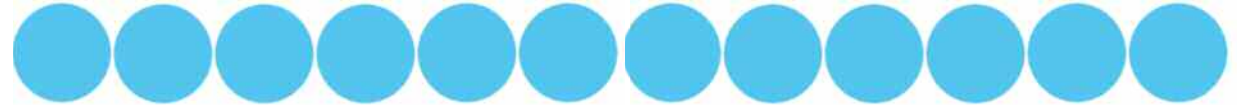# SEARCH INFLUENCE

Google+
for Business

BEST PRACTICES

7
STEPS
TO SOCIAL MEDIA HEAVEN

GOOGLE PLUS
Best Practices

Google+ is the newest competitor to the social media landscape. Backed by the largest search engine and shattering records of user signups, Google+ offers deep integration with tools and sites that, very likely, will be seen by all web users. The site has recently created brand pages, much like Facebook, but hasn't provided businesses with an adequate overview of their services or what a marketer could do with the new network.

Today, we're giving a full overview of Google+ Pages for Business, providing marketers and C-level executives the ability to understand this new, multifaceted social network and how it can drive traffic, raise brand recognition, and strengthen the online influence of your company.

If you have any questions about this book or any other aspects of your online efforts, contact us on Google+ at +Search Influence or online at www.searchinfluence.com/contact.
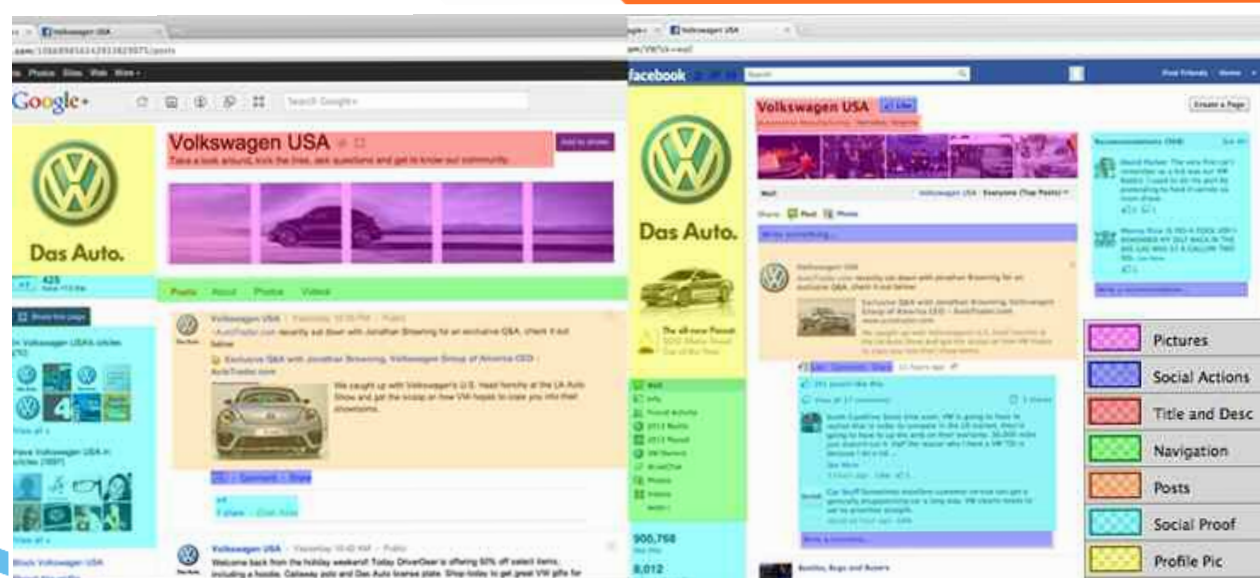
CATEGORIES

1 Basic: These steps are the first things you should do to establish a Google+ presence. Set up your profile today by following these steps.

2 Intermediate: Once you have the basics, creating content that is likely to be shared on the site and across the web is your next priority. Figure out how Google+ works for your business!

3 Advanced: You have your site; you have sharable content that you're tracking in your analytics packages; what next? Leverage the depth of Google+'s platform and get the most out of the fastest-growing social network.

Douglas Thomas is an Internet Marketing Associate at Inc.500 firm Search Influence. He's involved in all aspects of holistic website promotion, including organic and paid search strategy and implementation, social media, and traffic and performance reporting. His writing for the Search Influence blog has explored a variety of topics in internet marketing shaped by his past experiences with data and behavior in political science.

Another Facebook?

"Google is 'trying to build their own little version of Facebook.'" So says Mark Zuckerberg and the lead paragraphs of most stories on Google's new attempt at social networking. In a world where most people have only two feet, a third sock might seem extraneous. But Google+ is right now the fastest-growing sharing service, backed by one of the giants of the tech world. 40 million users, over 1 million sites, and a slough of high-profile business partners have made Google+ an intriguing social service.

Immediately, one can see that Google+ Pages are derived from Facebook Pages, but significant differences are important. There are no Fan Tabs, the social proof is more graphic and less textual, and user-generated content is relegated to comments on sanctioned posts instead of on the page directly. Furthermore, Google+'s Circles and Hangouts remain the "killer app" for the network. Creating targeted marketing lists and talking directly with customers allows interactions that may be more meaningful than simply public posts and text comments.

Google itself has said that the goal is not to create a further social element, but add social actions, proof, and connections to everyday internet uses. In this way, Google+ is Facebook's OpenGraph fully realized with a mature platform underpinning it. Using link relationships like rel=author and rel=publisher, Google+ connects your site to a growing implicit social graph. This combination of an existing platform, i.e. search and advertising, and a social element brings Google+ into the forefront of any internet marketing campaign.

Creating The Perfect Google+ Page

Seven steps provide the basics of optimal page creation, making sure any small business can build both the social and "everyday" aspects of Google+.

1. **Login** to your Google+ for Apps account
   - You can add extra admins later by selecting Google+ Settings under the Gear menu in the top-right.
   - Select Managers under the left sidebar Settings, and Invite your extra managers
2. Click **Create** a Google+ Page in the right sidebar.
3. Pick your **Category.** This does not show, but does affect how Google+ interacts with some other Google properties.
   - Most small businesses should use Local Business. This category connects with Google Maps to bring social proof to local listings. You'll need to Locate your business with a land-line telephone number.
   - Political candidates are welcomed on Google+, and are the perfect case for splitting your personal and business profiles, even when the business is one person. This avoids fragmentation of your audience.
4. **Add** your Business Name, Website, and extra categories, and set your privacy preferences.
5. "**Tell** your friends!" by clicking the share button.
   - Don't share a blank page. Create an introductory post, add pictures, and in Google's words, "Think Creatively." Make something that others want to share. You can see some examples below.
6. Link your web site to Google+ with **rel=publisher**. Using the badge maker, you can add a link directly to your site as well.
   - Make sure each page of your site has either rel=publisher or rel=author alone. In the case of both, rel=author will take precedence. Leave blog posts and other authored articles to personal Google+ accounts; if they don't have them already, you can create them for your employees!
7. Link your Google+ Account to your **Adwords** account. This will allow you to take advantage of social effects on your search ads.

Then you're done! You now have a bouncing baby Google+ page to curate.

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Google+ In The SERPs

SEOmoz - Google+
https://plus.google.com/112544075040456048636 +1
6 hours ago - Here's the post we mentioned last week about Google showing +1s in PPC Ads
New Adwords Social Extension Displays Google +1's In ...

SEOmoz.ir - Google+
https://plus.google.com/105269663944534992613 +1
Nov 8, 2011 – **SEOmoz**.ir - **SEOmoz**.ir First Persian SEO learning site in Iran.

Your page has two possible options for display in the SERPs, based on general "power" of the page. The first, SEOmoz's Google+ page, displays the profile picture and a meta description based on the most recent post, with a link if one was included in the post. This offers your site the opportunity to either receive an extra link in the SERPs or pass a portion of your Google+ page's clicks to a trusted site. On the other hand, caution should be taken for what links you share, since they'll be directly tied to your name in the SERPs, if only for a little.

The second, a much lower shows only a meta description, which follows this structure: "(Page Name) - (Headline) (Introduction)." Don't repeat your Page Name in your headline, and always include an introduction on your page. Adding a few keywords won't help your rank, but may help your clickthrough rate.

SEO for Google+ Pages

- Keep your page active to give it a unique appearance; this will increase clickthrough rates on your page
- Even if your page is active, treat the parts of your page as the components of the meta description, avoiding an unprofessional SERP appearance.
- Leverage both branded and keyword traffic in the SERP.

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Design Examples

By far, the most labor-intensive step is #5. Setting up your Google+ page to fit your brand image is even more difficult than on Facebook or Twitter, as you cannot edit the layout of the site by using a Fan Tab or custom background. Ignoring what you share, your branding will be most apparent in the top area of your page. Your profile picture, name and tagline, and top five photos will be the main area that will shape your audience's view of your page. These examples answer questions that people may have as they visit your page.

Who Are You?

Icons are a very Web 2.0 way to quickly and easily show what your organization is all about. Google+ highlights its chief areas of business, while remaining professional and detached. Furthermore, their tagline reinforces their goals and mission.


On the other hand, SEOmoz took the images from its gallery of desktop toys around the office to highlight not the company's main focus of "software" or "resources," but their community and quirky office environment. This personalizes a large corporate site and sets the tone for interaction with the page.

What Do You Do?
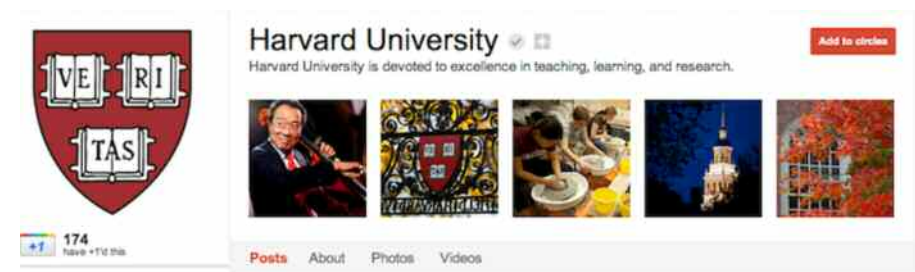
Harvard University shows its varied, wide-ranging set of activities by showing that "teaching, learning, and research" incorporate a variety of arts, with an appeal to the iconic style of the architecture of one of the best-known colleges in the world.
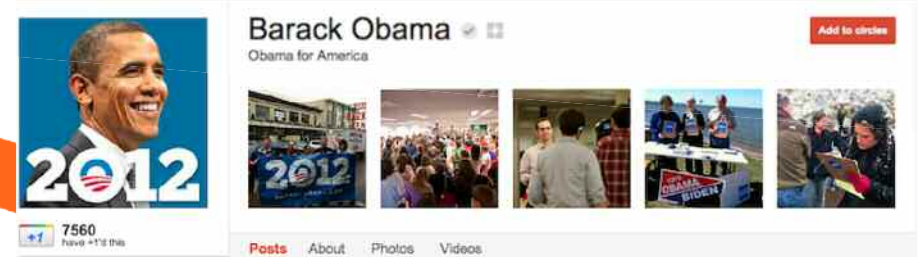

President Obama's campaign page takes advantage of its clear focus in mission and shows a variety of campaigning activities. His face looking towards the images leads the eye to the images, which clearly show what his campaign does on a day-to-day basis.

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Layout and Design Tips

• A profile picture facing what you'd like your visitors to interact with will subtly guide eyes to the important goals of your social media campaign
• Take advantage of the stark background and copious white space when you choose your top 5 images
Use your images not just as boilerplate and styling, but as action- and eye-grabbing points of interaction

What Is Your Product?
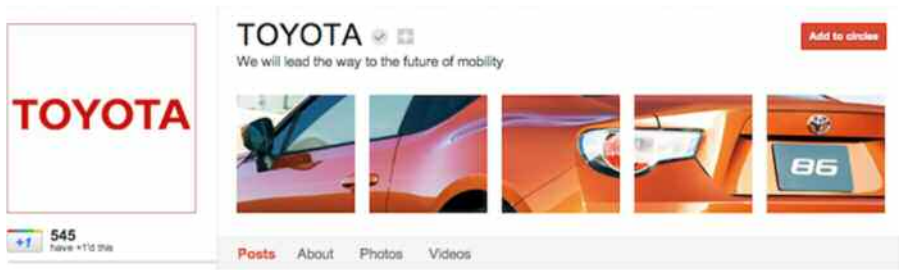
Toyota takes advantage of a "spliced banner" -- using the 5 pictures to make one. This stylish look shows the product in a panoramic view, reinforcing the brand. Google itself suggests this third party site to quickly and easily make this kind of banner.

Similarly, The Muppets uses its main product, the characters we know and love, to take advantage of the five-photo layout. The white backgrounds play with the existing layout of Google+, while the squashed faces fit well with the Muppet mindset.

What Should I Do Here?
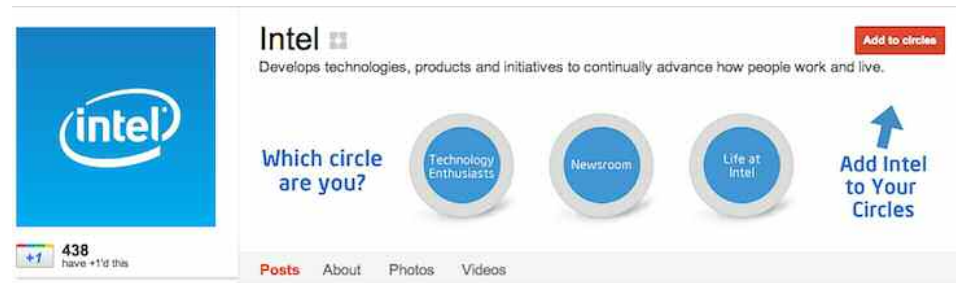
Intel solves the lack of fan tabs by using the top photos to set up calls to action, integrating circles by making visitors self-identify with +1s on posts. This engages the userbase of Google+ most directly and efficiently, while strengthening the brand image with similar clean styling across the page.

With any design choice, your Google+ Page should match your image, but do so creatively to set yourself apart from a bleak and generic default layout.

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Interacting With Your Audience

Post Types

Like Facebook, Google+ allows a variety of post types. As with any social network, a post with something for the visitor to do, i.e. look at a link, picture, or video. However, Google+'s simple text posts and comment system eschew brevity and reward longer posts with deeper discussion. This style of posting allows for longer-form content to be posted successfully to Google+ and then deep discussion run free.

Google+, like most social networks, is all about interaction and connections. Using Circles and Hangouts, a business can directly talk to small sets of customers, while Twitter-styled hashtags reach out beyond your circles into the Google+ user group. These four avenues provide a segmented toolset to target your fans directly.

Circles are somewhat like Lists on Twitter, but allow you to write posts directly to the groups. Businesses are given the ability to market directly to bucketed fans, providing content that would maintain a high ROI, similar to demographic targeting on Facebook. A user must add the company to his circle before the Page can add that user to its circles. Businesses can take advantage of circles to segment their audience. A business owner might want to keep past purchasers in a circle, offering special deals as customer appreciation. In another circle, a business might keep people who haven't walked through the door yet, but interact with posted content or are simply a serial "+1'er," so that they can turn an online friend into a paying customer. Finally, strengthening internal buckets with user-identified buckets allows the marketer to balance both sides of perception, creating an opt-in mailing list for those looking to interact with a business online. Circles give the business owner and marketer a tightly-controlled brand message that's sure to convert.

Hangouts provide businesses with an exclusive direct marketing conversation with their users. Capped at 10 simultaneous users plus the page, Hangouts are less a widespread broadcasting tool and more a private conversation with a few users. The Muppets found these things out when they were one of the first to use Hangouts. They heavily promoted their Hangout to a large number of people, garnering some frustration from fans looking to chat with some of their favorite characters but locked out. In addition, those who did get in were treated to a highly rehearsed advertisement for the new movie, instead of a friendly chat.

On the other hand, Macy's has turned their Hangout into a comment magnet, creating valuable content and raising awareness for their brand on the site. Offering a contest to talk to fashion celebrities, Macy's took advantage of the limited size of Hangouts, ensuring that their fans would want to be involved, but understand when they couldn't be. In addition, talking with their fans, not at them as the Muppets had, Macy's created a discussion instead of overtly marketing to their winners. Hangouts provide a unique marketing opportunity, even in its nascent state, providing a reward for customers interacting with the brand and a direct, conversational tone for marketers to directly hear from and talk to their audience.

Just like on Twitter, #hashtags allow larger discussions to go on, connecting users and pages beyond circles. These should be logically leveraged to make those who are searching for the hashtag to find it, and can be created if the page's active audience is large enough. Hashtags segment the broader network userbase, driving self-identifying targeted traffic to the link in the post and to the business's Google+ page.

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How to Interact With Fans on Google+

- Put everyone who Circles your page into at least one Circle. Bucket them for social retargeting according to their interactions with your business.
- Send posts that are appropriate for each circle, focusing on what they would want from your business.
- Let users self-identify, letting them essentially opt-in to marketing lists
- Use Hangouts to reward a small amount of fans from a contest to control the size of the demand
- Check comments, especially of pure-text posts, and reply as if they were blog comments, continuing the discussion.

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Effects of Google+ On Your Site

Google+'s integration with search and other Google properties is one of the main draws to using the network. Whether through SERP layout changes, ranking increases in both organic search, or effects on paid ads, Google+ gives marketers ways to take advantage of social effects and increase CTR and positioning.

We've already looked at how Google+ pages show in the SERPs, but secondary effects still affect search rank. It's clear to a degree that Google+ shares affect position, similarly to tweets. But building on that position is social proof. Even those not yet signed up for Google+ will see if their contacts have +1'd a page, encouraging sign ups for Google+ and +1s for your site.

Finally, connecting with Google+ can significantly affect the appearance of your site for local and organic searches. It will show a snippet of the Google+ profile or page of the author or publisher, with latest posts and an opportunity to add the page or profile to the user's Circles. This kind of integrated inbound marketing to Google+ will give extra life to the network beyond the growing userbase.

Making G+ Work For You

- Rigorously mark up your pages using rel=author, rel=publisher, and rel=me. This will make sure you take full advantage of the SERP layout changes
- Post often on your Google+ page to keep fresh content under your upgraded SERP layout
- For blogs and articles, take advantage of Google+ for Apps and set up profiles for your main authors to leverage AgentRank
- Use Google+ for Apps accounts to act as brand ambassadors, getting involved in customer and industry communities to increase their followers to increase the "+1'd this" social reach.

AgentRank

In addition, there should be increases in a patented, but not yet fully implemented, expansion of PageRank: AgentRank or AuthorRank. This new ranking factors could take advantage of the link relationships supported by Google+: rel=author, rel=me, and rel=publisher. These relationships allow your blog and article writers to become thought leaders, offering them a specialized SERP layout to all searchers, while allowing them to bring their reputation to other posts on other sites.

Rel=author connects a post to an author page on a given website. Rel=me connects that author page to their social network persona. Similarly, Rel=publisher is similar to the og:url of Facebook's OpenGraph, connecting a whole website to the social network. These three relations help to verify the site and establish trust.

Since the initial patent implies that search rank wouldn't be affected, the implication may be that the layout changes seen now are one effect of AgentRank. In the same way, publishers of content should also see increased likelihood of modified SERP listings with increased CTRs with high activity and reputation on Google+.

rel="author" and rel="me" in WP and other platforms • Yoast
yoast.com › SEO +1
by Joost de Valk · in 10,896 Google+ circles · More by Joost de Valk
Aug 23, 2011 – Google highlights authors in search when markup is done correctly: using **rel="author"** to the author page and **rel="me"** to the Google Profile.

How Will I Know Google+ Is Worth It?

One of Google's strengths has become its tools to justify the ROI on the service. Google Analytics, Adwords, and Webmaster Tools provide actionable data for organic and paid search and technical issues related to spidering. Google+ comes with a variety of tools to measure its impact on your site.
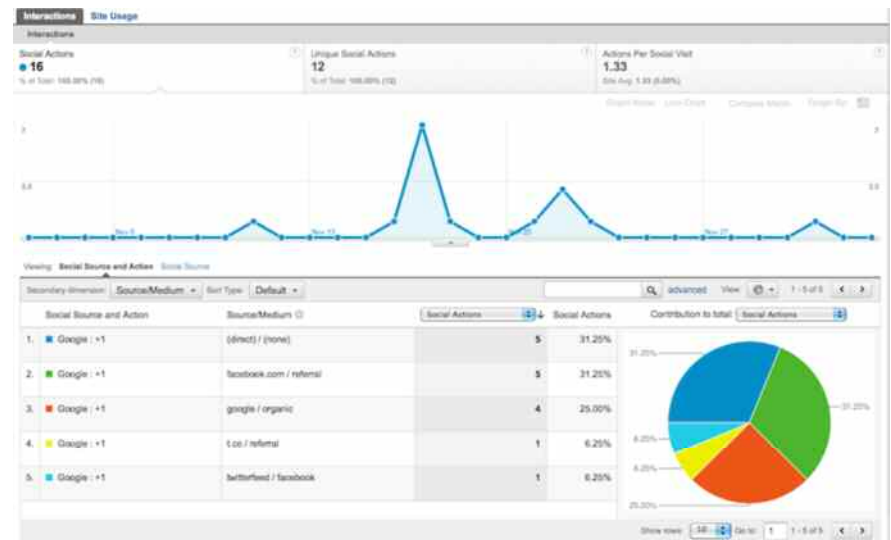
Google Webmaster Tools

Most site owners have Webmaster Tools installed. This allows them to control how Google sees their site. Now, it shows Activity, Audience, and Search Impact reports for Google+. These three reports open the eyes of the marketer to the direct impacts of the new social network. Activity allows a marketer to see what posts are being +1'd and if it's coming from your site or from the SERPs. A rising "New +1's from other sites" would show a rise in brand awareness, while "New +1's from your site" should coincide with rising traffic. In addition track which pages get +1'd, as that helps show the demographics of your Google+ community.

The Audience report plots the total +1's on your site, as well as shows demographic data similar to Facebook Insights, showing gender and age for the users who have +1'd your pages. This information allows for a SMB to see how his demographics are skewed by Google+. This aids in content development and strategy planning.

Search Impact is most interesting for SEO professionals, who will want to see the effect of Google+ on personalized search. This shows the total number of annotated SERP layouts including social proof. It also marks the CTR difference between the marked-up listing and the regular one.

Google Analytics

Extending the macro-level data of Webmaster Tools is Google Analytics, which when Google+ buttons are installed, includes social data from Google+ and other social networks. Under Engagement, Action, and Pages, Analytics gives page-level data to a marketer, deeper and more easily filtered than Webmaster Tool's sitewide data.

Engagement shows the standard Analytics scores for visitors socially active on your site. This allows you to see if those who +1 your site are converting visitors or more passive consumers of your content.

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Find out how Google+ helps you

• Webmaster tools offers a variety of domain-level stats, including search engine CTR, number of +1's, and broad demographic data
• Analytics allows that broad data to be segmented for more specific reports and action studies. Other social data can be pulled once Google+ is set up.
• Adwords gives marketers its own social-annotated CTR stats
• Use Ripples to find prominent sharers of your content.
• Searching Google+ posts shows what links and posts are being made about a topic. Use this to lightly monitor your brand's reputation on the network.
• Links are important too! Scan the linked content to make sure you're staying on your customers' good sides!
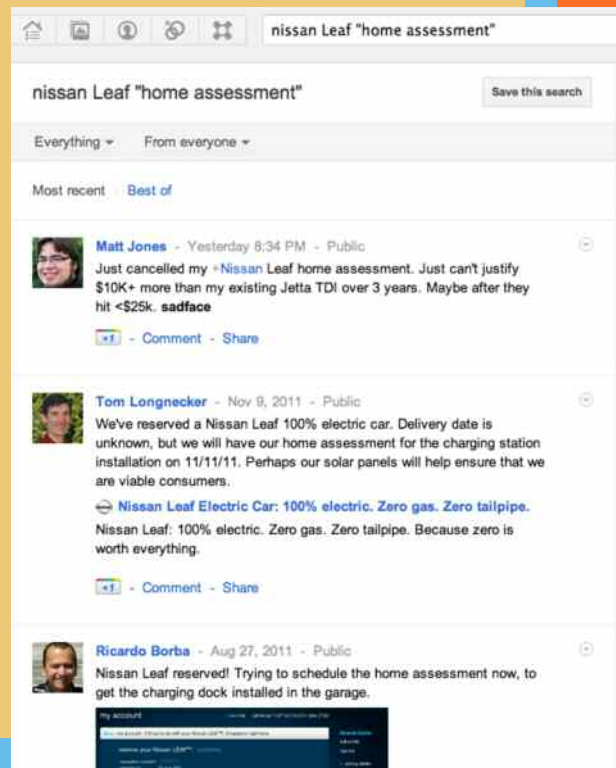
These statistics help you share more appropriate content on Google+ and set the appropriate KPIs for social measurement.

Actions shows how many people have made a social action on the site, bringing the same kind of segmentation as the rest of Analytics. This allows for conversion optimization, making sure that the appropriate social actions are happening on the site. Finally, Pages shows a breakdown of social actions per page. This report easily shows what kind of pages did better on various social networks, allowing you to strengthen your targeting of content.

Adwords

Connecting your Google+ Page to your Adwords account is a one-click solution to social ROI on paid search. Providing metrics broken out by two kinds of social proof: Pesonal and Basic. Personal Annotations include the faces of people from your circle who have +1'd the landing page or your Google+ page. Basic Annotations include how many people have +1'd the page. These simple methods of social display increase CTR on the ads, providing a lift to Quality Score, and thereby lowering your CPC.

"Google+ Analytics"

Google+ doesn't have its own Analytics system, like Facebook Insights; however, two tools are key to determining softer KPIs like social reach and brand sentiment. Ripples, a unique data visualization of Google+ posts, allows you to see who is sharing your posts on the network. This fractal-like image allows you to track which influencers are sharing your content. This provides marketers with link-building targets, networking opportunities, and other more personal connections.

A broader social analysis can be done using simply the search function on Google+. This allows a business owner to see what points of view and links are being shared, giving an idea of overall brand sentiment. This is similar to searching Twitter or Facebook, but is more manageable on Google+ due to the slower rate of posts from a smaller userbase.

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Going Deeper: Making the Most of Google+

Three areas of site maintenance are the key to optimizing for Google+: link canonicalization, +Snippets, and the Google+ API. These three techniques give a small business the highest amount of leverage in the social network. The first, using rel=canonical, is standard SEO fare, acting as a redirect for most spiders and "link juice" without changing the page the user visits. For Google+, rel=canonical also moves any +1's or shares to the new page, while a 301 redirect would wipe them out. For this reason, maintaining pages as live, even when restructuring the site, seems to be the new path for heavily-shared content. Adding a keyword-rich link at the bottom as a "manual" redirect will help spiders that don't treat canonicals as redirects and users to find your new, updated link.

+Snippets are Google's answer to OpenGraph. While you can implement it using meta information, Schema works mainly in the content of the post, allowing you to more naturally set up what shows as titles, images, and descriptions for Google+. Using in-content markup allows a few simple changes to a template to have a marked increase in consistency across Google+.

```
<body itemscope itemtype="http://schema.org/Article">
 <h1 itemprop="name">This is the article name</h1>
 <img itemprop="image" src="thumbnail.jpg" />
 <p itemprop="description">This is the description of the article.</p>
</body>
```

Finally, the most powerful of power-users will want to take advantage of the Google+ API. This, like the more powerful aspects of OpenGraph, gives a small business the ability to pull public data from Google+, like profile information, public posts, and comments on posts. Furthermore, the Google+ API enhances Hangouts, especially for those who aren't in the beta for new features. Google has examples for a voting app, which may make group decisions slightly easier, while other features allow for monitoring of participant settings, which can help for making a better user experience.

These techniques are more complex, and are hardly for the basic user. However, for a business with a well-rounded IT department or Internet marketing team, fine tuning your website to best take advantage of Google+ may help derive more value for a small time investment.

Google+: Not Just Another Facebook

Search Influence

8120 Oak Street, New Orleans, LA 70118, USA

In Search Influence's circles (36)

View all »

Have Search Influence in circles (24)

View all »

Report this profile

Create a Google+ page

Google+ is a new kind of social network, introducing itself backwards from other networks: it created a social platform, then released profiles and public information. Integrated with all the features, apps, and dashboards small business owners and marketers are already using, Google+ is a valuable discussion and content sharing engine, able to pull pageviews and get people talking about your brand, especially if your brand matches the interests of the userbase.

Rife with comparisons to other social networks, Google+ nevertheless is something wholly more expansive. Between integration with existing Google properties, ability to balance fully public and targeted posting, influence from pre-existing technologies like Schema, and deep analytical tools, Google+ is an exciting new prospect for a combined social-search strategy. More expansive than Orkut, less creepy than Buzz, and far more exposed than Wave, any internet marketer and savvy small business owners ought to take at least those seven steps to the social media heaven of Google+.

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ABOUT
SEARCH INFLUENCE

Search Influence plays a vital role in our customers' success online. We work with nearly 2,000 local businesses directly and as an outsourcing partner to major national marketing and media companies. Our process from analysis through implementation assures a comprehensive approach from start to finish and seamless integration with all of your marketing Initiatives.

Our systems and technologies for optimizing online marketing have us ranked among the top local search companies in the United States. Search Influence is also among *Inc. Magazine*'s Inc. 500 for 2011.

We thrive on results and accountability, and we love what we do!

Content by Douglas Thomas
Interior design by Julia Ramsey
Covers by Kate Voisin