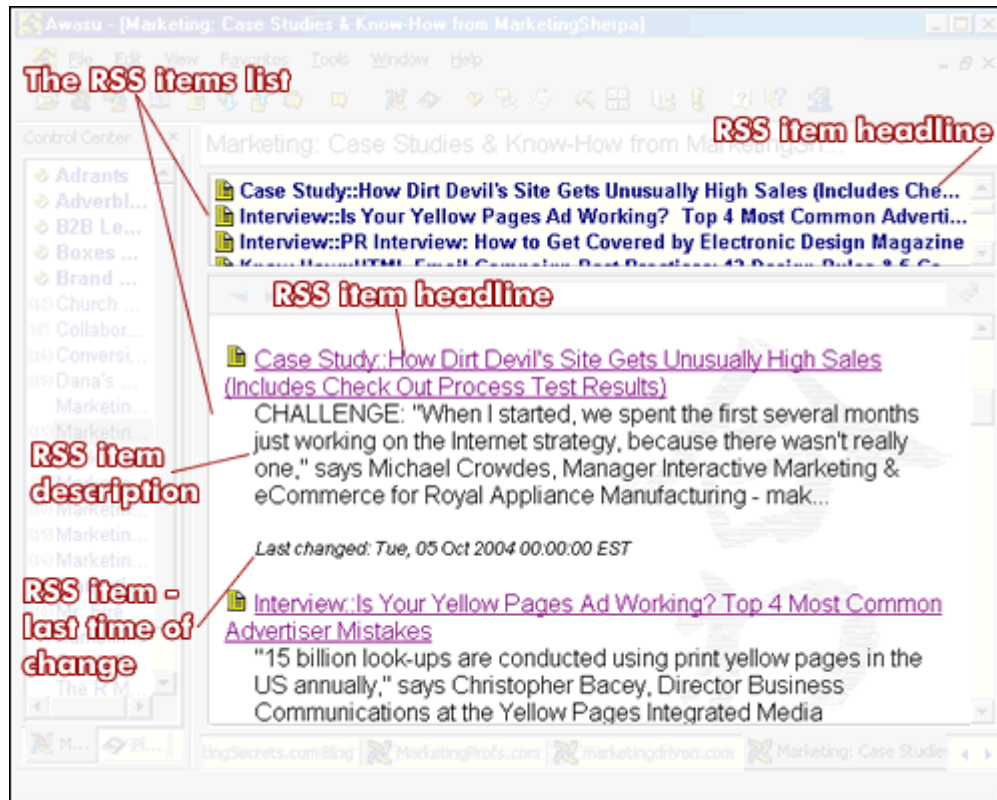
Screenshot: MarketingSherpa RSS feed content items, screenshot taken from the Awasu RSS aggregator

If you need more help and information on how to use RSS as an end-user, please go here.

RSS as a »Pull« Channel

As you can see, RSS is essentially a »pull« content delivery channel, meaning that in order to receive content via RSS, end-users need to proactively subscribe to an RSS feed.

You cannot deliver content to people who have not given you their explicit »permission« to be contacted by you. At the same time, those that already gave you permission can revoke it instantly, taking away your capability of communicating with them.

Although some marketers and publishers might feel threatened by the ease with which users can »remove« an unwanted publisher, this is exactly why RSS is so powerful. But it does mean that your content now needs to be more relevant than ever before.

The Marketing and Publishing Power of RSS

As opposed to almost every other internet marketing and publishing tool, RSS can power multiple key internet marketing and publishing elements and activities, in the following areas:

- Getting your internet content delivered to end-users.

- Improving your online visibility and generating more traffic / visitors for you.

- Powering your internet public relations through RSS conversations.

- Enhancing your web presence.

- Serving as an advertising platform for publishers and advertisers.

As such, the power of RSS is unprecedented. Because the channel is only starting to gain recognition from end-users, marketers and publishers, the time to start taking advantage of these benefits is now.

# 1. Get Your Internet Content Delivered to End-Users

Getting your content delivered to end-users is the first requirement for communicating with them, selling to them and building lasting relationships with them. If your content is not getting delivered, as is often the case with e-mail, a large part of your internet publishing efforts is wasted.

Direct marketing, direct selling, relationship marketing, public relations through direct communication with the media, communicating with your business partners and employees, direct advertising of your products, customer announcements and updated, all these are made impossible if your content cannot be delivered to end-users; your prospects, customers, the media, business partners and employees.

RSS, however, assures for 100% content delivery, meaning that all of your content is actually delivered to the people that willingly subscribe to it.

Here are just some examples of the content you can deliver to your various subscribers:

- MarketingVOX is using RSS to **deliver internet marketing news** to their readers as it becomes available. Instead of having to wait to receive all the news in a single e-mail newsletter, RSS users get them as soon as they are ready.

- Amazon.com is using RSS to **announce their bestsellers** and to help their users keep track of releases they are most interested in.

- Some affiliate managers already **communicate with their affiliates** using RSS.

- FindSavings.com uses RSS to deliver **savings coupons** and related information.

- Lockergnome uses RSS to provide visitors with the **latest downloads and relevant software**. Yet again other companies are using RSS to deliver product updates and patches directly to their customers, just as they become available.
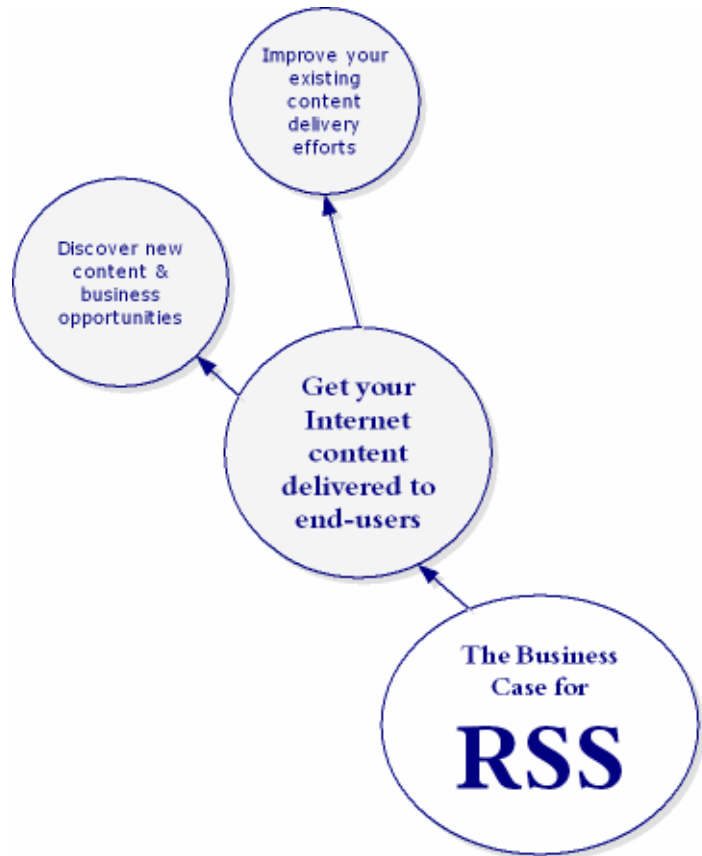
- A few hundred content publishers are using RSS to **deliver audio content**, such as .mp3 interviews and even "radio" shows.

- Textamerica.com allows people to **post pictures**, **videos & text from their mobile phones** and then make this content available via RSS feeds.

- Other companies are using RSS to **deliver whitepapers** and other educational content.

- One company uses RSS as a **consulting billing awareness tool**. The consultants create activity reports and the RSS feeds from the activity channels carry the billable information to the accounting staff for invoice preparation.

- Many internet publishers are using RSS to deliver their **newsletters**, as a supplement to their e-mail delivery.

- Publish **living digital catalogues** of your products and provide your customers with your latest product releases, broken down by the categories they're interested in, and make it easy for them to order.

- Provide your affiliates and marketing partners with **RSS feeds they can promote to their visitors to better promote your products** and still make a commission. Amazon.com is already doing it. When are you starting?

- Create **RSS autoresponders** with scheduled messages, to keep in constant "marketing" contact with your prospects and slowly get them to the point of purchase.

- Provide **limited-access content** to your customers, employees, team members and even investors, without fearing other unwanted eyes. Use RSS for internal communications, teamworking and other needs.

- Provide your customers with **easy access to software updates**, delivered to them exactly as they become available, without the fuss of having to visit your web site or deal with huge e-mail attachments, which would get blocked by spam filters anyway.

- Newsreporters are constantly bombarded with e-mail, so why not instead deliver your **press releases via RSS**? Or even better yet, why not deliver some of your releases as video comments, interviews or statements from your company managers or owners?

As you can see, RSS can be used to deliver practically any kind of content to practically any target audiences you aim to reach, as long as that content can be provided in a linear structure and can be broken down in several individual items or stories.

The opportunities for integrating RSS in to your communicational strategies are endless and there are practically no limits to what, who and how you can communicate through RSS.

In terms of content delivery to end-users, just think of the RSS feeds you publish as your subscriber lists and as direct links to your various target audiences.

Results: What You Can Expect

Lockergnome.com, although serving a more tech savvy audience, is an excellent example of the results you can ultimately hope to achieve using RSS.

Being one of the most popular tech web sites in the world, Lockergnome.com is seeing a ration of 5:1 in favor of the number of RSS subscribers against e-mail subscribers, and the same ration for Clickthrough rates.

They are in fact seeing a 500% better clickthrough ratio with RSS than they did with e-mail, which proves that RSS feeds are not only being "opened", but read as well.

Improving the Old and Discovering the New

RSS, as a content delivery channel for reaching end-users, can be used to improve your existing content delivery efforts, as well as provide you with an abundance of new publishing & marketing opportunities, not previously available through other content delivery channels.

Discover New Content & Business Opportunities

Study the examples given at the beginning of this chapter and you will see that RSS provides a multitude of new content & business opportunities, not available with other content delivery channels.

High frequency content updates, even on a daily or hourly basis, are now finally possible with RSS. No more need to hold on your important messages, news and other content for a week or even a month to include it in your e-zine --- with RSS you can update your content as often as you want/need, and your subscribers won't mind.

Podcasting (*delivering internet audio content*) and **Videocasting** (*delivering internet video content*) allow you to communicate via rich media messages, not only making your content more attractive and powerful, but also enabling a more personal »conversation« with your audiences.

Up until know, the internet was predominantly a textual channel. Adding audio and video to the mix, delivering both via RSS, goes beyond the basic capabilities provided by »traditional« internet content delivery channels. Rich media personalizes the internet experience and gives your company a distinguishable face, while at the same time providing you with a media platform to convey your message so that it is easier to understand, see and feel.

Think about …

- Delivering press releases in audio or video

- Sending your customers a personal video message from the CEO

- Doing audio interviews to expand your reach and provide more content to your visitors

- Delivering video demonstrations of your products

- Using video and audio to demonstrate how your customers and readers can easily resolve various issues that you are helping them with

- Delivering important messages to your readers, customers and business partners via a more personal audio experience, instead of using impersonal e-mail communications

- And so on …

In addition, Podcasting and Videocasting form the basis of new business models, giving you the opportunity to expand your product base to include these formats with higher perceived value.

Customer education & support are improved as well, since you can now demonstrate key product usage points via online video → providing customer support content in a format, which can easily demonstrate everything you need to convey to your customers.

Appcasting goes one step further, giving you the ability to deliver critical software updates and patches to your existing clients, without them having to visit your web site every week to see if the much needed update is already available or not.

Product news, releases and updates are now finally possible in an easy-to-consume way. Using RSS, you can provide your customers or prospects with simple tools to create their own »product feeds«, through which they'll be immediately notified when new products that precisely match their interests are available.

As soon as your product portfolio changes, so does the content in the RSS feeds that your customers are subscribed to.

Just think of the following possibilities …

- The search tool is one of the most often used in larger web stores, giving your visitors an easy way to find the products they are interested. But the same search results can be delivered via RSS as well. Imagine your customer doing a search for one of your product categories, and then also receiving a link to the RSS feed for those very same search results, to find out immediately when a new product matching his terms is released or available for order.

- This works for complex searches as well. If your customers are in the habit of searching for specific product categories, but only in a specific price range, you can deliver those very same results to them via RSS, but with a small twist → as soon as a new product matching their terms, including the desired price, is launched, they are notified about it via RSS instantly. No need to visit your site again to do the time-consuming search; the release comes directly to them.

- Of course, the same approach that many are already using for e-mail alerts can be used for RSS. Give your visitors a simple form using which they enter their criteria, and then give them access to an RSS feed bringing them product updates based exactly on their criteria. Why not just use e-mail? Because no one really wants more e-mail messages in their inboxes and no one wants to give away their personal information, while RSS is anonymous, doesn't require an e-mail address and is read when the customer decides he has the time.

Personalized/customized database listings are quite similar to product updates, but relate to any kind of complex information you provide to your visitors.

- Job listings

- Dating

- Real estate

- Etc.

Using RSS, your visitors can decide exactly what kind of »content« (in this case, an individual content item could be a new job listing) they are looking for and then have that content delivered directly to them, via their own personalized RSS feed.

And yet, all of these are just some examples of what you can do with RSS. The possibilities for new content delivery & business development models are quite endless.

For example, some companies are already giving their visitors the opportunity to track their FedEx, UPS and other packages via RSS feeds. Yet others are creating new services that allow you to receive critical information from an RSS feed to your mobile phone via SMS (such as getting an SMS notifying you that a new job matching your criteria is available). Yet again other sites enable you to keep track of when you need to return your library material, and even when your holds are ready and when they are about to expire, all this using RSS.

All of these are new business opportunities made possible with RSS, and each of them in a way improves lives of end-users, without placing a larger burden (more e-mail messages) on them.

Improve Your Existing Content Delivery Efforts

However, RSS is not only about discovering the new, but also about improving the old.

The power of your e-zine and your other content delivery efforts can be easily expanded by providing RSS as a supplementary content delivery channel.

Since e-mail is having difficulties getting through to customers, RSS can help you reach the people that are either using too trigger-happy spam filters or people who no longer give out their e-mail addresses to internet publishers, but don't have a problem subscribing to an anonymous RSS feed.

- Give your subscribers the option of subscribing to your e-zine either via e-mail or RSS.

- Don't rely only on e-mail autoresponders, but provide an RSS option as well.

- Create a special RSS feed to announce your e-zine when it's available, in addition to sending it out via e-mail.

- Deliver your e-mail e-zine or newsletter just like you've been doing all this time, but also provide RSS feeds for certain e-zine sections, such as the news section. Why should your visitors wait for your regular e-zine issue to get important news, if they can have it immediately available through your RSS feed?

Meeting the Needs of the Most Demanding Direct Marketer

Contrary to general opinion, RSS meets the needs of even the most demanding direct marketer, actually providing most of what e-mail marketing does. Most direct *marketing reasons against RSS* are in fact the result of inadequate understanding of RSS by most marketers.

- **Scheduled and autoresponder messages**
  There are already a few services and software packages on the market that allow for scheduled and autoresponder messages via RSS feeds. Once your visitor subscribes to your special RSS feed, he can receive a pre-determined set of messages in a specific time frame, determined by you. Use these messages to welcome your new reader to your RSS feed; thank your new customer after the purchase, send him additional information about the ordered product and give him the opportunity to buy an additional product at a lower price tag a couple of days later, and so on.

- **RSS metrics**
  RSS can in fact be tracked: track anything from the number of your subscribers, their reading habits, their reading frequency to your click-through rates and activities after clicking-through from your feed. This includes tracking which of your RSS feeds are performing better, are more interesting to your readers and drive more sales … and the same for individual content items.

- **Message targeting**
  Since RSS feeds can be dynamically generated on a per-user basis, you can easily track the interests of your individual subscribers and then target marketing messages directly to them, making each message relevant to their needs and interests in order to increase your sales success.

- **Message personalization**
  If you generate your RSS feeds for each individual user, you can also personalize these feeds. Basic personalization includes elements such as the reader's first name, while more advanced personalization might include personalized content and product recommendations and so on.

- **Data capture**
  E-mail marketers have already become experts at using opt-in forms to get as much information from the prospect as possible; the prospect's name, his interests, the current products he is using, his current position in the purchase cycle and so on. RSS can be used in the same way, giving your visitors access to the RSS feed only after they've filled in a simple or complex opt-in form. This can work with e-zine subscriptions, as well as forms you require your visitors to fill in to either register on your website or download your free report or whitepaper.

Good news for direct marketers is that these capabilities are already available in many RSS publishing/marketing solutions, available at very acceptable prices, accessible even to the smallest companies.

2. Improve Your Visibility and Generate More Visitors

For many marketers, RSS can prove especially valuable as a tool to improve their online visibility and generate more visitors.

Improve Your Search Engine Rankings

RSS has been documented to greatly impact traditional search engine rankings, even bringing little-known low-traffic sites to first-page positions for their key search engine keywords and phrases.

Improved rankings are the result of RSS-specific search engine strategies, increased number of inbound links to the site, tight RSS feed focus and the specific RSS feed format, which provides search engines with strong and focused content streams from publishers' websites.

Since RSS content is still scarce, search engines and directories are giving additional weight to RSS publishers. One of the best examples of this is Yahoo! While it usually took more than a month to get listed, you can now do so in about 24 hours using the three steps listed below.
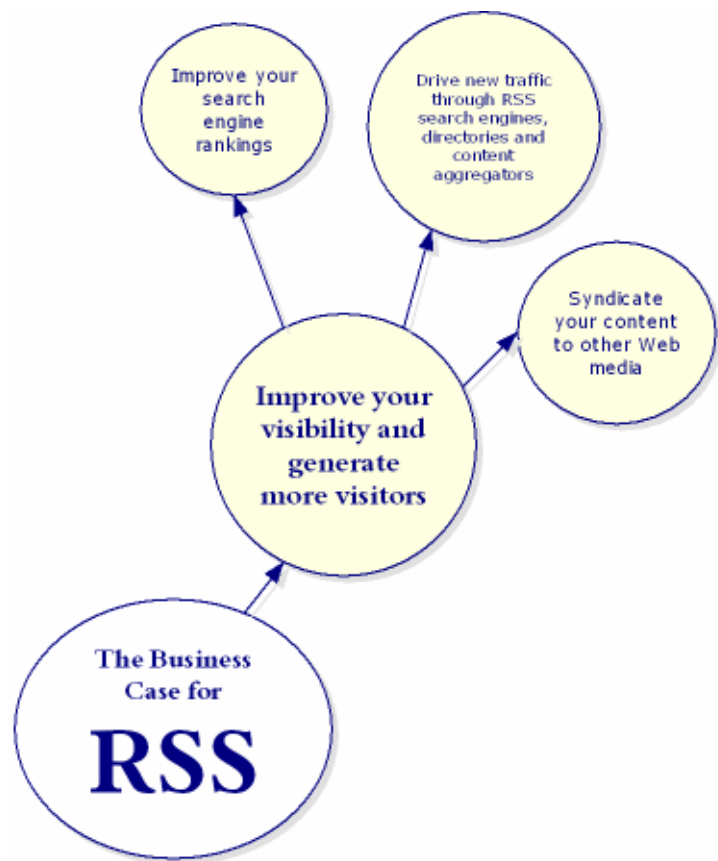
1. Start your own My.Yahoo page.
Just go to http://my.yahoo.com and sign up if you don't have your Yahoo! ID yet, or simply sign in otherwise.

2. Add the 'Add To MyYahoo' button to your site.
You may get the HTML code for it at http://my.yahoo.com/s/button.html.

3. Click on that button and confirm.
That's it. You just announced your feed to Yahoo!

Other RSS search engine optimization strategies are almost equally simple to implement.

Results: What You Can Expect

BTI Communications Group is a small VoIP solutions provider, but has to complete with large VoIP corporations with much greater visibility and resources.

But using RSS they achieved #1 search engine rankings for their most important keywords, such as *voip solution provider* on Google.

While their larger competitors are investing in Pay-Per-Click search engine campaigns, the BTI Communications Group is achieving top positions for free.

Drive New Traffic through RSS Search Engines, Directories and Content Aggregators

There are now over 100 RSS-specific search engines, directories and content aggregators available to further publicize your RSS feeds and your RSS content, to generate additional exposure not available before.

All of these sites will introduce you to new audiences, make your content more widely accessible and at the same time improve your search engine rankings by providing you with relevant inbound links to your site.

Syndicate Your Content to Other Web Media

RSS is the standard for internet content syndication, meaning that it makes it easy to get your content published on other websites looking to provide their visitors with more high-quality content that they themselves cannot generate.

The very same feeds you are using to deliver your content to end-users can be taken by other sites to display your content, while providing links back to full-text versions of that content on your own site.

How can this benefit you?

- Your syndicated content will bring you new visitors, especially interested in the topic you are covering. Each of these visitors, which you practically "received for free", can be converted in to a new subscriber or customers.

- More visibility for your site and your brand.

- When someone syndicates your content they are actually giving you an endorsement, increasing your credibility and your perceived brand-value.

3. Branded RSS Aggregators

The swift RSS penetration has recently spawned many new advanced RSS marketing tactics, which are for the most part still unknown to the majority of marketers. Marketing with branded RSS readers is one of these most recent RSS marketing trends.

While the topic of branded RSS readers is actually not so new, it received much fuel recently as NewsGator announced the launch of their NewsGator Media Platform, a "Private Label RSS Service for Media Companies", to give media companies a branded RSS reader they can promote to their visitors and at the same time increase their brand exposure and achieve a more personal contact with readers.

It was only a matter of time before one of the larger players stepped in to this market, since branded RSS readers provide a unique way to reach out to consumers and connect with them in a personal and at the same time marketing oriented manner.

To better grasp the marketing opportunities involved in this market, imagine your prospects and customers using an e-mail client branded by your company, interacting with it every day and using it as part of their lives and daily activities. Complete brand experience on one side, and unprecedented communicational and marketing access to the customer on the other. The branded RSS aggregator becomes not only a daily used tool, keeping your brand constantly in front of your customer, but also a one-touch interaction tool between the customer and your company.

Naturally, early branded RSS reader applications are really not going very far, but the potential is by all means here, especially considering that by November 2004 only 6 million Americans were using RSS, leaving all others still completely receptive to new RSS readers.

Branded RSS Readers in Real-Life

One of the most notable branded RSS applications is the Quikonnex DeskView, an RSS reader that Quikonnex made available to their RSS publishers, to distribute to their own visitors.

Each publisher can brand the reader by including their RSS feed in it from the start and changing the initial copy of what end-users see when they launch the reader. Brandable features also include an affiliate links and access to Quikonnex's RSS communicational system to communicate with other Quikonnex users.

Another notable branded reader is the Customer Reader, which just recently became available for beta testing. The interesting features as disclosed right now include branded interface skins, forced RSS feeds, personalized contact and other key information and a special notifications area to bring your content closer to the end-user.

An example of a branded Custom Reader aggregator can be obtained here.

As this market evolves further, we are sure to see more and more advanced marketing opportunities integrated directly in to the RSS reader.

Building Your Own

Since RSS just started hitting mainstream use, the opportunity to present your customers and visitors with your own branded RSS aggregator has much potential, especially since getting one of the dozens of RSS reader developers to customize their own reader for you should not be difficult or expensive.

Here are some of the features you may want to consider:

- A visually branded software interface.

- Pre-installed company RSS feeds, presumably spotlighted in the reading list; personalized if possible (the last would have to be done in connection with the company's RSS publishing system that would automatically provide a personalized feed for each identified RSS reader user and automatically provide him with content relevant to his needs through the company feeds, for instance product support content updates).

- An RSS feed customization module, if the company offers RSS feed customization.

- Ad serving module, capable of serving targeted company ads to users through the reader, based on their browsing/content consumption habits.

- Notification module, capable of serving special notifications from the company (this could be implemented as an RSS feed, but with an additional notification message posted on the screen when new content items appear; could also be used for every new content item from the company), to facilitate prospect/customer/partner communications.

- Communications module, basically a form that the user can use to send messages to the company, and even receive feedback; could even include a customer support system.

- Web store module that would allow the user to browse the company's product line through the actual RSS reader and even conduct orders.

- Direct access to product information, such as product manuals, FAQs, product forums etc.

- An option for the user to customize his aggregator with his own affiliate links (for the company's products, or even his own) and then re-distribute it to his own visitors.

- Direct access to other information; a publishing company could perhaps give its users the opportunity to read its book excerpts directly from the RSS reader.

- Integrated forum, to enable the user to communicate with our company customers/partners and perhaps even discuss possible business cooperation with them.

- Etc.

The key is in achieving concrete relationship and sales oriented interactivity between the user and the company, based on the RSS reader as a one-stop interaction point.

4. Enhance Your Web Presence
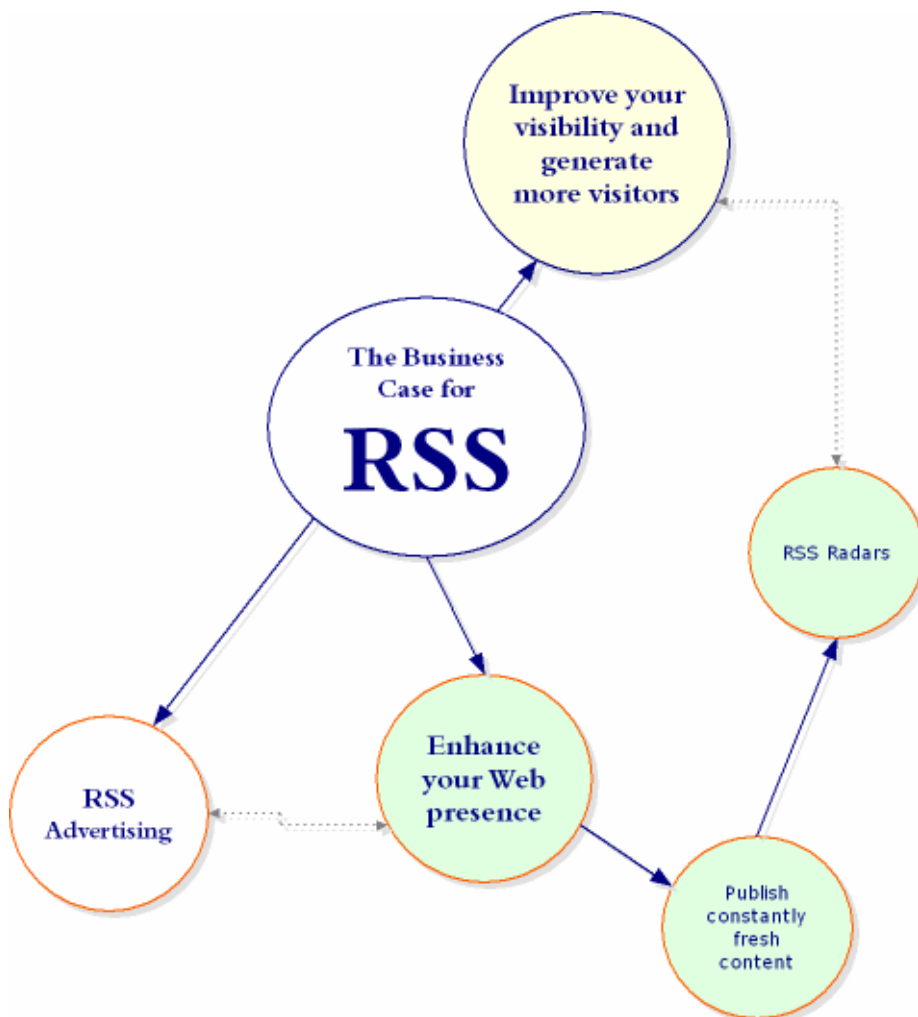
While all of the business advantages of using RSS, presented above, are directly related to marketers publishing their own content via RSS, RSS can also be used to enhance your own website and enable you to provide more relevant content to your visitors.

Content from RSS feeds from other publishers can easily be displayed on your website, to help you become a more valuable content source to your visitors. The ultimate goal is to become a focused high-value website, which internet users turn to when they are in need of the specific content that you provide access to.

The results are more frequent visits, more loyal visitors and more opportunities to make the sale or build a lasting relationship.

This content "creation" strategy can prove especially valuable for websites that do not have the resources to produce their own content, but are in need of a tool to keep their visitors coming back. Providing relevant selections of content from other relevant sites is just the way to do that.

RSS Radars

RSS radars are an off-spring of displaying syndicated content from other publishers on your own website.

They are highly-focused streams of content, which combine and filter multiple (even hundreds) of content sources to create a single content source with only the most relevant content from a very specific topic.

The key word here is "highly-focused", meaning that a good RSS radar will only capture and display the most highly relevant content on a very specific topic, usually focused on a single phrase.

For example, a website covering the topic of RSS might provide focused RSS radars for the following topics:

- Branded RSS aggregators

- RSS metrics and statistics

- RSS advertising standards

- And so on …

As you can see, each RSS radar example is focused on just one sub-topic of RSS, providing the best of the best on that sub-topic. Such radars will not only serve as valuable content sources for end-users interested in the sub-topic, but will also increase your search engine rankings for that specific phrase.

5. RSS Advertising

RSS advertising is one of the latest RSS developments, with a small number of advertising networks already offering RSS advertising to advertisers.

Since RSS is a new advertising channel, advertisers that get in early will achieve low prices and high success rates.

According to Feedster, one of the companies providing this service, RSS advertising results are in-between the results advertisers can achieve with Google AdWords and Google AdSense. However, since the supply of RSS feeds surpasses the demand from RSS advertisers, RSS advertising prices are still very low.

Other strong providers in this area are also Pheedo and Kanoodle, with others constantly entering the market as well.

6. RSS Conversations
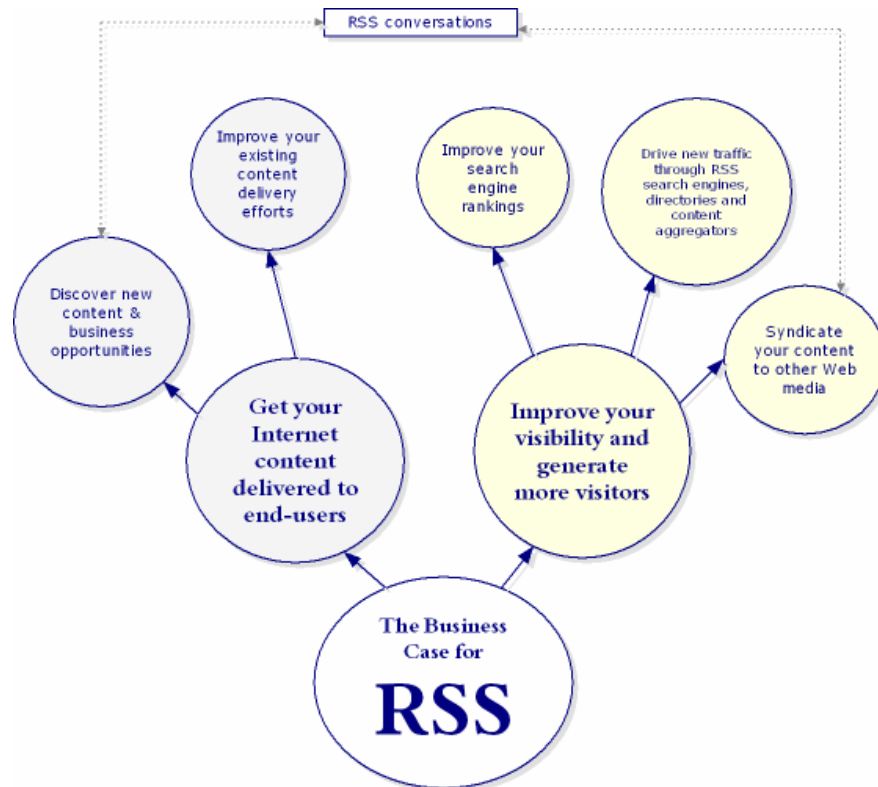
Markets are conversations. And this is still true today.

Using the combination of RSS content delivery to end-users and syndicating your content to other web media, RSS can be used as an excellent tool to power marketing conversations.

RSS conversations start with a new content item on your website, usually a blog, distributed via RSS to end-users and other websites. The whole point is to spread the dialog from the originating point (the publisher) to multiple starting points, where the dialog itself takes a life of its own and further spreads through multiple online media, completely losing all structure.

Each new website that mentions your content item (predominantly blog post), is a new starting point for the dialog. On one side, the dialog is powered by people that comment on the story on the actual website. On the other, the dialog is further spread when other RSS end-users, which are subscribed to the RSS feeds published by new dialog starting points, further spread your content or comment on it on their own websites.

RSS conversations are additionally powered by "automatic dialog facilitation", which takes place when your RSS content is automatically syndicated by RSS directories and content aggregators, spreading your idea even further and making it available to even more people.

The end result are multiple conversations going on around the internet surrounding your product or idea, all generating feedback, traffic and prospects for you.

While RSS conversations can be powered simply by getting your content syndicated on as many websites as possible, via RSS, best results can be achieved through active "dialog facilitation".

Dialog Facilitators watch the internet space and are on a constant look-out for any news, opinions and other content about your topic or about your products and services. They keep track of this content and constantly respond to all conversations, trying to further facilitate them. They respond either in the form of blog comments or blog postings in their own blogs, even writing articles and other content (such as audio interviews) and distributing it throughout the internet.

But, they also start conversations. They watch the pulse of the market and then input new stories that match that pulse in to the market, trying to upgrade conversations and prolong them.

They engage in private conversations with other bloggers and seek-out new note-worthy stories, engaging more and more people in them.

On the "automatic front", they make sure that their content is spread throughout the internet through the power of RSS, thus generating new conversation locations.

We could define the role of a Dialog Facilitator as someone who watches (researches), responds to (comment or new content), enables (RSS content syndication), starts and powers online conversations about a certain topic, industry, product or company.

A complete union of market research, PR and direct marketing.

Tying it All Together

As we mentioned early in this report, RSS is in fact a many-in-one marketing & publishing tool. While it does provide a number of benefits when used for each individual marketing function, best results are achieved when it is fully integrated in your internet marketing strategy.

The key point is that RSS makes various marketing functions work together, in order to generate the best possible end result.

It's now the time to tie it all together and see the whole picture ...
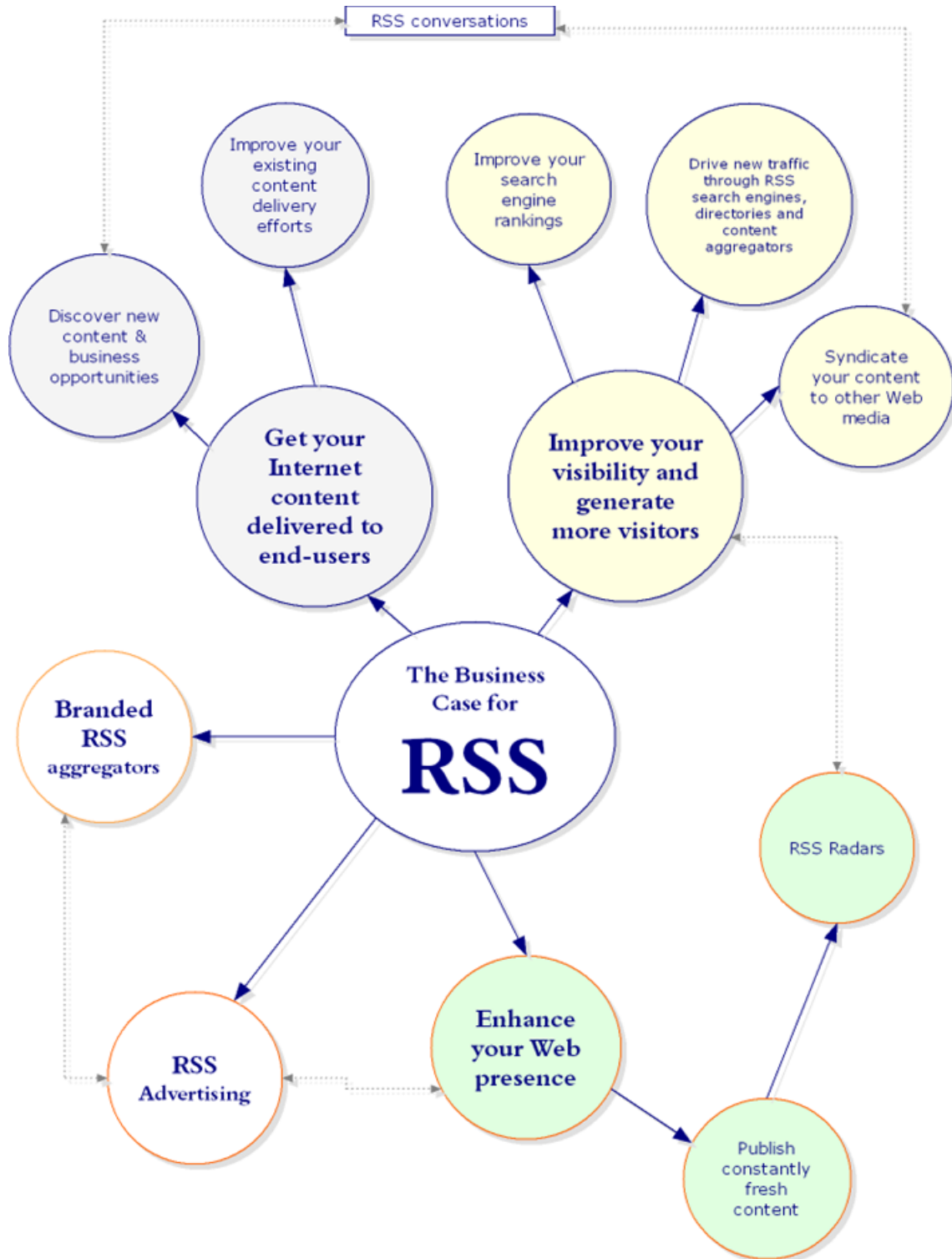
- RSS as a **content delivery channel for communicating with end-users** gets your content delivered and provides you with multiple new content delivery & business development opportunities.

- RSS as a **promotional/visibility tool** increases your traffic by improving your search engine rankings, generating traffic from new RSS specific sites and getting your content published on other sites. Each of these activities brings new visitors to your site, which are now ready to be converted in to new subscribers with which you can communicate (via RSS and/or e-mail) on the long-term. In addition, the improved visibility enforces your brand and generates more credibility for your company.

- Content delivery to end-users and content syndication together form the basis of **RSS conversations**, which further spread your reach throughout the internet and serve as a strong PR platform.

- Once you have access to more prospective subscribers, to which you want to deliver content via RSS, you can provide them with your own **branded RSS aggregator** to make the switch to RSS easier for them, as well as to establish a constant connection with them, enforce your brand and develop brand experience. Your branded aggregator also serves as a sales platform for your own products and an advertising platform to generate advertising income.

- As a publisher, your goal is to better satisfy the needs of your visitors, establish yourself as a key content source in your industry and make your visitors come back more often. Providing access to additional information is one of the elements to make this possible. Use RSS to **syndicate content from other websites** and, as an upgrade to target their most focused content needs, create **RSS radars** for your key phrases.

- RSS radars will in turn also **generate additional visibility**, especially through improved search engine rankings, and generate new subscribers for your RSS feeds.

- All of the above will create **advertising venue** and create a new source of income.

- In addition, using **RSS advertising** you can increase the reach of all of the above activities.

The system comes full-circle, establishing RSS as the tool that powers an important share of all of your internet marketing and publishing activities.

The Ultimate Business Case: The Power of Free

Implementing RSS is low-cost and can even be free, if your RSS publishing & marketing needs are relatively basic.

Considering the many business benefits of using RSS, and its low implementation cost, there really should be no strong reasons against adopting RSS as one of your important internet marketing tools.

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This report is based on

Unleash the Marketing & Publishing Power of RSS

A marketer's guide to getting the most from RSS

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"Rok's book is the most comprehensive guide on RSS for marketers. A milestone document that clearly defines the role of RSS in the marketing mix and gives concrete instructions and tips regarding how to best leverage this powerful and game changing capability."
Dick Costolo, **Feedburner**

At **550+** pages (there's a shorter version as well), **55 practical examples** and more than **34 interviews with RSS experts**, *Unleash the Marketing & Publishing Power of RSS* is the **complete guide to marketing & publishing with RSS**, covering the entire topic of RSS for marketers from using RSS to communicate with end-users to using to increase your search engine rankings.

Topics covered also include RSS marketing & business strategies, RSS metrics, branded RSS aggregators, one-to-one RSS communications, RSS promotion, RSS customization and personalization, using affiliate-powered RSS feeds and more.

Find out why this e-book has been **acclaimed as the best and most comprehensive guide on RSS for marketers** by top RSS experts, marketers, publishers and developers.

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Click here!

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"There is nothing like this I have seen before. This is a pretty monumental guide to RSS/Atom newsfeeds and their effective use for online marketing, business and publishing. Rok has entitled it: Unleash the Marketing & Publishing Power of RSS: A Marketer's Guide to Understanding and Taking Advantage of RSS for Marketers and Publishers."
Robin Good, **MasterNewMedia.org**

"MarketingStudies.net has put together the most comprehensive guide on RSS I've read to date. It has everything you need to know about RSS from what it is to how to use it as a marketing tool. I highly recommend this guide."
Bill Flitter, **CEO of Pheedo**, Inc., RSS & Weblog Marketing Solutions