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TRANSCRIPT

Cut #27: Subscription technology powers online publishing

George Faulkner with Ben Edwards

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FAULKNER: Welcome to [ShortCuts](#), a weekly online broadcast brought to you by IBM. We're here to help you get the most of everyday Internet and e-mail tools. I'm George Faulkner. This week's question came to us from Jules in Toronto. He asks, how is subscription technology changing the world of online publishing?

On the phone with us is ShortCuts publishing expert, Ben Edwards. Ben recently became publisher of [economist.com](#), the online companion to The Economist Magazine.

Having spent the last few years as a key player in the world of new media, Ben joins us to share his enthusiasm and expertise on online publishing. Ben, what can you tell us about subscription technology and the way it's changing publishing?

EDWARDS: Hi, George. Thanks for having me on the show. I think... if you think about the publishing business model, what publishing does is it brings together readers and advertisers. Right? That's the model.

So what happens with a subscription technology is that it can change the point of aggregation, if you like, for the content. If you think about a Web site such as [economist.com](#), or [nytimes.com](#), or [wsj.com](#), each of those Web sites is aggregating content, attracting readers, and then charging advertisers.

With subscription technology, what happens is I as the consumer of your content can aggregate your content

elsewhere. So instead of having to go to your Web site, I can subscribe to your content feeds which you publish, and then I can reaggregate that content where I want it to be...

...which might be inside a feed reader or inside an RSS enabled browser like Firefox or Safari, or somewhere else on my desktop, perhaps on a personally configured home page which, those sorts of services you're getting now with Google and Yahoo! and so on.

And I pulled your content from wsj.com or economist.com, whatever, and it goes to where I want it to go, so I no longer have to go to your Web site.

So if you think about that, the challenge for publishers obviously is to continue to match advertisers to readers and consumers of your content even though they're no longer going to be necessarily visiting your Web site, your portal, your destination to consume it.

FAULKNER: So I see, Ben, that many of the large publishers utilize subscription. What do you see happening sort of at the next level in the average sort of large news source site beyond subscription? Do you see any trends sort of in the next wave?

EDWARDS: Well, I see a couple of things happening, George. First of all, the news sites themselves are going to be trying to counter this disaggregation by providing different sorts of aggregating services themselves.

So if you go to, for example, Newsweek, you can get mynewsweek, which is actually a news reader, right? And it's built right there on the page, it's offered free. So I can go to Newsweek and instead of, you know, aggregating all the content I want somewhere else, I am pulling other people's content and I'm aggregating it on to Newsweek.

So I'm not going to.... It's going to increase my likelihood that I'll come to your site. So that's one trend. And you'll see more and more of that. You'll see much more...you'll see much more the traditional news sources aggregating other news sources on to their sites and allowing our readers the opportunity to aggregate and pull whatever they want on to

their site, too, because that's one way of battling these forces of disaggregation.

Then the second thing I think you'll find is models where the advertising travels with the content, and you're beginning to see some experimentation with that RSS advertising where publishers are going to be able to place, to sell advertising that actually gets embedded into the RSS into the subscription feed...

And then it travels with the content so that even if you're reading it, you know, on...in your feed reader on your desktop, on your home page, someone else's site, you'll see that the publisher will still be able to match the advertising and the content

FAULKNER: Well, thank you so much for joining us today, Ben. For a transcript of today's show, visit us on the Web at ibm.com/shortcuts. There you'll find more information on this week's topic. And again, if you've got a question or our experts, write us at cuts@us.ibm.com. From all of us at ShortCuts, thank you for listening.

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