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Google+ - Should Marketers Pay Attention?

By Mary Gospe

Google Plus, Google's social network project, was formally launched on June 28, 2011 after an invitation-only beta period and now has over 40 million users. I recently attended a BMA Northern CA meeting to learn about Google+ and its implications for marketers. At the meeting, Gopi Kallayil, Google+ Marketing lead, shared his perspective on Google+ and how it can benefit your customers and your business.

According to Gopi, Google+ was designed to focus on how people interact with others in real life. Rather than sharing everything with everyone we know (original Facebook model), we have circles of friends that we share different information with. So, Google+ developed **Circles**, allowing users to segment their contacts into categories and specify what information they want to share with whom.

Another need Google+ fills is to make it easier to share photos and videos with our circles, by leveraging Picasa for photo sharing and YouTube for videos. Through [Google+ for Mobile](#), Gopi "wowed" the audience by taking a photo with his phone. It instantly appeared on his Google+ wall so he could share it with one or more of his circles.

Google+ also has a feature called [Google+ Hangouts](#) in which you and up to 9 others from anywhere in the world can participate in a video chat. You can watch a video together or share anything on your computer screen.

[Google +1](#) is a button that's beginning to appear on web pages. Click on it to give your "stamp of approval" for anything you find of interest on the Web—be it articles, products, brands, etc. You can instantly share the content with your circles. When someone in one of your circles does a Google search on that topic, they may see your +1 in the search results, giving them a vote of confidence that someone they trust recommended it.

And just last week, on November 7th, Google announced [Google+ Pages](#) to allow celebrities and brands to share news and interact with fans. Fans can use the +1 to recommend your business and can add your page to one of their circles to get updates. With [Google+ Direct Connect](#), searchers put a "+" in front of their search query and can go directly to a business's Google+ page and then add it to their circles.

Implications for marketers:

Gopi mentioned some creative ways businesses are using or thinking of using Google+:

- One insurance company has a vision of how the instant upload of a photo of an accident can speed up the claims process
- Signed documents uploaded instantly can speed up business transactions
- Colleagues can collaborate in a Google+ Hangout while sharing documents
- Sales reps can share videos with prospects in a Google+ Hangout
- Customer service reps can assist customers in a Google+ Hangout

Although there are many ideas on how businesses may leverage Google+, the social network has been quite controversial in the media. [Smartbrief on Social Media](#) recently featured two stories showing opposite ends of the spectrum. Farhad Manjoo, Slate's technology columnist, proclaimed "[Google+ is](#)

[Dead](#)" in his November 8th article. And Caleb Garling published in the November 8th issued of Wired Enterprise "[Why Google Plus Pages \(Will\) Beat Facebook. And Twitter.](#)" Gopi said that Google+ is still a work in progress and that new features are being rolled out daily.

Regardless of the opinions on either side, marketers can't ignore the numbers. One billion people (1 in 7) conduct a search on Google each day. There are three billion YouTube videos watched each day. With Google's strength in these areas as well as the Chrome browser, Google Apps and mobile, marketers need to keep a close eye on Google+ . It is a new **and free** way to market their brand, products and services and engage with fans, prospects and customers. At a minimum, start with creating a page for your company as it will show up in search results and add the Google +1 button to your website. From there, you can get creative, leveraging Google+ Hangouts and sharing information with fans. It's a new frontier to explore.

About the Author:

Mary Gospe is principal and co-founder of KickStart Alliance. She helps B2B tech and clean tech companies build and nurture their sales pipelines through integrated marketing campaigns, sales development programs and inside sales operations. For more information, contact [Mary Gospe](#) at 650.941.8970. You can follow Mary on Twitter at www.twitter.com/marygospe

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