making the most of feedblitz

THE ONE-STOP RESOURCE TO

Realizing Greater Engagement, Success & Value from FeedBlitz

PHIL HOLLOWS
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A feedblitz GUIDE

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Phil Hollows

A FeedBlitz Guide
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Praise for
FeedBlitz

"FeedBurner had missed over 8,000 RSS subscribers in my case. Feedblitz offers superior counts and analytics"

~Danny Brown, BestBloggingTipsOnline.com

"We're now with FeedBlitz. Our feed is too important to trust to a free, unsupported service from Google."

~ Brian Clark, Copyblogger.com

"Feedblitz has been a godsend."

~Cecily Kellogg, @Cecilyk

"FeedBlitz is a gazillion times better than FeedBurner. More features & flexibility for your blog."

~ Denise Wakeman, DeniseWakeman.com

"You know what I love about FeedBlitz? Awesome, FAST customer service. Put that in your pipe and smoke it, FeedBurner."

~ @MileHiMama

"This is one of those occasions I jump in and say I stopped using #FeedBurner a while ago. It's now #Feedblitz."

~ @AriHerzog

"Dorking out so hard on @feedblitz this morning. Why have I limped along with FeedBurner for so many year!? GAME-CHANGER!!"

~ @OffbeatAriel

Join us! Check out the latest testimonials and fan tweets at
http://feeds.feedblitz.com/favorites

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Introction

If you're an existing FeedBlitz publisher, using FeedBlitz for email updates to your subscribers or for RSS feed management, this Guide is for you.

Perhaps you've come to us recently from FeedBurner, or have been with FeedBlitz for years. Either way, you probably suspect that there's more that FeedBlitz can do for you, but it never quite gets to the top of the priority list and, hey, who has the time to dig around anyway?

And that's what we're addressing here, with this Guide. A one-stop resource that you can get to grips with quickly, pick what you want to work on and make it happen, all without having to ferret around within FeedBlitz itself or reach out to support.

If you take any of the steps outlined here inside this Guide, you're going to be making your email marketing more effective, strengthen the engagement you're building with your subscribers, and ultimately make your online mission that much more effective.

So, welcome! I hope this Guide helps you, and if you need to, please don't hesitate to contact FeedBlitz technical support at support@feedblitz.com, me directly at phil@feedblitz.com, or follow me on Twitter as @phollows.

Thanks!

Before You Begin

As stated in the introduction, this Guide is for existing FeedBlitz publishers (it largely doesn't matter whether you're on a paid or legacy ad-funded program; where there are differences they'll be pointed out in the copy). So if you don't yet have an account, feed or list with us, by all means read on for insight as to what you can do, but the Guide won't be enormously useful. We recommend starting a trial and then coming back to this Guide once you've got your feet wet, as it were.

The big question will be – where to begin? And that is a question only you can answer, I'm afraid. You will know your audience, your site and your business much better than us, after all. With luck, however, an item or to in here will resonate with you, and that'll be your clue as to where to start.

IMPORTANT!!

Log in to your account dashboard at FeedBlitz. Click into the dashboard for each of your site(s). If you see any tiles with the big orange "Finish Setup" button on them, you know what you should do? ***FINISH SETUP.*** It's important. Do it! Consider it a pre-requisite for the ideas here.

OK, done? Good. Then let's begin.

It Splices and Dices!
Integrating Third Party Content

One of the great things about FeedBlitz's RSS feed functionality is how flexible it is. Which, of course, is one of the challenges: There's a lot to figure out, and it can be daunting!

Which brings me to splicing and dicing (well, splicing actually – dicing (via filters) is in the next chapter). Splicing is the process of merging other content into your main feed so that what your subscribers end up with is more than just your source feed.

Accessed via the "Add Other Feeds" button from your RSS feed's home page, you can add content from your other social media channels to your feed, or incorporate any other RSS feed into your posts. You can therefore enrich the RSS subscriber's experience by merging multiple content feeds into one.

For social networks, all you have to do is identify your account. For example, my YouTube channel is at youtube.com/phollows. To include my YouTube channel's feed into the FeedBlitz RSS feed, I simply enter "phollows" in the box next to the YouTube icon on that screen. It's the same idea for all the other social networks too. For any arbitrary third party RSS feed, simply specify the RSS feed URL in the "Service ID" field on the form. It's a great way to merge and cross-promote different blogs into a single feed, for example.

The drop down on the right tells you how you want the posts inserted into the main feed. A daily list that pulls all the content from the relevant feed, a daily summary that is a bulleted list of titles only, or by merging the third party content into your feed in chronological order.

Now, sometimes feeds can get very large. FeedBurner would simply give up when that happens, but instead FeedBlitz will simply include all new posts up to the RSS feed size limit we impose. If that content consists entirely of spliced in third party content, FeedBlitz extends the feed until at least one of the "main" feed's posts has been included.

Dicing Feeds with
RSS Tag and Category Filters

One of the great things about a FeedBlitz RSS feed is that you can do more with it than simply share the feed URL. You can use filters to modify what the feed shows to subscribers. This enables you to create category-specific feeds automatically, which can then be used to create category-specific mailings.

You do this using path modifiers, /tag/ and /not/, to pick what you want in or out, respectively. If we use the FeedBlitz News RSS feed as an example (feeds.feedblitz.com/feedblitz), they could be used like this:

All posts tagged "FeedBlitz" only: feeds.feedblitz.com/feedblitz/tag/feedblitz
All posts except testimonials: feeds.feedblitz.com/feedblitz/not/testimonials

You can have multiple /tag/ and /not/ modifiers in a single feed URL. If you have multiple modifiers they are an OR, not an AND, i.e. All posts matching ANY of the selections will be included in the criteria.

Learn more here: http://www.feedblitz.com/automatic-category-feeds-for-everyone/

Why is this useful? Because now you can use these feeds to create category specific content that can be served to a web site via an RSS widget, create custom mailing content for niche audiences, or simply restrict what's publicly available via RSS if you want to avoid syndicating some articles beyond your web site.

These filters work on both your feed's tags and categories, which FeedBlitz consolidates into a single "keyword" list, against which the filters are then applied. So a post will appear in RSS feed with the filter /tag/happy if it is either tagged "happy" or in the "happy" category.

Podcasting Feeds with
FeedBlitz AutoCast

FeedBlitz AutoCast is the extension of FeedBlitz's RSS feed management services for bloggers, podcasters and online publishers. Ideal for producers seeking a FeedBurner alternative, FeedBlitz's AutoCast features enables publishers using the old FeedBurner SmartCast service to switch. It also delivers value – metrics, monetization and migration – for new podcasters seeking to take advantage of content distribution from services and tools like Apple iTunes.

If you're switching your podcast RSS to FeedBlitz, AutoCast has a vital feature to enable you to migrate you iTunes feeds to FeedBlitz without losing your audience. FeedBlitz's AutoCast can optionally insert the iTunes <itunes:new-feed-url> tag to an RSS feed, redirecting iTunes to the podcast source's new location. This enables simpler migration of iTunes subscriptions both to and from FeedBlitz, ensuring that you can be assured your audience won't be "trapped" at FeedBlitz like they might have been before.

When FeedBlitz detects that the FeedBurner SmartCast service is active during a FeedBurner migration, FeedBlitz AutoCast is automatically enabled (since February 18, 2013). Moreover, any feed can be podcast-enabled from the FeedBlitz RSS feed's settings page.

iTunes new feed tag insertion

Possibly the most important function in FeedBlitz's podcast feed capabilities, especially from a FeedBurner migration perspective, FeedBlitz AutoCast adds the required element to your podcast feed so iTunes can seamlessly transition all subscribers to the new feed source without having to lose a single audience member.

Download tracking

Podcast files are linked into RSS feeds using "enclosure" elements. When AutoCast is enabled, FeedBlitz tracks enclosure accesses separately from other links within the post, reporting them as downloads (D/Ls in the reports pages). It's entirely possible, depending on the nature of the subscriber's podcast app, that other links and tracking from the post will not be available to subscribers. Tracking downloads separately shows you the true reach of your content.

Automatic enclosure creation

No podcast? No problem! With AutoCast switched on, FeedBlitz will find any audio, video, or flash file that you link to in the post and create an enclosure from it if one isn't already there.

iTunes categorization

AutoCast allows you to set up to five iTunes category / subcategory combinations to be defined for the feed, making it more likely that iTunes and

other podcast app users will find your podcast when searching for something new to follow.

iTunes podcast feed tag extensions

There are many iTunes specific fields that can be optionally added to a podcast RSS feed. If they're not already there, FeedBlitz will create them automatically from the other tags in your feed. This creates a richer subscriber experience when browsing your podcast.

Highlighting podcast media for non-podcast subscribers in feeds and email

Any RSS feed can be followed via email or in an RSS aggregator / reader – and that's true for podcast feeds too. FeedBlitz now adds a relevant audio, video or other icon to the post's content in RSS and email to highlight podcast elements that might otherwise be missed by a non-podcast feed subscriber.

Understanding FeedBlitz's
RSS Feed Metrics

FeedBlitz collects a lot of data – a lot! – about how your readers interact with your RSS feed. We're often asked what the terms we use mean, and how best to work with reports. Wish granted!

Circulation

Circulation is the total number of unique people to whom your feed was available in the given time frame. This not only includes those who subscribe in a reader or via email; but also those who view your feed in their browsers.

Consider a traditional print newspaper or magazine. Enough are printed for delivery to subscribers, but they print more to be bought at newsstands by casual readers. The total number of people who actually get the newspaper is subscribers + casual purchasers, and that's the circulation number. If you prefer to think in terms of an email list analog, the circulation is analogous to the number of emails sent when you broadcast a message to your list.

Reach

When you send an email to your list, you know that the number of people who actually open the email is going to be less than the number of people to whom it's sent. That's the mailing's open rate. "Reach" is the analogous "opens" metric for RSS feeds. It is the number of unique people who actually interacted with your feed in the specified time frame, whether by reading the post, or by clicking through on a link within the post. "Reach" de-duplicates multiple views and clicks by the same user on an item, so it will be typically be less than the sum of the number of clicks + the number of views.

Reach can exceed your list's circulation, however, because reach can be amplified by social media promotion. If your post goes viral on Twitter, for example, it may be clicked into by hundreds or thousands of people. Each of those people will have a different signature that FeedBlitz will identify as a

different unique user. When that happens, the reach total may well exceed the nominal circulation count, since a fetch by an aggregator for one Twitter account will contribute *one* to the circulation metric, not the number of followers that Twitter account has.

If you want to include the number of followers in your site's audience calculation, use the FeedBlitz site dashboard for the relevant site.

Views

The number of times an article was opened from the feed.

Clicks

The number of clicks for an item in the feed. Since posts often contain more than one link, this number might be relatively large as people explore the links within an article. Like views, this is de-duplicated when deriving the day's reach metric.

Downloads

Podcast files are linked into RSS feeds using "enclosure" elements. When AutoCast is enabled, FeedBlitz tracks enclosure accesses separately from other links within the post, reporting them as downloads (D/Ls in the reports pages). It's entirely possible, depending on the nature of the subscriber's podcast app, that other links and tracking from the post will not be available to subscribers. Tracking downloads separately shows you the true reach of your content.

Platform Data

FeedBlitz shows you the platform, or reader used, to consume the feed, and the number of people (the share of the circulation) which that platform accounts for. For most sites, the leading RSS reader is either Google Reader, or an email service like FeedBlitz. Which is a point worth emphasizing: For mailing lists powered by an RSS feed, the RSS feed's circulation count *includes* the number of email subscribers on the list. At the site dashboard level, FeedBlitz takes this fact into account when deriving the total audience figure where it can.

FeedBlitz differentiates between three broad classes of RSS reader. These are explained below.

RSS Aggregators

These are apps and services that are used to fetch RSS feeds to be read later in a dedicated RSS reader, or for use in a pure RSS form – so this total can include machines polling your feed in order to convert it into a widget for your website, say.

Services like Google Reader will check the feed on behalf of multiple users; FeedBlitz checks what the aggregator says it's doing to determine the correct circulation count due to that reader. There are individual desktop and mobile readers too; FeedBlitz will report those as well. If you specifically want to track the number of *subscribers* as opposed to the total *circulation* for any given day, use the RSS aggregator total alone.

Browsers

When the user views your feed in their browser, it's a more casual interaction than a committed subscriber. It is, however, worth tracking and contributes to the circulation count. The totals for any given day are reported as the number of RSS visitors.

Search Engines

You'll find that your RSS feed is being visited by search engines – that's a Good Thing, and we report it here. Search engines, however, don't reflect someone actually visiting your feed; they are indexing it for inclusion in their search results. So although we track and report search engines in the RSS feed analytics, they do not contribute to your RSS feed's total circulation, any more than (say) Google indexing your online email archive represents someone being added to your email list.

Using FeedBlitz's RSS Feed Reports

So now you know what the numbers mean, how to get at them? First, choose your RSS feed's icon from the FeedBlitz navigation, and you'll be taken to the

feed's home page at FeedBlitz. The top of that page will show the circulation / reach chart (unless your feed is so new we haven't had time to consolidate its data yet – metrics are calculated daily, overnight, US eastern).

How to get more information? For any particular day on the chart, click the bar for that day, and the detailed metrics appear for that day. Follow the links on the detail for more in depth data.

If you want more that a week's worth of metrics, click the orange "Reports" button at the top of the feed's main page. There you can alter the timeframe for the reports to show other time ranges.

Diagnosing Circulation Changes

One of the most terrifying things that can happen is when your circulation drops dramatically (it's never terrifying the other way around, is it?!). What on earth can be happening? Here's how you can use FeedBlitz's RSS feed reports to figure it out. This is also a great way to figure out what hasn't made the transition from FeedBurner, if the two services are showing radically different numbers.

Well, the first piece of good news is that, in all likelihood, FeedBlitz hasn't suddenly "lost" those subscribers and cast them off into some Internet subscription purgatory. What's more likely to have happened is that they've stopped being *counted*. There are a number of reasons why that might have happened, and you can find out! Here's the process to follow:

1) Go to your RSS feed's home page in FeedBlitz, then click the orange "Reports" button.
2) Change the range to cover the time frame of the circulation change you're interested in.
3) Click one of the days (say a "big" one). Note from the RSS aggregators detail the top few consumers of your feed.
4) Click a different day (say the scary "low" one) and again look at the RSS aggregator detail.

If you're diagnosing a difference between FeedBlitz and FeedBurner, perform steps 1-3 on your FeedBurner dashboard, and then repeat in FeedBlitz for the other data.

Big circulation changes are caused by one of the largest readers changing what it's doing, and that will probably have leapt out at you immediately. So the question then becomes, why the change? Answers typically include:

1) **Broken feed redirects from your site**. Make sure that any redirects are correctly working from your blog's original feed to FeedBlitz. If it isn't working any more, the traffic won't be sent to FeedBlitz and we won't see the feed readers to count them.
2) **FeedBurner feed deleted.** FeedBurner's 30-day deletion process simply redirects traffic for the first fifteen days, and then stops. You'll need those folks to resubscribe – the FeedBurner Migration Guide from feedblitz.com can help you there.
3) **Incorrectly edited feed URL**. Say you have lots of users at FriendFeed, update it to point to the new feed at FeedBlitz – and accidentally mess it up. Ooops! Now the traffic isn't coming our way and we won't count it. If you see a large centralized service "disappear" make sure that the URL they're checking is correct.

Once you've identified the source of the mystery disappearing readership, take the appropriate actions. The metrics should reflect the effect of your changes the next day, since feed metrics are calculated once a day, only.

RSS Feed Monetization

Monetization – earning revenue from your RSS feed – can take many forms. FeedBlitz can help you make money from your content by inserting ads into your feed, much like the old AdSense for Feeds network at Google FeedBurner, which was terminated in Early December, 2012.

The great thing about ads in your RSS feed is that all people and services that read the feed – such as your email subscription service – will also get the ads as well. Every downstream consumer of your RSS feed gets the chance to display your ads and help you monetize your audience. Neat!

Using FeedBlitz's RSS Ad Network

FeedBlitz's RSS ad network, which according to some publishers is paying out roughly 2x to 3x more than Google's defunct AdSense for Feeds equivalent, is configured on the RSS Settings page for your FeedBlitz RSS feed. Expanding the "Monetization" section gives you the chance to enable or disable the ads, and control how often they appear in the RSS feed itself. If you have a typical length feed – 10 posts – you will probably be OK with ads appearing every post, or every other post. If your feed is longer, the number of ads might start to overwhelm your subscribers, so consider a larger spacing between them.

The positioning of ads is an interesting item to consider. Above the post will be the most effective but your subscribers might think it a little too pushy. "After the post" might hurt revenues, as you really don't want your ads to appear "below the fold" where a user has to scroll to see them.

The "first paragraph" choice works well by placing the ad within your copy. This makes it appear as the user is reading your post, and so is much less easy to ignore. These ads generally perform the best, relatively speaking.

The exception to this rule is if the first or second thing in your post is typically an image (e.g. coupon and deal bloggers often have product images at the top of the post). Placing an ad immediately after or immediately before a product pack shot makes the feed look very busy, image-wise, and detracts from

general readability. If you turn your readers off with the ads in the feed then they'll be unhappy and start to leave, which is obviously a bad thing.

Bottom line: add the ads, see how you feel about how they look, test over a good length of time to evaluate how they perform, and then change a setting – and test again. Over time you should be able to optimize for best performance.

Adding your Own Ads to your RSS Feed

If you don't like the FeedBlitz ads, or you have an opportunity to augment or replace them, you can always add your own to the feed. These can be a sponsorship you've sold, for example, or an affiliate link, or a house ad promoting your own work.

You insert your custom code via the "Custom Footer" section of the "Per-Post Customization" section of your RSS feed's settings. Simply enter the HTML for the campaign, and save. If you're adding third party code, remember that RSS feed readers typically won't display script, flash or other "active" technologies, so you must only use static images, links and text as your promotion. Once you've added your footer code, don't forget to test it to see how it looks.

No ad? No problem. You can always use the custom footer feature to insert something like copyright information with every post, for example.

There is one downside of using the Custom Footer compared to FeedBlitz's own ad engine: the Custom Footer always appears after each and every post. There's no way to make it skip posts, like the FeedBlitz ad service can. So your sponsorship could get a little overwhelming if more than one item is being viewed at a time.

Note that you can mix your own sponsorships (via the custom footer) and the FeedBlitz Ad Network in the same feed. Just check that you don't cross the taste boundary when you ad multiple revenue generation sources to your content. And test, test, test to see what combination of factors work best for you and your audience.

RSS and Email Ads

FeedBlitz has another couple of monetization options, available for publishers using our email services as well as / instead of our RSS options. Read the email monetization section below for information on these services, reporting, and how they interact with FeedBlitz's RSS ad program.

Send an Email Blast to Your List –
No Blog Post Required!

Do all mailings from FeedBlitz have to be blog or RSS-powered? No! Sometimes you want to reward your email subscribers with a special offer, have some breaking news you want get out ahead of schedule, or have a deadline you want to remind them about just before it expires.

Newsflash!

To send an email blast to a list using FeedBlitz you:

1. Pick the list from the site navigation
2. Click the large green "Send a Mailing" button
3. Choose the type of mailing you want:
   a. "On Demand" lets you pick posts from the feed, sort them and then push them out.
   b. "Newsflash" sends a dedicated blast with out an entry in the feed.
4. For a Newsflash, create your content in the editor (optionally based on prior newsflash mailings, if any), preview it then send it out.

Newsflash content is treated like a regular automated mailing, in that it is formatted with your list's template. If you have dedicated HTML markup where the regular template is inappropriate (e.g. a sponsor's custom ad, or an event mailing), you can disable the template in the editor and / or preview screens.

Suppression Lists

If you are blasting your list on behalf of a third party sponsor, they should provide you with a suppression list. This will contain email addresses that have opted out of their emails before, and whom you shouldn't email their content to, even though they're happily opted in to your list. Upload suppression lists by choosing Publisher Tools | Suppression Lists from the left navigation.

To use a suppression list, pick it from the drop down under the newsflash mailing editor or on-demand post selection page. Its use is recorded by FeedBlitz so you can send that report to your sponsor, if necessary.

Not that you would dream of it, of course, but just in case: Don't be tempted to import from a suppression list into an active mailing list. Suppression lists contain fake email addresses that are monitored for abuse. You *will* be busted, and your account at FeedBlitz will be immediately suspended without refund when you are caught.

Content-Specific Mailings:
Filters

Let's say your blog covers PR, online advertising and social media. For the sake of argument, let's also assume that you blog about each of these topics equally. If a reader is only interested in what you have to say about PR, then your posts about online advertising and social media, while no doubt highly illuminating and full of pithy insight, will be less relevant to that reader. Two thirds of the time you send a mailing you're more likely to miss than hit with that individual – and with loss of relevance comes the risk of increased unsubscribe rates.

You can reduce this risk dramatically with FeedBlitz. You can use tag and category filters (we treat tags and categories as being the same for filtering purposes) for RSS-powered mailing lists. So, for example, you can create different lists sending different content from the same source feed. Content-specific lists increase the relevance of each email sent to someone on that list, which in turn reduces churn and unsubscribe rates.

For the above example you'd create four lists: All Posts, PR, Online Advertising, and Social Media. All except "All Posts" would use filters to make sure that their subscribers only get relevant content. Once set up, all you have to do is use the correct category or tag consistently when you post. Easy.

Alternatively, you can tell FeedBlitz to *exclude* certain tags and categories as well, or instead. We at FeedBlitz use this capability to make sure that we do not email out posts on the blog tagged "noemail" – these are typically service messages. That way, occasional status updates about the state of the day's FeedBlitz mailings (for example) aren't mailed out to the subscriber base later in the day when the service message is no longer relevant.

To configure filtering for an existing list, open up the list from your site navigation by clicking its envelope icon, and click its orange "Settings" button. On the page that appears, click the link where it says that FeedBlitz sends "all

posts", and set up the filters. Like RSS feed tag filters, if you specify multiple keywords, a tag or category match on *any* keyword activates the filter.

To quickly create multiple lists for different audiences from your site, all you need to do is clone your "All Posts" mailing list and add the filter(s). Here's how:

1) Pick your "All Posts" list envelope icon in the FeedBlitz navigation.
2) Click its orange "Settings" button.
3) Click the green "Clone" button upper right.
4) Clone it without changing the schedule.
5) Add / change filters, and edit the name of the list to match the filters selected.

Once you've got each clone built and defined, repeat the process for the next tag / category / keyword.

If you're offering multiple lists, you now need to get those options in front of your site visitors so they can actually subscribe! For that you need to tweak the subscription form, like this:

1) Pick any of the lists in the FeedBlitz site navigation.
2) Click the orange "Form Code" button.
3) On the right, pick either of the "All Public" options.
4) Choose how you want the options displayed to users.
5) Configure the other options as you wish.
6) Copy the code to your site.

And that's it! When your readers start the subscription process they will be asked to pick which list(s) they want to join. They self-select into the most relevant lists for them, which keeps them that much more engaged – and around as subscribers - for that much longer.

For more about configuring subscription forms, see the section on the topic later in this Guide.

Creating an Automated "Newsletter" Weekly Mailing

Sometimes a daily email can be too much. Sometimes there's room for a weekly alternative for people who just don't want to hear from you that much. And it's a cinch to set up. Here's how:

1. Pick your mailing list from your site navigation.
2. Click the orange "Settings" button.
3. Click the green "Clone" button.
4. Change the schedule to weekly.
5. Change the name of the new list to show it's weekly.
6. If you send full posts daily, you can set the character limit in the weekly version to make it a "digest" to keep the mail size down.
7. Go to the weekly mailing list's main page and click the "Form Code" button to generate subscription forms, links and QR codes for the new weekly mailing.

You can repeat the process and choose a different schedule, for example if you want to create a mailing that comes out ASAP (the "Express" schedule) as well as a daily summary.

But, wait! You already have a weekly or monthly "newsletter"? Sent via a traditional contact service?

You can eliminate the time it takes to produce and maintain this newsletter mailing list – and probably save some money as well – by automating it with FeedBlitz, using this very approach combined with some tag / category filters and a little creativity when blogging!

Interested in saving time, money and getting better value from the chore known as the weekly, monthly or quarterly newsletter? See the next section.

Automate your
"Contact" Newsletter

Many small businesses have multiple mailing lists – their "Blog Subscribers" and the "Newsletter" list. These may reflect differing subscriber acquisition approaches, history, or content differences. "Newsletters" typically contain very similar content to the blog, perhaps with a small amount of extra editorial. They often have no online presence other than potentially a web-based archive of the mailing itself, and are typically produced manually by copying and pasting blogged content, re-uploading images, etc. It's time consuming, tedious, and error-prone.

Instead, what you can do is automate generation and production of this newsletter using FeedBlitz, AND gain better SEO benefits by having the newsletter content on *your* blog as well as on your mailing service's archives. You simply replace your manually produced "contact newsletter" with an automated weekly mailing of that week's posts. And to keep the extra editorial? Add an extra blog post and enable everyone to hear what you have to say!

Here's what you need to do:

1) Create a weekly "newsletter" mailing powered by your blog, following the steps above.
2) Either:
    a. Make the mailing an automated digest of all posts from that week by changing the maximum number of characters from the list's settings; or
    b. Blog a weekly wrap up (say), and tag it "newsletter" - and then set up the appropriate filter for the newsletter list to only pull that post; or
    c. Blog as you do now (as in step (a)), but use filters to only pull article(s) tagged "newsletter" for your "newsletter" mailings.
3) Import your "newsletter" subscribers from your contact service via the "Import" link on the list's "Subscriber Management" tile (they do NOT have to opt in again at FeedBlitz).

4) Close your legacy email contact account.

You end up with a weekly "newsletter" that is in fact completely automated, built from your online editorial content. It saves time (which we all know is money); saves real money by consolidating two services into one, and probably delivers a more consistent presence for you in your newsletter subscribers' inboxes than the old way without their feeling overwhelmed. You gain extra content for bonus SEO points – and don't lose anything. By setting it up as a weekly mailing, subscribers who were used to hearing from you once a week, once a month, or once in a blue moon, won't feel deluged – even if you're actually blogging much more often.

That's it! Now all you have to do now is blog, with all the content marketing and SEO benefits that brings, and FeedBlitz will generate your "Newsletter" automatically.

You gain consolidated services, support and SEO juice; you save time, hassle and money. That's a win, right? Right!

Tailoring the
Subscription Lifecycle

The steps in the subscription lifecycle take the visitor through the following interactions as they join and ultimately leave your list:

1) Completing the subscription form
2) Completing the dual opt-in process
   a. Sending them the activation email
   b. Presenting a page that tells them to check their inbox for the activation email
3) Presenting a page that acknowledges they have activated their subscription once the activation link has been clicked
4) Opting them out of the list if and when they unsubscribe.

For each of these steps, FeedBlitz has a default mail or landing page, and that's usually fine for most purposes. Each mailing and each landing page is formatted with your list's template, so your branding is consistently and persistently reinforced each step of the way.

But FeedBlitz also gives you the opportunity to override the defaults if you want to, making the process more consistent with you and your content, and driving currently engaged visitors back to your site as they work through the required interactions.

All of these options are set via the list's "Settings" button, in the "Subscriber Interactions and Notifications" section.

Altering the Subscription Activation Email

After the subscription form (see the section later in this Guide), the wannabe subscriber is sent the opt-in activation email. You can change the text that is sent, colors, fonts, insert graphics and more by clicking the activation email link in the list's settings section. Remember that the email is always sent

formatted by your list's template, so you don't need to add any branding such as a logo in the message.

Custom Landing Pages

There are three landing pages that are part of the subscription life cycle:

- The activation reminder ("check your inbox") page
- The post-activation landing page
- The "you have been unsubscribed" landing page

If you want to override FeedBlitz's default landing pages, you can direct the reader to a relevant page on your site for any of these steps in the subscription process. There you can offer additional content specific to you, other subscriptions, deliver an incentive, ask the subscriber to share, take a survey, or indeed anything! It's your site, after all. All you have to do is make sure that the basic message on the page matches the activity that the visitor has just completed, otherwise the user experience will be too confusing.

To use your landing page instead of FeedBlitz's, first set up the page on your site. It's important that it be a page, not a blog post, and that the page not appear in any visible menus or site navigation. Once published, grab the page's URL, head over to the list's settings section in FeedBlitz, click the appropriate landing page link in the subscriber notifications area, paste in the URL, save.

Tip: If you have multiple lists and are careful as to how you word the custom landing pages on your site, you can construct a single set of landing pages that will work for all of the lists we run for that site.

Automatic Reminders

Did you know? If a subscriber starts the dual opt-in process but doesn't activate right away, FeedBlitz automatically sends an opt-in reminder after three days. So we try really hard to get the prospective reader onto your list and visiting these landing pages! Also, a subscription that hasn't been activated (or has bounced out, been deleted or unsubscribed) does not count for billing purposes. FeedBlitz only charges for active email addresses.

Customizing the Subscription Form

The FeedBlitz Subscription Form Philosophy

The approach we have historically adopted at FeedBlitz is to keep the subscription form on your site as simple as possible, and for any extra data collection or work (such as CAPTCHAs for anti-spam, custom fields or social media authentication dialogs) to take place on a separate page.

This approach as a couple of benefits. Firstly, your site's layout won't change as either you change elements of your mailing list – adding or removing custom fields, for example – which keeps site maintenance simple. Nor will the form typically need updating to take advantage of any new capabilities FeedBlitz adds.

Secondly, the forms we create use very simple HTML. They are easy to modify, style and lay out on your site. This gives you and your web designer great flexibility without having to worry greatly about breaking the form itself.

Understanding Form Options

Forms are configured using the orange "Form Code" button on your list or autoresponder's main page. By default, a form subscribes the visitor to the associated list, and optionally presents an interstitial page, with your branding, to allow the user to choose how they want to follow you (using email or one of our social media options) and (if necessary) supply custom field data and complete the CAPTCHA anti-spambot test.

Much of the basic form is configurable. For example, if you don't want to allow the user to enter anything but an email address, change that option. If you want to change where the form appears, change it.

What you can also do is affect what the form asks people to subscribe to. If you have multiple lists on your site or in your account, you can make the landing

page offer all of them to your readers. The scope is controlled by the top right option. When multiple lists are available, the options expand to ask how you want the choices to be presented. Radio buttons and drop downs allow the user to choose exactly one list at a time, which keeps things simple for visitors. Checkboxes, on the other hand, allow multiple lists to be selected in a single interaction. The great thing about telling FeedBlitz to allow the user to choose multiple lists is that the landing page automatically updates itself as you add or remove lists from your account.

You might not want all your lists to appear in this form, though. To stop a list from appearing when it otherwise would, edit the lists settings, and find the privacy option. Making the list "private" stops it from appearing in the public "all lists" form. You can still create and use a subscription form specifically for that list at any time; that always works.

Finally, if you have custom fields, you can tell FeedBlitz which ones you want the form to include (by default, all visible fields will be included). This is great for when you have different fields defined in your account that are for different lists, or when you want to eliminate the submission of custom fields to streamline the subscription process.

The Hosted Subscription Form Link

As well as the form code for your site, FeedBlitz also creates a link (between the horizontal lines above the <form> code) which you can place anywhere and use to solicit new subscribers. The link is great for online locations where a form isn't permitted, such as email signatures or a link for a QR code; or offline in printed items, such as business cards or collateral.

Simplifying the Form and Reducing Clicks

To go straight from the form on your site to sending the activation email without going through the typical interstitial page requires the following:

1) Email only form
2) No custom fields
3) A paid FeedBlitz account
4) No reason for FeedBlitz to otherwise present a CAPTCHA

When all these conditions are true the user workflow is much simpler and faster. The variable that you can't control is FeedBlitz's security and anti-spam detection routines that decide when to put up the CAPTCHA; more on this below.

Image Verification CAPTCHAs: When They Do and Don't Appear

A CAPTCHA will always appear if you're using an grandfathered, unpaid publisher account, or when you're creating an individual email subscription that's unlinked to a publisher account.

If, however, you're paying FeedBlitz a monthly fee, we make the CAPTCHA invisible. Which is to say, we still have anti-spambot code present, but it doesn't require a human being to read lots of squiggly letters.

A CAPTCHA will however be presented on a premium account if FeedBlitz detects what it thinks is someone or something attempting to spam the list. This will happen when the invisible CAPTCHA test we use fails – indicating a spambots trying to automatically fill in the form - or when the pattern of usage appears to indicate manual (human) entry of junk addresses, in which case the CAPTCHA starts to appear to manage the process more aggressively.

However, under normal circumstances, no CAPTCHA will appear as the result of a premium publisher's subscription form being submitted.

Altering the Form's Design

As observed above, the code use in FeedBlitz is pretty simple. So you can readily alter its design! The HTML does not use any HTML IDs or classes, so surrounding the form in a <div> will enable you to style it anyway you like. Usually, the form will automatically pick up the correct fonts and colors from your page anyway.

Here are some common questions we get:

1) Q: Can I remove the "preview" and / or "powered by" text? A: Yes.
2) Q: Can I change the button or the text on it? A: Yes!
3) Q: How do I make the email field narrower? A: Use a smaller number as the "size" attribute's value in the <input> fields.

You can also use the form code in third party forms and subscription managers; more on that below.

Using and Customizing the Embedded Form

The embedded version of the form is designed to be used on a page of your site. It is a single line of script that you add in the HTML editor for the page. When using the form, the subscriber never leaves your site.

The embedded form, because it is sitting within your site, does NOT use your email list's template – it would be silly to have your logo repeated on the page within your site, for example! It is served unstyled, and so should appear with your site's default fonts and colors. If it doesn't, have your graphic designer add the relevant stylesheet information to the HTML the form is embedded inside, and wrap the script code in an appropriately styled <div> block. If this is all CSS to you, worry not – your designer will know what it means.

Once you have the subscription form embedded on the page the way you like, update your site so that there are clear calls to action to subscribe – and have those link directly to the page you just created. Otherwise the odds of a casual visitor finding the subscription page buried somewhere on your site are low, and you don't want that.

Using Custom Fields in the Form

Most FeedBlitz accounts don't include custom fields, such as name, location, job title or birth month, so this section doesn't really matter to most of you!

But if you *do* have custom fields (or want to), here's how they work in the subscription form:

• Only visible custom fields will be shown on the interstitial landing page

- All required custom fields called for by the form must be completed before it can be successfully submitted
- You can change the custom fields required by any given form using the form's "Form Code" definition page
- You can use multiple versions of a form in different locations asking for different custom field data if you wish

Define custom fields using the link on the form code page, or via the left navigation under "Publisher Tools."

Working with Third Party Subscription Forms, Popups and Widgets

For forms and widgets that don't ask for data beyond email, such as the subscriber's name, the standard FeedBlitz form code should work as is in the plugin or widget. Use the "EMAIL" field after you paste in the FeedBlitz form code, not the "EMAIL_" field. If you visit FeedBlitz.com for long enough, you'll see this at work with our popup for the "FeedBurner Migration Guide," which is powered by the popular PopupDomination plugin. Typically, you can either paste in the form code directly, or use the link to the hosted form for the widget.

If, however, the form or dialog wants a name or other custom fields, then you need to follow the following steps to make it work:

1) Define a custom field to hold the name. Make it a simple visible text field.
    a. For the sake of this example, let's assume you called the field "FirstName" (so it appears as <$FirstName$> in the field editor)
    b. If you want to add other custom fields, repeat this step.
2) On the list's "Form Code" page, configure the form for a single list updated.
3) In the custom field section, de-select "All custom fields" and make sure only "Name" and any other custom fields you want on the widget are checked.
4) Copy the form code and paste it into a text editor.
5) Add this to the form code just before the </form> text:
    <input type="hidden" name="FirstName" value="">

a. Repeat this step for your other custom fields, changing the "name" value to match the custom field's name in FeedBlitz
6) Copy paste the whole thing, from <form> to </script>, and paste into the popup dialog's configuration screen.

At this point you should be able to tell the plugin that the name field maps to "FirstName" and the email field maps to "EMAIL" – and it will work great! (Yes, it's a little ugly, and yes, we're working to improve this).

How to Really Grow Quality Subscriptions Quickly

I've covered this topic in much more depth in "List Building for Bloggers" (find out more at http://ListBuildingForBloggers.com), but to supercharge your subscription rates you should:

- Have your subscription form clearly marked, above the fold, with social proof, on every page.
- Use incentives to reward new subscriptions.
- Use popups judiciously (on the 2nd page of the session or later, and do not show a popup as soon as the page opens – give the visitor a chance to read what you have to say).
- Have forms in multiple locations on the page (e.g. at the foot of a post, but before the comments, as well as in the sidebar).

Unsubscribing Readers from Social Network Subscriptions

We like to think the form is pretty clear about what's going to happen when you subscribe with your social media account to a list we power. And yet – people are still surprised that the updates appear in their streams. As a publisher, you may then get readers indignantly demanding that you stop spamming their accounts and take them off the lists this minute, *or else.*

So, firstly, how did FeedBlitz get the right to post as them to their accounts? Because they went through a multi-step authorization process where the subscriber allows FeedBlitz to post on their behalf. It's impossible for the FeedBlitz app to Tweet, post on Facebook or update LinkedIn without this authorization in place. No spamming here – it's all properly opted in.

So, how to stop the social media updates depends on the service the user added your content to. For Twitter, you can look up the user's Twitter account in your list, and then unsubscribe them. You can't do this with Facebook or LinkedIn, because the user accounts are held by the account ID which isn't the same as the user's name. Moreover, unsubscribing the same user's email account has no effect – an email subscription is different from a Twitter subscription which is different from a LinkedIn subscription, etc.

For all social media accounts, including Twitter, the following basic steps will stop FeedBlitz from posting to the subscriber's community:

1) Log in to the social media service's web site
2) Go to your Account settings page
3) Find the apps section
    a. In Facebook and Twitter, Apps are in the left sidebar.
    b. For LinkedIn, they're accessed via the Companies, Groups and Applications tab.
4) Find FeedBlitz on the apps page.
5) Revoke its authorization, saving if necessary.

Set up an Autoresponder Series

What is an Autoresponder?

An autoresponder is a fixed sequence of one or more emails that are sent whenever a new subscriber takes a triggering action. That action might be:

1) Joining a list to which the autoresponder is attached.
2) Subscribing directly to the autoresponder itself.
3) Taking an action outside of FeedBlitz that then triggers an autoresponder sequence.

Autoresponders triggered by a new list subscription (1) can be as simple as saying "thank you" via email; or delivering a link to a promised incentive; or starting a multi-day nurturing sales sequence.

Examples of (2) are email courses such as "30 days to …", and lead capture / generation tools like white paper, or e-book downloads.

An external action that triggers a sequence (3) is what we call "activity-based subscriber management" and is triggered by a "parser" receiving the relevant notification from the third party system.

Lead capture / generation, triggers and parsers are slightly more advanced, and covered in the following sections.

Creating a Basic Autoresponder

To set up an autoresponder that starts when a subscriber joins your list, select the list from the navigation, click the "Autoresponder" button and follow the steps. Add and sequence your articles and then publish them. You can also pick from any existing autoresponders you've already set up in your account.

Your first email should contain a link to any incentive you promised, or alternatively offer a reward – possibly previously unannounced for a little "surprise and delight" – to your new subscriber. While that's great – why stop

there? Think about what you might add to the sequence, every day or two or three (don't overwhelm your new subscribers; if you get a lot of unsubscribes with the "too many updates" message, consider slowing down the delivery pace). Examples of topics you can cover in later messages in the series include:

- Thanks for subscribing.
- Here's a special offer for new subscribers.
- Check out our top ten most popular posts.
- Survey: How do you like the site?
- Here are the first three chapters of my e-book
- Join the e-book affiliate program.
- Here's a coupon on a product or service
- Join these other lists we offer
- Links to some partners
- Ask a question: How are we doing? How can we help you?
- Etc.

Be creative, think what might appeal to your audience, and deliver!

It's also worth mentioning that this kind of autoresponder is great for (a) Large sites with lots of content, where you can use the series to guide the new subscriber around; and (b) sites where mailings are relatively infrequent. In the latter case, a well-constructed autoresponder sequence can keep you front and center in the new subscriber's inbox, even if you typically don't mail for days or weeks. In fact, it's essential – mailing too little and not following up with the new subscriber is a sure way to get increased unsubscribes and spam complaints when you eventually do. An autoresponder is a great way to deliver timely, relevant emails even when you're not.

Finally, if you're launching a new incentive for people to join your list, what about those who are on the list already? Consider sending a newsflash to your current list linking to your new incentive. Reward their wisdom, surprise them with your generosity, and ask them to spread the word. They'll love you for it.

Using FeedBlitz for Lead Capture

For businesses, the process of lead generation is essential for filling the top of the sales funnel – the process by which visitors are turned into leads, then into prospects and finally into customers. One of the core functions of marketing is to build awareness and create demand to fill the top of that funnel; it is the function of sales to move people through the funnel, qualifying them as they go, and finally closing the deal.

Lead capture – the part where a visitor steps up and indicates their first interest in what you have to offer – is the top of that funnel. For many sites, that step involves filling out some form or other in order to get some relevant item of value: a software download, a white paper, or an e-book, for example.

Not only can you can use FeedBlitz for this, but you can also use FeedBlitz to help move leads through a simple sales funnel and turn them into sales. How? By using an autoresponder to do the heavy lifting for you.

This is, in fact, what we do here at FeedBlitz.com. Since many of our clients come to us out of frustration with FeedBurner, we created the "FeedBurner Migration Manual," available from http://www.feedblitz.com/the-feedburner-migration-guide/

It's a pretty good bet that someone downloading that manual is fairly interested in migrating away from FeedBurner. They're therefore a pretty well-qualified lead. That e-book – all 40+ pages of it – is mostly an educational, how-to resource, by design. We want it to be a shared reference.

It's also free. But to get at it, the visitor has to give us their email address. That's the trade – you give us your email address, and in return we lay out in detail the steps you need to take to leave FeedBurner. We capture the lead, and once they validate their email address, we kick off a sales funnel sequence via an autoresponder.

Working the Sales Funnel with an Autoresponder

The autoresponder we've built for FeedBlitz to react to leads has four objectives:

1) To ensure that the visitor actually downloads and reads the FeedBurner Migration Manual;
2) To highlight differences between FeedBlitz and FeedBurner that may be important;
3) To address critical objections that the lead may have to switching;.
4) Converting them to a trial customer based on what they've learned.

Obviously, objective (4) is the main one we want to achieve. But we have to get through the first three first in order to convince the lead to start a trial.

So, what sequence did we build?

- The first two emails simply verify that the subscriber has accessed the Migration Guide – they include links to it and clear calls to action to download it.
- Daily thereafter, an salesy piece is sent that talks about their experiences, addresses objections (primarily subscriber loss), and highlights FeedBlitz's additional value (e.g. the autoresponder they're receiving!). Remember, these prospects are contemplating moving from a free (unsupported, neglected but nevertheless *free*) service to a paid one. We need to convince them that there's enough *value* in what FeedBlitz does to justify the change in *price*.
- Each mailing has a call to action to start a trial.
- The last mailing in the sequence thanks them for their attention and automatically adds them to the blog's mailing list via a *trigger*.

Even if you're already a customer, it might be interesting for you to sign up for the FeedBurner Migration Guide to see this at work – and possibly to use it as inspiration for your own online sales process.

Your Turn!

So for you, the first step is to plan out the emails – content and timing – that you want to send to your leads once you capture their data. Once you've got that content settled, you create the autoresponder in FeedBlitz as follows:

1) Go to the relevant Site dashboard in the FeedBlitz navigation.
2) Click the "New Autoresponder" orange button at the top.
3) Follow the steps to create the initial post.
4) Add your other posts to the sequence.
5) Make sure they're all then published, and not in draft.

With the content built, how do your leads join the list? By subscribing directly to the autoresponder, as opposed to joining it by dint of subscribing to one of your mailing lists. To generate the autoresponder's subscription form, click the autoresponder's "Form Code" button. Configure the form, and place it on the landing / squeeze page where you ask for the lead in return for the resource.

You can edit and style the form code to suit your site (we did for the Migration Guide at http://www.feedblitz.com/the-feedburner-migration-guide/) – but if you do, test that it works. See too that we included the form multiple times on that page: We really want qualified visitors who've got that far to sign up.

Et voila! Lead capture on the site, and a nice email sales sequence that drives the new lead to the next step in your sales process, whatever that might be.

Taking It to the Next Level

Once you have a little experience with this approach, you will probably recognize that there are different customers (or ones with different priorities, perhaps) for your business and the different products and services you offer. You can therefore build different autoresponder sequences, starting from different squeeze pages, for each of these products, services or markets.

But what happens when you're successful? Once a prospect becomes a customer, you probably want them to:

(a) Stop receiving the sales funnel mailings, and

(b) Start receiving a "new customer sequence" instead.

Again, this is actually what happens at FeedBlitz. When a customer starts a trial, they're automatically removed from the sales funnel autoresponder and automatically added to the new customer autoresponder. You probably have a similar process in your business, so consider how a different autoresponder sequence can help "onboard" a new account.

Activity-Based Subscriber Management: Parsers & Triggers

The task of dynamically switching subscribers based on what they do from one list to another, or one autoresponder to another, is what we call "activity-based subscriber management." It's implemented in FeedBlitz using a combination of features called *triggers* and *parsers*. These capabilities, and how you can use them, are discussed in the next couple of sections.

Shopping Cart and Third Party
Service Integration: Parsers

A lot of your business' activity that involves people you want to get onto your mailing list is going to take place outside of FeedBlitz. I know, the horror! What you need, then, is a mechanism to get relevant information out of that third party product or service, such as a shopping cart, payment service (e.g. PayPal), CRM, form plugin, e-book sales site, or co-registration system; and get it into FeedBlitz automatically. With such a system in place, you can start using activity-based subscriber management to launch relevant lists and autoresponders, tuning the message to the subscriber based on what they've just done. Highly relevant, and perfectly timed.

But how to do this without programming, APIs, and integrating with any arbitrary third party system? The answer might surprise you: Email.

What is a Parser?

Pretty much any third party system out there can be configured to send you an email when an event of note – say a purchase, or a download, or a registration – takes place. In that email will be data about what triggered the event, including the user's email address. And it is this notification email that you can use in FeedBlitz to add that user to the relevant list or autoresponder.

A "parser" is the feature in FeedBlitz that makes this all work. It is a combination of a special email inbox at FeedBlitz that you (or strictly speaking the third party service) can send (or forward) the email notification to; and rules which you specify about how the email notification is formatted. The parser will then extract (i.e. parse) any inbound emails it gets for the subscriber's data, and then add that subscriber to the list the parser is associated with.

Defining a Parser

To get a parser in place, you're going to need two things:

1) A list or autoresponder for the parser to join the new subscriber to; and
2) A sample notification from the triggering system for you to analyze.

You'll also need to make sure that the email address you log in to FeedBlitz with is valid, because notifications from the parser itself will be sent to that email address. You don't want to miss these updates, especially while you're first setting up and testing the parser.

Once you have these elements in place, you can begin.

Go to the list or autoresponder you want the notifications to add people to, and click the "Parsers" link in the "Subscriber Management" tile. Looks complicated, doesn't it? Don't sweat it!

Defining a parser has two distinct sections. Since it's possible (albeit highly unlikely) that emails other than the ones from your initiating service will reach the parser, you need to tell the parser how to identify ones that are genuine. Usually specifying the sending service's "From" address or the subject line will do. Comparisons aren't case sensitive. Don't make the test too restrictive, else it might weed out valid emails too (you'll find out about this if it happens if you follow the advice here, however).

Next, you need to tell the system now to parse out the data in the email to find the subscriber's email address (and, optionally, if you have them defined, any custom field data). The content you need is probably in the body of the inbound message, and it's probably obvious how it's split up. If it isn't, you can divine the answer through some trial and error testing (and if that fails, contact FeedBlitz tech support for help). Finally, once you've determined how the data is split up in the inbound email, you map the content in the email to the data FeedBlitz stores for your account.

Emailing the Parser

When you save the parser, you'll notice that you're given a massively long email address to use. This makes it hard for a spammer or some other mechanism to spam your list's inbox with junk as it's pretty much un-guessable. Just to be

safe, though, don't share that email address with anyone or anything beyond the third party system you're integrating with.

In your source product or system, specify the parser's email address in the relevant notification or email service integration section (if there is a section for "Aweber" and the page asks for your list's email address, put the email address for your FeedBlitz list parser in there – it will work).

But what if you can't add the parser's email address? What you can do instead is to add a rule or filter to your email app's inbox – most modern systems and services will have such a mechanism. Set up the rule to find emails from your source system if they can only come directly to you, and configure it to forward the email to the parser's email address. Depending on the product, this might only work if you're using it (desktop email apps like Outlook work this way), but for server-based email systems (gmail and Exchange) the rules should be applied server-side, 24x7, regardless of whether you're logged in or not. You could also use an online service like ITTT (If This Then That) to check your mailbox and do it for you.

Worst comes to the worst, you can forward notifications manually, but that gets old really quickly and we only suggest that as a way to test your parser, and not as a production approach.

You *do* have to figure out a way to get the emails from your source system to the FeedBlitz parser. Without this, it isn't going to work.

Parser Notifications

Once you have your parser initially defined, make sure that it is set to always notify you via email. You're not going to keep it that way once you have it tested and working, but at first you want it to tell you what it's up to, just so you can make sure that it's working correctly.

One important final note: Parsers may take a minute or two to pick up and process the inbound email. So during your testing, be ready to wait at least this long for the notifications from the parser to reach you once you've sent a test message in. Make sure that you have FeedBlitz@Mail.FeedBlitz.com in your white list and contacts to avoid the notifications being misrouted to junk.

Testing, Testing, Testing: Model Implementation Process

Here is our outline process for successfully verifying a new parser.

1) Have at least one sample notification email from your third party system available to test with.
2) Make sure that your parser is configured and set to always notify you.
3) Forward the sample notification to the parser's email address.
4) Wait a minute or two; check your inbox for the results.
5) Determine what happened. If it didn't work, adjust. If it did, send another test using a different notification email to make sure it's extracting the correct data from the notification. Repeat step (4).
6) Once it's working, send a junk email to the parser. It should reject it. If not, repeat this step (and then re-verify that it's working correctly by going back to step 4).

Now you're ready to go live!

1) Update your third party system to send notifications to the parser's email address:
    a. Important! When you add a new notification email, some services (such as PayPal) will require that the address be verified via dual opt-in. So you need to make sure that the parser is set to forward ALL notifications to you at this point so that it forwards the dual opt-in email to you. Then you can click the link inside and activate the address.
2) If necessary, update your email app to forward inbound notifications to the parser instead.
3) Allow the parser to process notifications.
4) Once you're satisfied that the moving parts are working OK, change the parser's notification setting to be fail only.
    a. Why? Because sometimes third party services will change the format of their notification emails, and that in turn may break the parser. You want to know when that happens so that not only can you fix the parser quickly, but you can then also add the subscribers it missed to the list by forwarding the notifications that failed back to the now properly working parser again to process.

Depending on the third party system you have the parser listening to, the list you attach the parser to can be a "thank you for joining / buying / etc." autoresponder sequence, or a way to opt the user in to a relevant mailing list if they checked the box on the form they submitted, or a sales funnel for something else.

FeedBlitz itself uses this mechanism to add new customers to the "New Customer" onboarding autoresponder. When a new trial starts, FeedBlitz sends an email to the autoresponder's parser's email address, which in turn adds the subscriber to the onboarding mailings. That, in turn, fires off various triggers to manage the subscriber's presence on other lists. Triggers are the topic for the next section.

Rules and Restrictions

- A parser assigned to a normal mailing list will initiate the dual opt-in sequence for that list, requesting that the user verify their intent to join before adding them.
- A parser will not assign an email to a list if that user has previously left that list.

Activity-Based Subscriber and
List Management: Triggers

Getting the right message to the right person at the right time is critical to making the most of your email marketing and maximizing your results for your business, blog or organization. The prior section discussed using parsers to automatically add subscribers to the right list or autoresponder based on activity in systems and services that are *outside* FeedBlitz. Triggers perform a similar role based on activity *within* FeedBlitz.

What is a Trigger?

A trigger is an action that moves or removes a subscriber from one or more lists based on other events within your account. A trigger can either subscribe or unsubscribe a reader from a list or autoresponder; and a trigger fires when one of the following events happen on the list / autoresponder it is attached to:

- The subscriber joins the list by completing the dual opt-in process
- The subscriber unsubscribes
- The subscriber completes the autoresponder sequence

So, for example, we at FeedBlitz use a trigger for each of the two main autoresponder sequences we use; the one for people downloading the "FeedBurner Migration Manual" and the new customer onboarding sequence. The last post in each tells the reader that the autoresponder has finished, and that in order to help them keep up with FeedBlitz they've been added to the main blog's subscription list. It's a trigger – using the autoresponder completion event - that moves the subscriber into the main FeedBlitz News mailing list.

Preparing for Triggers

Before you set up a trigger, you need to have at least two mailing lists in your account (and by "list" here I mean either a traditional mailing list *or* an

autoresponder). To figure out how and when to move subscribers between your lists, try mapping your lists on a piece of paper to plan the workflow.

Implementing Triggers

With your plan in place, select the list you where the subscriber activity you want to take action on occurs, and then click "Triggers" in the "Subscriber Management" tile.

Then pick the subscriber event from the drop down, and then the action that you want to take place. Autoresponders have three actions (subscribes, unsubscribes, completion); other lists just have subscribe and unsubscribe as available events.

So in FeedBlitz's case, we set up triggers on the autoresponders such that when the subscriber completes the sequence, they are automatically subscribed to the main FeedBlitz News mailing list.

But there's more – and this is the power (and complexity) that triggers can bring to your automation: The "New Customer" onboarding autoresponder *also* has an action for the "subscription" event.

Why? Because when a subscriber joins the "New Customer" autoresponder, we clearly need to stop pitching them to sign up! So the "subscribe" event for this responder is set to *un*subscribe the subscriber from the FeedBurner Migration Guide autoresponder. That way we won't keep asking them to do something that we know they've already done, which would be aggravating, to say the least. This trigger prevents that from happening.

The complexity arises in that, as and when we add new lead generation autoresponders, we will have to remember to add additional unsubscribe triggers to the new subscriber mailing to ensure that the relevant sequences are stopped.

Restrictions

In order to preserve deliverability, there are a couple of important restrictions on triggers, as follows:

- An unsubscribe event can only trigger other unsubscribes. You cannot subscribe a subscriber to a list when they're asking to leave one.
- A subscribe action that adds a subscriber to a different list will not work if that subscriber has already unsubscribed from the target list. In other words, a trigger won't override a subscriber's previously expressed desire to get off a list.

Triggers on autoresponders also have the following features:

- If an autoresponder has zero or one entries in its sequence, triggers for the "completed" event will be fired in addition to any "subscribed" triggers when a subscriber is added to that autoresponder.

Fully Automated Activity-Based Email Marketing

So what you can now start to create is a fully automated, list building and email marketing machine that gets the right message to the right person at the right time. What you need is:

- One or more lists delivering content;
- One or more autoresponder sequences that are triggered by various forms or parsers;
- Triggers to migrate subscribers from one list to the next based on activity.

Best yet, once you've created all of these things and got them working, it will all work on a set-and-forget basis.

Monetizing Your Mailings

FeedBlitz Ad Policies

As a quick recap, FeedBlitz pays out your share of ad revenues generated by any of our ad programs (RSS or email) when all of these conditions are true:

1) You're an active, paying FeedBlitz premium publisher;
2) Your earnings balance exceeds $25 at the end of the month;

Earnings are paid out via PayPal 45 days after the close of the month when your ad earnings balance meets the above criteria. New trial accounts count as "paying" in this context.

Being Profitable: Making the Most of Your Ad Programs

Advertising is not a get-rich-quick way to make lots of money on the Internet. An individual ad presented to an individual user via RSS and Email will typically make you a fraction of a cent, because the limitations of these formats limit the ability of ad networks to track users. This in turn means it's very hard to tailor the ads and practically impossible to do so in a context-sensitive way. This tends to yield non-optimized ad displays, which reduces earnings compared to similar ads on the web.

The other thing about advertising is that it becomes more successful for you the more volume (impressions) you generate. There are several ways to boost the number of ad impressions:

1) Write more posts more often;
2) Include more ads in any given update;
3) Grow your audience.

(1) Might be possible, (2) gets confusing, ugly and off-putting very quickly, which leaves (3) as the best way to generate more money from ads. Your audience needs to grow, retain its quality as it does, and you will benefit financially as a result.

For publishers with larger list and RSS audiences, such as coupon and deal-bloggers who also post multiple times a day, FeedBlitz's advertising programs can be very successful indeed. Many of our larger publishers are now making significantly more than our monthly service fees thanks to FeedBlitz's ad programs. FeedBlitz is driving real profits for these account holders.

And you can get in on the program as well. FeedBlitz has several ways you can monetize your feeds and mailings:

- FeedBlitz's RSS ad program.
- Custom ads in your RSS feed footer.
- FeedBlitz's email ad programs.
- The Escalate Network / Coupons.com widget.
- Your custom ads in your email template.

Ads in Your RSS Feed

See the RSS feed monetization section of this Guide above. Ads in the RSS feed will automatically flow into any RSS-powered mailings that FeedBlitz (or any service using your FeedBlitz RSS feed as the content source) sends.

FeedBlitz's Email Ad Programs

When enabled, currently under My Account | Ad Revenue Share, the email ad setting is account-wide for all mailing lists you're running. You choose the type of ad you want to run, where in each post it will appear, and how often.

No matter what you pick here, FeedBlitz will only show at most three email ads per mailing, so as not to overwhelm the subscriber. It will also typically show at least two, so once enabled you're going to get two or three ads every time.

From a format perspective, rectangles typically pay much better than any other form of standard ad unit; you should therefore use them unless you have a compelling reason not to.

Finally, note that our ad networks currently perform best for audiences in North America and, to a lesser degree, the UK and Europe. If your audience lies

outside these regions, earnings from the FeedBlitz ad networks are likely to be poor; you should consider directly selling instead (see below on how to do that in FeedBlitz).

Reporting

FeedBlitz gives you daily insight into the performance of the FeedBlitz ad networks you are participating in via My Account | Ad Revenue Share | Reports. Ad metrics are calculated overnight, US eastern time. Unfortunately, at the moment it isn't possible to differentiate between RSS ads and Email service ads within the reports.

When you look at the reports you will see that there is a certain amount of volatility in the metrics. This depends on when your posts go out, and what advertisers are supplying ad demand that your inventory can fill. Don't despair if you see ad revenues drop off for several days, even if you're posting like crazy! It happens – hang in there and the numbers will bounce back. Often you will see earnings drop around major holidays, when people are online less, and at quarter- and year-end, when brand ad campaign funds are all drained. Wait for the first of the month and you'll find that campaigns will start to kick off anew.

Brand Safety

Because of the nature of our aggregating many sites for advertisers to reach, it's impossible for FeedBlitz to evaluate them for what's called "brand safety." As a result, household name advertisers – who are typically a risk-averse bunch – tend to avoid such content.

If you are running a large site that is an established and brand-safe, please contact FeedBlitz technical support. We can work with you and our ad providers to elevate you to a premium, brand-safe ad supply with commensurately higher earnings.

How FeedBlitz's RSS and Email Ads Interact

When the FeedBlitz email engine detects an RSS service ad is already in the post, it won't add the email ad to that post as well. This reduces the risk of too

many ads overwhelming the subscriber. That said, there's typically very little point in enabling both RSS and email ads for your account anyway, if your mailing lists are powered by an RSS feed which already is configured to deliver ads.

When FeedBlitz's Ad Networks Are Disabled

If your account is closed or there is a payment issue, FeedBlitz will make your account ad-funded for the duration of any applicable grace period. This means ads will be inserted into your mailings, but they will benefit FeedBlitz, not you. Your ad insertion setting will be automatically disabled as part of this process.

When you re-establish your account, mailings will become ad-free automatically. To insert email ads that benefit you again, you will have to re-enable the insertion settings under My Account | Ad Revenue Share.

Escalate Network's Coupons.com Email Widget

For bloggers working with Escalate Network http://www.escalatenetwork.com/ FeedBlitz enables easy insertion of a current coupon offers into your mailings, enabling your list to help you earn from via the Escalate Network affiliate program. All you need to start is your Escalate affiliate ID.

Inserting the Escalate widget is easy using the "Easy Template Editor" – expand the monetization area, enable the widget and enter your affiliate ID. FeedBlitz will take care of everything else for you.

If you're using the "Advanced Template Editor" instead, use the tag <$Escalate=XYZ$> in the template, and replace "XYZ" with your affiliate number.

For more information about the various email template editors at FeedBlitz, see the "Customizing Your Email Templates" section later in this document.

Your Custom Ads in Your Mailings

One of the things about ad networks like FeedBlitz's, and what most ad networks *won't* tell you, is that any ads you sell directly will (or at least *should*)

make you more money than ads from the network. Why? Because the ad networks all take their cuts along the way, so the price the advertiser pays is always more – and sometimes much more – than you earn. This is OK, because ad networks are investing to bring the ads to you, and they need to make a living.

This implies that ads you sell and run should earn you more while they're running than any ad network ads they're replacing, simply because there are no middlemen involved. Price accordingly! That said, you can run directly sold ads *as well as* ads from your ad network, in which case you can price them as you see fit – any additional revenue you make from your own ads is gravy.

There are two ways to sell and distribute a custom email ad in FeedBlitz. One is simply to tell your sponsor that you will mail their offer to your subscribers – the dreaded "email blast." You do this via a Newsflash mailing (via the list's home page, then click the green "Send a Mailing" button and follow the steps). It might feel a little spammy to some recipients, and you might not want to do this too often, but it's certainly an option. If you do this, make sure you disable your mailing list's template as part of the process, since your sponsor will probably give you the exact HTML they want sent.

The second way is to add your sponsor's ad code to your email template. You have to use the Advanced Template Editor (ATE) for this, and you access it via the list's "Design" button. Assuming that you're adding some kind of image ad, you'll need a static image (i.e. not flash; instead jpeg, gif or png image formats all work great) and a static link (i.e. not javascript).

Insert the image into the relevant section of your mailing template, then highlight it and add the link. Rinse and repeat for other ads you're adding. For example, you might add a rectangle top right, next to the table of contents; a skyscraper in the right margin; a landscape banner just before the footer. That gives you at least three slots to monetize with. You can obviously sell them to the same publisher, or mix them up. Pricing should be for the top slot (above the fold) to earn the most, and decline the lower down the mailing you go.

If you place your ad code between the <$BlogPosting$> tags in the Advanced Template Editor it will repeat with each post included in the mailing. That sounds good if you have multiple posts per mailing, but don't do it. Having the

same ad repeat over and over in the same mailing looks poor and won't make your sponsor happy.

If you don't want ads to appear in landing pages, such as the hosted subscription form, and default activation, opt-in reminder pages and unsubscribe pages, surround each ad with a pair of <$BlogNoLandingPage$> tags. This ensures that way they will only appear in mailings.

If you are selling a lot of sponsorships in your emails, constantly adjusting the template can be both time consuming and error-prone. What you can do instead, then, is use a blog to power the delivery and insertion of ads into your mailings automatically via the ATE's <$Feed$> tag. All you do is add the ads as posts to that blog. That's fairly advanced stuff, but once you have it set up it works really well. Read more about how to set it up here:

http://www.feedblitz.com/using-blog-as-email-sponsorship-ad/

Don't Forget!

No matter which advertising program you end up using, don't forget to add your email and RSS feed subscribers to your media kit. When you promote your site to a potential sponsor or buyer, your subscribers and lists are going to be very valuable properties they can buy separately or you can bundle with a regular sponsorship sale. List all the options available in each channel that a brand can buy from you.

Customizing Your
Email Templates

The Different Template Editors

A "template" is what controls the layout of your blog's content when it is turned into a mailing or subscriber landing page. The template is where the graphic design elements of the mailings are determined, beyond what is in an individual post. Branding, layout, fonts, colors – determined by the template. Whether a post is truncated, where it comes from, how it's tracked: the list's settings.

FeedBlitz has two distinct template editors, and a third way of creating your initial template. The editors are the "easy" template editor, which simply needs you to upload an image or two and make some choices from a form, and the advanced template editor (ATE), which gives you full control over the HTML used, and enables much more powerful layouts than the easy version. You can also have FeedBlitz try to generate a template automatically using the auto-template generator.

The Easy Template Editor

This editor allows for very fast and simple creation of basic email mailing layouts. It lets you define basic colors, underline styles, table of contents positioning, sidebars and more. It also allows one-click monetization if you're an Escalate Network affiliate.

When you save an easy template, it overwrites any previously saved advanced template (but see the versioning section below). But you can later edit the template created by the easy template editor using the ATE, which means that you can use the easy editor to kick start the development of a more sophisticated template.

Templates generated via the easy editor are *mobile-friendly*; they are built using *responsive design* techniques, so scale images, fonts and other layout elements

to fit more gracefully on mobile phones and tablets without forcing the user to pinch-zoom all the time. This alone is a great reason to start any template development by starting the process in the easy editor; all the HTML and CSS you need to achieve a mobile-friendly email is already there.

The easy editor also defines the template for the best possible results across the broadest possible spectrum of email apps. Templates designed here should look OK in gmail and both new and old versions of Outlook, for example. While not every email app will support every nuance of HTML that you specify, using the easy template editor will ensure that the emails are similar enough across the board and legible.

Important Note: If you imported your list from FeedBurner, your FeedBurner look and feel was migrated to FeedBlitz's easy template equivalent. Unless you them went on to fine tune the template in the advanced editor, your migrated FeedBurner email subscribers are already getting mobile friendly mailings from you as a result of the way our templates work. If you want to change a setting for an imported FeedBurner list, start with the easy editor first.

The easy editor has a small preview image where you can get an idea of the effect your changes will have on the resulting email. At the foot of the editor, though, is a preview button. That will take the easy settings and apply them to the most recent (up to five) posts from your blog so you can see how it lays out using your content. Previewing any changes does not save them; and even if you save the changes and then change your mind, FeedBlitz's template versioning ensures that you can easily go back and start over.

Finally, the easy template generator is undergoing many revisions during Q1 2013 and beyond. Keep checking back – and following the FeedBlitz blog at http://blog.feedblitz.com – for updates!

The Advanced Template Editor (ATE)

The ATE gives you complete control over the layout of your emails. It gives you complete access to the HTML source of the template, which is both its killer advantage and its greatest risk: you can really mess up badly when using it if you're not careful. You get complete flexibility, but with that flexibility also comes the responsibility to test what you've built to make sure that it works.

The ATE controls the layout using custom "tags" that tell FeedBlitz where to insert the relevant content from your site into the mailing. They all have the form <$...$>. Most insert content; some however are control elements that must be present for the template to be valid and work properly. All the tags are defined and documented below the template editor window in the tag legend; you can insert them as you see fit.

The two most common and critical control tags are <$BlogPosting$> and <$BlogNoLandingPage$>. These MUST appear in matched pairs for the template to be valid. Elements between <$BlogPosting$> tags are repeated for each post included in the mailing; elements between each <$BlogNoLandingPage$> pair are ONLY included in mailings, and not on landing pages or the online subscription form.

If these tags aren't properly paired up, FeedBlitz will interpret the template as being broken and default to its standard, FeedBlitz-branded template. This is obviously not what you will want to have happen, so once you save a template, use the list's troubleshooting section to send yourself some test emails.

Other things to note about the ATE are:

- Item tags that relate to posts but are used outside the <BlogPosting$> section will use the content from the top (most recent) post.
- Advanced: You can use the **<$Feed$>** tag to add other feeds to your template; see http://www.feedblitz.com/since-its-inception-feedblitz-has-been/
- Advanced: Use the **<$BlogBlock$>** control tags within <$BlogPosting$> to change layouts on an item by item basis, as documented here: http://www.feedblitz.com/design-better-looking-email-updates/
- The ATE is currently the only location where you can define a template to be the master template.
- There are no guarantees that a template produced or modified via the ATE will be mobile-friendly; you should test the results on your reference portable platforms yourself. Desktop versions of Safari (for iOS devices) and Chrome (for Android) can give you something of an idea of how your email will look on mobile if you preview it in these browsers and then narrow the browser width significantly.

Template Design Tips

- **Use dark fonts on a light background.** Not only is that easier to read, but not all email apps will be configured to show background colors. Most apps use white as a background color, so a light font on a dark background risks being light on white – or practically invisible.
- **Background images may not display as you expect.** They might not be shown at all, or some systems might ignore CSS settings and repeat the image endlessly. Best avoided unless you want them to tile. Also note that systems with images off by default won't show the background either, so make sure your template makes the mailing visible with images and backgrounds missing.
- **Mix serif and sans-serif fonts.** It's more pleasing to the eye if your headline fronts come are the opposite of your post's text. If your post text is sans-serif, try a serif font for the headlines; and vice versa.
- **Avoid non-standard web fonts.** They use script to download themselves into your browser. Great for the web, but they won't work in email since the required scripts won't run.
- **Test, test, test!** This methodology works well for getting the kinks out of your templates:
  - Preview the template, save when you're happy with it.
  - Use the trouble-shooting button on the list's main page for the online preview.
  - Check rendering is OK in IE, FF, Chrome and Safari.
  - Send test emails and check rendering in email in gmail – if that works you're good.
- **Advanced: Use inline CSS**. The easy template editor generates style sections (<style> </style> tags) but also generates inline CSS (the style attribute in the HTML tags) which will work better across a wider range of webmail clients (notably gmail). Use inline CSS wherever possible; you cannot rely on the <style> tag or externally loaded style sheets to work.
- **Advanced: Mobile-friendly responsive design.** The easy template editor generates mobile-friendly mailings; if you work within the framework created by the easy template editor you have much better chance of remaining mobile-friendly. Avoid adding HTML tables in your markup. Smart phones and tablets will obey @media CSS directives in stylesheets, and you can adjust font sizes, display attributes and other CSS elements

as you wish. Make sure to mark them !important to override inline styles. FeedBlitz will automatically add @media directives as part of mailing, so test and preview your template on a mobile device once saved.

- **Advanced: Don't use invisible images to control spacing.** Use inline CSS padding and / or margin attributes. The mobile-friendly @media descriptors will scale photos down, but invisible spacing images UP – and that could ruin the layout of your mailings. Again, test!

The Auto Template Generator

The auto template generator attempts to build a layout just like your current web site's mobile layout. The auto template generator will then load up the ATE to let you finesse what it builds.

Sometimes this works great - and sometimes, it really doesn't. Preview the template before you save it.

If it doesn't work, switch to the easy template editor and start over. It's much easier to add things in the ATE to a template built with the easy template editor than to try to figure out what to change from a balky automatically generated template.

Template Versioning

Starting late-January, 2013, every time you save a template (regardless of the editor used), FeedBlitz keeps the previous version. Prior versions can be found at the foot of the easy and advanced editors. If something goes horribly wrong, you can pick an old version, preview it, and load it into the relevant editor. The restored version won't be applied to the live system until you save it, so you can load other versions to find the right starting point again. Versioning is automatic.

Understanding and Using Master Templates

A Master Template is one that applies to all your mailing lists *except for* those with their own template enabled. It is set and cleared using a checkbox on the Advanced Template Editor; there is currently exactly one Master Template per account, if enabled. Using a Master Template makes it easy to enforce brand

consistency across all your lists, and editing it affects all the lists that use it immediately. You don't have to edit the template for each list one by one if they're using the Master.

FeedBlitz uses the following algorithm to determine which template to use for any given mailing:

1) If the list has its own template activated, use that.
2) If not, and there is an active Master Template, use that.
3) If not, use the FeedBlitz default template.

To override a Master Template, simply enable the individual template for the relevant list. That breaks the link to the Master for that list alone. If you later want to revert it back to the master, use the ATE to disable the individual template.

WordPress Plugins

FeedSmart RSS plugin

FeedBlitz has two plugins if you're on the WordPress platform. The first is the "FeedSmart" plugin that redirects RSS requests on your site to FeedBlitz for serving. It is a great way to have your visitors subscribe to your site on your domain, but have us take both the load and measure the activity.

The FeedSmart plugin only works for FeedBlitz RSS feeds. If you're deploying this plugin as part of a FeedBurner migration, it is essential that all other redirection plugins and theme settings are removed from your site. See the instructions in the FeedBurner Migration Guide for more details.

Member Mail Comment Plugin

Additionally we have the "MemberMail" plugin which adds a "subscribe to my newsletter" check box to native WordPress comment forms and user registration pages. It's a great way to grow your list when visitors are already in an existing workflow, such as commenting on a post. When checked and the comment form submitted, FeedBlitz will begin the dual opt-in process by sending the visitor your list's activation email.

This plugin only works with native WordPress comments; it doesn't work with third party commenting systems, such as those from LiveFyre, Disqus, or Facebook.

Getting Help, Online Resources
and Contacting Support

Getting stuck? Looking for more advice? Want some more help? Maybe a little frustrated? Here is where to access FeedBlitz resources that can make a difference.

Online Searchable Knowledge Base

http://support.feedlitz.com

A great place to find the answers to common problems, and insight as to what's going on and what you can do to fix it. FeedBlitz serves tens of thousands of bloggers and small businesses, so odds are that any issues you're encountering have been seen before – and this is where the most common ones will be referenced.

The FeedBlitz Blog

http://blog.feedblitz.com

The latest news and, if necessary, any service announcements will be posted here. Subscribe to get the latest news delivered to you as and when. The blog also contains how-to articles and case studies that you can apply to your own account.

Technical Support

Don't be shy! *Ask for help.*

Really – we have real people whom you can talk to who can get you going.

Look, there's no such thing as a stupid question, and we'd much rather you contacted us early and often than get frustrated when a solution might be as easy as a simple configuration change.

You can email us any time at support@feedblitz.com, send a tweet to @feedblitz, or phone us during US east coast business hours using the number listed on our contact page http://www.feedblitz.com/contact/

So if you are stuck, confused or, for whatever reason, just plain pissed off, don't get mad – get in touch! We're happy to help. From email formatting to RSS feed setup, billing questions to subscriber management, if you have a question we'll get you the answer.