

# Attensa Feed Reading Best Practices

Tips for managing, channeling, organizing and reading feeds to beat information overload

## The Difference between Feeds and Email – News versus Conversation

There's a difference between feeds and email. Think of feeds as sources of news, and email as requests for dialogue and conversation.

Email is great for answering questions and responding to requests for information. Feeds are great for monitoring fluid events like project updates, real time market and competitive developments and ongoing research.

Monitoring feeds is far more efficient than browsing and searching the web. It can eat hours a week to visit and search every relevant website, blog and wiki covering your market and project load. Subscribing cuts the time you would normally spend surfing and searching by delivering relevant information automatically.

## The Secret to Speed Feed Reading - Scan and Skim

Think of your feeds as filtering and automatically delivering the news that is relevant to you. Just like with newspapers and magazines, not every article delivered to your feed reader will be of earth shattering importance. Approach feed reading the same way you read a newspaper or a magazine, scan the headlines. Open the articles that catch your attention and don't worry about the rest.

One way to manage feed reading is to *set up a specific time each day to scan your feeds*. First thing in the morning is good time to quickly see if important developments need your attention.

When you are scanning your articles look for trends. If there are numerous posts on a topic of interest, pay attention and process the information while the idea is new. Important things have their own way of surfacing. They catch your eye or your co-workers' eye(s). When you find critical relevant information, share it. Forward the article like an email, tag it and sync with del.icio.us or use the republishing feature to post it internally.

## Organize and Categorize

The key is to organize your feeds so that the most important information is easy to access. Organize your feeds based around projects you are working on, your job role, teams you are involved with and keywords or topics that are relevant to you.

With Attensa for Outlook and the Feed Server it is easy to create a taxonomy and folder structure to help you keep your feeds grouped logically by subject. You can easily create folders and sub-folders, name them, and move feeds between folders. You can keep your feeds organized by simply dragging and dropping Outlook folders.

*Make a "Must Read" folder for feeds you can't afford to miss.* When you are in a time crunch just scan through your Must Read folder and leave the others for later.



*Give your feeds meaningful titles.* Most blogs have clever names that have some significance to the author but don't mean much to the readers. You can easily change the feed name to something that makes sense to your own organization or system.

### Channel Feeds to the Access Points That Make Sense

Attensa gives you the ability to channel your feeds to folders in Attensa for Outlook, to your Outlook inbox, to a browser reader connected to the Attensa Feed Server, to your mobile phone and to Sametime Instant Messaging.

*Think about how, when and where you want to access your feeds.* Time critical information requiring instant response should trigger a desktop alert and connect to Outlook, your phone and Sametime. News content can be channeled to Outlook and the Web reader. With Attensa's AttentionStream synchronization, you'll always be up to date regardless of where you are reading. The Attensa AttentionStream synchronization monitors every action so updating feeds, reading and deleting articles, subscribing to new feeds and adding tags are instantly synchronized in Outlook, Online and on your mobile phone or PDA, and in Sametime.

### Look Before You Leap – Preview Before You Subscribe

It's so easy to subscribe to new feeds that most new users quickly over-subscribe and begin drowning in a sea of information.

*Think through each subscription.* Use the Attensa preview feature to judge the value of each new feed. Don't just look at the headlines, look at the article content. Does the feed provide full content, or just teasers forcing a visit to the originating site? Ask yourself how you will benefit from subscribing before pulling the Add Feed trigger

### Stay on Top of Critical Information with Desktop Alerts

The Desktop Alerts feature places an Attensa icon in your System Tray. When new articles are available, an alert dialog is displayed just above this icon, showing you which feeds have new articles, and how many articles are available.

The Attensa Desktop Alert toaster allows users to track fast breaking business information whether you are working in Outlook or not. The Desktop Alert appears when your selected priority feeds are updated with new articles.

You can use this power for good or evil. Use it too frequently on too many feeds and you'll only contribute to information overload. Use it judiciously and you'll be notified the instant new information is available from your carefully selected list of must read feeds. T

### Control the Flow – Schedule Feed Updates On Your Schedule

We live in an interrupt driven world. You can't control the flow of email into your inbox, but you can control how frequently your feeds are updated.

With Attensa you can get as granular in your updating schedule as you want. You can specify global settings for how often your feeds are updated, and you can specify updates for individual feeds and/or categories. For most feeds, updating hourly should do the trick. You may want critical feeds to update more frequently.



## Don't be Afraid to Delete, and Don't Feel Guilty About It

*Give yourself permission to ignore things that don't look threatening or critical. It's ok to delete articles that aren't relevant. Attensa for Outlook can help. It cleans up nicely. You can set a schedule for automatically deleting read and unread articles.*

## Persistent Search – Less is More

The first time you execute a persistent search you can bring on a firehose of information. Here are some tips for controlling the flow.

Don't select every search engine. Use the search engines that are likely to deliver the most useful results.

### *Tagging Search Engines*

Delicio.us tags is a refined tool because the tagged results have already been filtered by users searching similar topics

### *Blog Search*

Start with multiple engines then pare them down to eliminate duplicates

Google Blogs

Technorati

Feedster

Plazoo

News Releases

Yahoo! News

Image Search Engines

Flickr

Video Search Engine

YouTube

Create a sub-category labeled with the search text to help organize the results and to help you identify the most useful results. Delete search feeds that are delivering off target or duplicates. Narrow your search terms to more precisely define your search parameters and focus your results.

Once the search is refined you will be able to quickly scan the results a daily basis for

## Use Attensa for Outlook to Read Feeds Offline

A popular analogy for feed reading is that Web feeds are like a Tivo for the Internet. With Attensa for Outlook you can time shift to read your feeds when you have the time. Having your articles available offline gives you more flexibility to catch up than by relying on a browser reader that requires an Internet connection.



## Using the Attensa River of News

Attensa for Outlook lets you choose the way you want to scan and read your feeds. In addition to the Outlook view, you can read your feeds in a “River of News.”

Dave Winer, a pioneer in RSS, coined the term River of News. He uses two analogies to create a mental model for using the River. Think of it like watching boats go by while you sit on a river bank, or think of it like dining at a conveyor belt sushi restaurant. Either way the idea is the same. Interesting things flow by and you get to pick and choose the items that capture your attention.

Here’s his description:

“But there's another kind of reader, an aggregator, that works differently, and I think more efficiently for the human reader. Instead of having to hunt for new stories by clicking on the titles of feeds, you just view the page of new stuff and scroll through it. It's like sitting on the bank of a river, watching the boats go by. If you miss one, no big deal.

You can even make the river flow backward by moving the scrollbar up. To me, this more approximates the way I read a print newspaper, actually it's the way I wish I could read a print newspaper -- instead of having to go to the stories, they come to me. This makes it easier for me to use my brain's powerful scanning mechanism. It's faster, I can subscribe to more, and my fingers do less work.”

*With Attensa for Outlook you can choose from three article views in the River of News.*

*Favorites:* The Favorites option sorts articles using a sophisticated formula based on the amount of attention you pay to the articles in each of your feeds.

*Priority:* The Priority option sorts the articles by an even more sophisticated predictive ranking formula based not only on what you read but when you read it.

*Date:* The sort by Date option displays the most recent articles first, regardless of which subscription those articles belong to.

There is no one right way to read feeds. Try all three until you find the view that works best for the way you work.

*Drag Your Must Read Feeds to the Top.* You can override the formula-based listing by dragging and dropping specific subscriptions to the “Manual Order” areas of this window. Move subscriptions to the top if you always want to view the articles in those subscriptions first—the articles in those feeds will always be displayed at the top of the list no matter what weight the subscription has.

You can also drag your least read feeds to the bottom. Move subscriptions that you don’t care much about, but still want to keep available, to the bottom of the list.

*Use the automatic prioritization to help you organize your feeds.* Every once in a while, start at the bottom of the list to see if there are articles of interest. If there are always the same feeds at the bottom of the list, think about unsubscribing from the feeds and deleting all the remaining articles.

## Put Those Tools to Work

Attensa's River of News view allows you to scan, preview, read, tag, share, and delete articles faster than you ever thought possible.

As you scan through your feeds a floating tool bar puts all of the tools you'll need for dealing with articles a mouse click away. There are also hot keys for navigating the river.

## Hotkeys for River of News Preview

Attensa provides a number of keyboard shortcuts for the River of News to help make viewing and managing your articles even easier.

**Space Bar:** Pressing the Space Bar opens the selected article in full Detail View. On the next press of Space Bar, the article is closed, set to Title only, and the next article is selected. The cycle continues with the newly selected article. Space Bar has the same effect as clicking on the Detail button to the left of the article, except that the next article is automatically selected when the Space Bar is pressed again.

**Up Arrow:** Sets currently selected article to default Detail View and then selects the previous article.

**Down Arrow:** Sets currently selected article to default Detail View and then selects the next article.

**Right Arrow:** Cycles through the selected article Detail View states in forward steps.

**Left Arrow:** Cycles through the selected article Detail View states in reverse steps.

**Home:** Sets currently selected article to default Detail View and then selects the first article.

**End:** Sets currently selected article to default Detail View and then selects the last article.

**Page Up:** Scrolls the view up one page. Sets currently selected article to default Detail View and then selects the top article in the new view.

**Page Down:** Scrolls the view down one page. Sets currently selected article to default Detail View and then selects the top article in the new view.

**D, d, Delete:** Deletes the selected article without prompting you, then selects the next article in the view and displays that article in full Detail View.

**R, r:** Toggles the Read/Unread state of the selected article.

## Optimizing Outlook Performance

Advanced settings allow you to set parameters for information logging: choose how much of your CPU power is allocated to Attensa, and how many system resources are allocated between Outlook and article updating. For optimal Outlook performance use the default setting. Set Logging to the first position "Errors". Set CPU usage to the second position and set Microsoft Outlook Performance to the third position.

