

# Sunseed Desert Technology's use of Automated Cross Posting

Sunseed Desert Technology is a learning centre concentrating on solutions for semi-arid agriculture and low impact living. They have a very limited budget to promote their activities and their research. They are increasingly relying on blog posts and social media to draw visitors to their website for ongoing publicity and fundraising drives.

One recent fundraising drive aimed to raise money to pay for materials to repair the roof of their main house. This campaign led them to re-evaluate their social media strategy and to use a tool to allow for cross posting. They wanted to increase interest in their campaign by releasing interesting data and facts on a regular basis to build an audience and create a groundswell of momentum for the campaign.

The particular circumstances facing them were:

- Irregular electricity supply to power computers dependent on solar power
- Limited monthly bandwidth via radio internet
- Limited time to promote project activities due to understaffing

Cassandra from the project shared some of the challenges they faced when using social media to promote activities.

“Good use of social media is a talent these days, especially on the constantly shifting internet landscape: we don't have time to use them all; blogs, pictures, facebook or other networking sites. We try to keep our supporters (and could-be supporters) up to date with what we're doing, but the big challenges are not just in finding good content, rather working with tools themselves. It takes time and energy, and not just people energy, but electricity too.”

## Addressing the needs of the project

As a key tool for their social media they used the IFTTT web service. IFTTT.com - is an easy to use online service which automatically undertakes an **action** in response to a **trigger** defined by the user, hence the name - *If This Then That*.

After posting content of a blog post to their website it was cross posted to Twitter and onto their Facebook page. They also put other social media tricks in place, videos uploaded to vimeo, and audio uploaded to soundcloud are posted to the website, twitter and Facebook.

After setting up an account on IFTTT.com they created channels for each of their online presences. This involved either inputting their user details or setting up oauth connections. As the posts are published this triggers ifttt.com to cross post to other channels.

**What is IFTTT?** IFTTT is a service that lets you create powerful connections with one simple statement:



## Channels

Channels are the basic building blocks of IFTTT. Each Channel has its own Triggers and Actions. Some example Channels are:



The tool also helped overcome a particular limitation. The use of Facebook at the project is restricted using a blocking rule on network router. This is set up as a way of limiting the bandwidth use of the radio-based Internet provision. In the past the block was temporarily disabled to allow for limited Facebook use as an outreach tool. Now after setting up the initial connection all blog posts can be sent to be posted on the project's Facebook page without disabling the filter..

This cross posting to Facebook allowed for an additional possibility. Visitors to the centre were encouraged to set up a learning blog on the project website. This learner blog is then set to cross-post to the Facebook page of the visitor. This allows them to share their experiences with family and friends. In this way the project's bandwidth can be used to promote networking and sharing learning to the social networks of visiting volunteers without the additional bandwidth of normal social networking use.

There are other uses of IFTTT that could be useful to a similar project. These include: the logging of temperatures available online to an online spreadsheet, the ability to automatically reply to emails based on their titles or send sms texts to project members if the subject contains the word 'Urgent'.

## Hand On - creating a cross posting recipe in IFTTT

As the project uses a WordPress website, they can take advantage of a **recipe** that has been set up by another user of IFTTT to post a tweet if a WordPress site is updated.

## WP to Twitter



by [exponent](#)  
October 11, 2011  
used 290 times

Link to this Recipe  
<https://ifttt.com/recipes/4984>

[Tweet](#) [Share](#) [+1](#) [Share](#)

Review the Action then click Use Recipe.

[Discover similar Recipes](#)

### Activate these Channels first



WordPress Channel

Activate



Twitter Channel

Activate

We can see that users are prompted to activate **channels** to be able to do this. Setting up a channel is a way of creating an input to this system or an output.

After setting up your channels you are then asked to modify an **action**.

## Action



### Post a tweet with image

This Action will post a new tweet to your Twitter account with a linked [pic.twitter.com](https://pic.twitter.com) image. NOTE: Twitter limits you to a total of 30 tweets with images per day.

#### What's happening?

PostTitle PostUrl PostContent

limited to 120 characters to accommodate image URL

#### Image URL

PostImageUrl

Use Recipe

#### WordPress Ingredients

Data from the Trigger



Select an Ingredient

In this case our action is to post a tweet with an image from our WordPress site. If we wanted to change the contents of a post, it is possible to do this by altering the Ingredients listed in or adding text directly as shown in the screenshot below.

## Action



### Create a link post

This Action will create a new link post on Facebook.

#### Link URL

PostUrl

#### Message

Latest News from Sunseed Website -  
PostTitle  
PostImageUrl  
PostContent

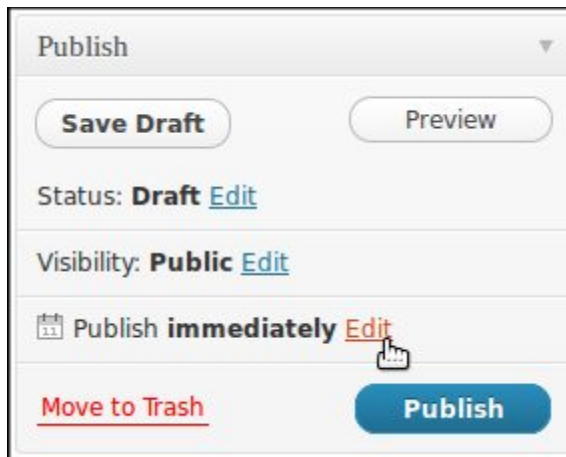
Use Recipe

+ PostImageUrl

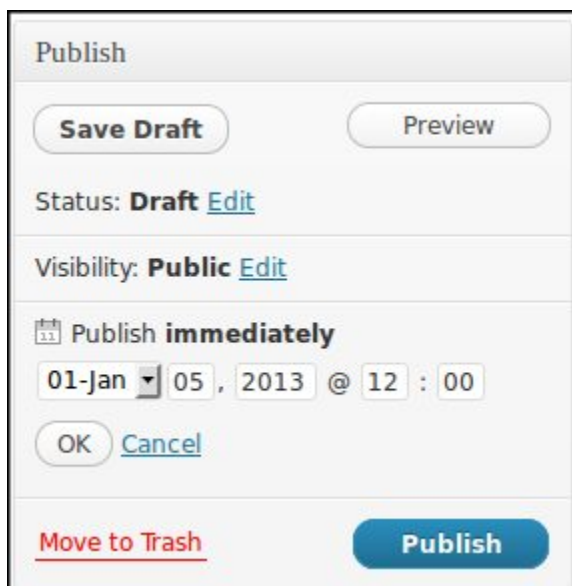


First Image URL  
Select an Ingredient  
Post Title  
Post URL  
Post Content  
First Image URL  
Tags and Categories  
Post Date  
[http://www.com/images/no\\_image\\_card.png](http://www.com/images/no_image_card.png)

Now that the cross posting is set up, the project workers are able to schedule posts regularly using the date feature of their WordPress site.



Instead of publishing immediately a date in the future can be set.



This allows them to write many posts at the same time and have them released over the next few weeks. This circumvents issues of access caused by low batteries and limited bandwidth.

### How IFTTT works

Behind the scenes IFTTT uses a combination of APIs, RSS Feeds and OAuth. This enables access and easy movement of data between web services. OAuth uses token based user authentication rather than storing passwords. This is what happens when activate channels and you are asked to log into your web services and then allow certain permissions.



## Authorize IFTTT to use your account?

This application **will be able to:**

- Read Tweets from your timeline.
- See who you follow, and follow new people.
- Update your profile.
- Post Tweets for you.
- Access your direct messages.

Remember me · [Forgot password?](#)

**Authorize app**

Cancel

This application **will not be able to:**

- See your Twitter password.



**IFTTT**

By ifttt Inc.  
ifttt.com

Put the internet to work

This is better than handing over your username and password. If IFTTT were hacked and your tokens taken, the intruders would only have a limited access to your accounts. However, there are still some concerns, for example when you activate a Facebook channel.



This screenshot shows that there are disadvantages to the way IFTTT is set up, for example, it asks for more permissions on your Facebook account than it really needs.

We can see that if the security of IFTTT were compromised you would be potentially be leaving yourself quite open.

### Resources and alternatives to IFTTT

<http://dlvr.it> - a similar web service.

[brdcst.it](http://brdcst.it) - You can set up your own installation of brdcst.it by downloading the code and setting it up on your own server. This is a good way of bypassing concerns about security.

<http://hueniverse.com/oauth/guide/intro/>: More about OAuth - if you are interested about how OAuth works you can read this guide.