

## Quocirca's Changing Channels – So what are the benefits of an enterprise RSS server?

By Bob Tarzey, Service Director, Quocirca Ltd, Mar 12th 2007

It is easy to be cynical about many of the so-called Web 2.0 technologies – blogs, wikis, etc – and dismiss them as just another way for employees to be distracted and waste time.

For resellers, this cynicism will run deeper as on the surface this is more free stuff with no opportunity for product margins and little for service revenue. But a closer look reveals that there are some real benefits for businesses who embrace these technologies for the right reasons. And these benefits do involve buying products and services.

A case in point is RSS (Really Simple Syndication) and some of the leading vendors with the products to enable RSS for the enterprise are heading to Europe right now.

Anyone can make use of RSS by downloading a free reader or a web browser enabled for RSS, such as IE V7. These allow users to set up and receive feeds, which are basically alerts about stuff going on in cyberspace: new blog entries, website updates, new items for auction etc.

There is, of course, a place for all this in businesses, but there are three downsides. First, even if the alerts are work related, they are still a distraction to many. Secondly, many employees setting up the same feeds consumes bandwidth and time, and thirdly, IT departments – just as with instant messaging clients – will not want tens of different RSS readers to manage on their employees' desktops.

To get around these requires standardising on a tool and setting up a controlled RSS environment, which means installing an enterprise RSS server.

There are a number of benefits to this. The most obvious is that the selected tool is the only one IT has to support - other RSS readers can be blocked. In addition, alerts about external content can be setup and shared by many users, saving bandwidth and time. The feeds available can also be controlled, so employees can only

access those authorised, and the level of control can be tailored for different individuals and groups; some of the RSS servers link through to user directories such as Microsoft's Active Directory.

But there are wider benefits too. RSS servers are basically content aggregators. Content can be aggregated from many sources so, for instance, a feed that gives the current status of a customer might draw information from its public website, list its current share price from another external feed, and show the status of orders from an internal database - an instant view that would otherwise take some time to put together.

And information can be pushed out. Important announcements are often lost in the mass of email and it can be hard to tell if someone has actually read an announcement. For example, used with discretion, RSS servers can be used to push out new health and safety announcements and request user confirmation they have been seen and read. Such an audited trail can be used to satisfy regulators, and staff who fail to acknowledge receiving and reading a notice can be taken to task.

Enterprise RSS is still pretty niche. The three main vendors are NewsGator, KnowNow and Attensa. All are US-based and are only just getting going in Europe. NewsGator has opened an office and is looking for local partners. Attensa has similar plans and is already active in Europe. KnowNow has existing customers in Europe, so expect it to establish a local presence soon.

It is still early days, so plenty of opportunity for resellers to get ahead of the game and make some real money from web 2.0.

## About Quocirca

Quocirca is one of Europe's leading independent industry analyst firms. One of its biggest assets is the core team of highly experienced analysts drawn from both the corporate and the vendor communities. This team prides itself on maintaining a bigger picture view of what's going on in the IT and communications marketplaces. This allows all of Quocirca's activities to be carried out in the context of the real world and avoids distractions with fads, fashions and the nuts and bolts of specific technologies. Quocirca's focus has always been the point of intersection at which IT meets "the business".

## Quocirca Services

The insight and experience that comes from working as an industry analyst as well as a practitioner allows the Quocirca team to contribute significantly to IT Vendors, Service Providers and Corporate clients. To this end, it provides a range of consulting and advisory services. Details of these, along with some of Quocirca's latest analysis, may be obtained by visiting <http://www.quocirca.com>

Quocirca's primary research involves the surveying of many thousands of technical and business end users each quarter, analyzing their perceptions of the possible impact of emerging, evolving and maturing technologies on their businesses.