

Business Computing

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A free monthly publication for small business. Over 20 years experience providing computer and network solutions.

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The Learning Center

The RSS feed. RSS or Rich Site Summary is a format for delivering regularly changing news or opinion. Many news related sites or blogs syndicate their content as an RSS feed to whoever wants it. A RSS feed will typically have a list of new information in headline form. Each item has a title, a description, and a link to the website where the item appears. For a blog, the items will be the most recent posts. It allows you to easily stay informed by retrieving summaries of the latest content from sites of interest. You save time by not needing to visit each site individually. By not having to sign up for newsletters you ensure your privacy. News aggregator software allows you to grab the RSS feeds from various sites and conveniently display them on your PC.



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Why the Internet Will Eventually Close Down the Newspaper

With our ever accelerating lifestyles, time is in short supply. Coupled with an explosion of information, it will finish off the newspaper as we know it today. The conventional press has provided a wonderful educational vehicle that has dragged humanity out of the Dark Ages. Unfortunately today, the newspaper is a broad-based medium with local editors deciding on what we should all read. What we really need is a method of tracking more information in less time and doing away with editor censorship. With the Internet we have such a system that will soon become widespread. In fact, it is prevalent today but largely unknown to the majority.

RSS is designed to address this issue of locating and reading more relevant information in less time. That simply means reading what you want, rather than what you are dished up in the press. So what is RSS? RSS stands for "Rich Site Summary" or is a system for summarizing new information via the Web. Today we have important web sites such as Yahoo displaying RSS feeds. What people in general do not know is how to display the information feeds on their personal computers. By book-marking feeds of interest you can gather and display them easily on your computer screen.

Here we have a wonderful dynamic substitute for the static newspaper of old. By displaying feeds from news sources and blogs you can construct a worthy way of keeping up to date with news and opinion. To top it off you can do it all for free, of sorts! The downside in the feeds is they can incorporate advertising. You get the free feeds but with the ads sometimes tucked inside.

How do you display the feeds on your PC? You will need to download special software to display the info on your computer. The good news is some of the versions are free. Do an Internet search for "feedreader" or "bloglines" to get started. Download the software and set up the feeds as per instructions. What is so remarkable about this way of reading the news is you can tailor the explosion of information to suit your particular taste. It can be likened to a newspaper with a hundred thousand different editions. If your passion is sport you can have oodles of sports feeds displayed. By browsing through the constantly updating headlines you can easily read stories of your interest.

The detractors who rubbish new methods say things like, "You can not read off a computer screen", or "Heck, I like browsing through the local newspaper at breakfast." These people need to think again as reading a broadsheet newspaper is a curse in many situations like public transport and the outdoors. With new portable devices we can now save time by discreetly reading the news in all sorts of new locations. Whether hiking in the hills or sailing a boat now we have a way of keeping up to date without having to hunt for a newspaper.

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Why You Should Be Worried Using “Always-On” Internet!!and how to banish your worries!

Why does high speed “always-on Internet” pose a greater security threat than a dialup modem? Hence using a dialup modem you are connected to the Internet for shorter times. This gives potential intruders less time to break into your system. When you connect to the Internet, you are assigned a number called an IP address. This number changes every time you log on to the Internet. With “always-on Internet”, this number may stay the same, giving hackers plenty of time to break into your system over several days.

In the past, hackers were mainly geeks seeking technical challenges. Now a new generation of hackers has a more powerful motive: profit. Almost any conceivable white-collar crime can now be committed over the Internet. Of particular concern is the threat posed by spy-ware. Spyware is software designed to send data over the Internet without being detected. Spy

programs can be released onto a computer for a specific motive such as stealing sensitive company documents.

Small businesses manage and store all their critical, and sometimes sensitive, information on desktop PCs. Personal files, product specifications, client data and company financials are all vulnerable to theft. Reducing Internet access isn't the answer, as the Internet is too important.

So what are the guide-lines for security on a small business network? We are assuming a small network is, up to six computers accessing the Internet. An external router that can be easily switched off should be standard equipment. A router offers a method of camouflaging your access to the Internet, making it difficult to detect your access point. It is in fact a hardware firewall. Switching off at night means that a different Internet connection number is assigned every day to your router. This makes it more

difficult to locate your network again.

Software protection at the desktop level should also be considered. This means each PC can individually manage security. For good info on this subject go to www.zonelabs.com They offer a range of software firewalls that you can use on each PC, including a basic free version. Another way you can easily minimize security risks at each individual PC is to only the share necessary folders with others on your network. Avoid sharing the whole hard drive (C: drive) at all costs as this makes it easier for hackers. For an added extra precaution, you can include passwords on these shared folders.

The vital question now is, “How do I test the security of my system?” Go to www.grc.com and they have a brilliant site in which they will probe your system (for free) and see if you are vulnerable to hacker attacks. Spend a little time at this site

Setting Up the Bloglines News Aggregator

Bloglines is rather like an online newspaper that you can adapt to suit yourself. It is a popular site for assembling news and opinion information. Bloglines is a server based aggregation system, which means that it runs and is managed on an Internet server computer rather than by software installed on your PC. After you join Bloglines you simply search for the content you are interested in and identify the feeds you want to track. Once you subscribe to these feeds, Bloglines will constantly check feeds for changes or additions and direct new information onto your Bloglines personal page.

Signing up to Bloglines is easy and free. Only an email address and password are required. By registering with Bloglines it allows you to login and read your favorite news stories. Currently, your personal page is updated about once an hour. In addition, there is a handy way of saving interesting content by the way of “Clippings.” Clippings allow you to save particular articles for later review. By clicking on a link, you will add a particular item to your Clippings Tab. To view a previously saved item, open the Clippings folder and click on an item. You can sort and organize your Clippings just like a filing system on a computer.

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