How to Use

GOOGLE+ FOR BUSINESS

Guide to Using Google's Social Network for Business

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HOW TO USE GOOGLE+ FOR BUSINESS

HOW TO USE GOOGLE+ FOR BUSINESS

By Magdalena Georgieva

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CONTENTS

WHAT GOOGLE+ IS AND WHY IT MATTERS /3

HOW TO SET UP A GOOGLE+ BUSINESS PAGE /6

THE BENEFITS OF GOOGLE+ IN SEARCH /11

6 BEST PRACTICES FOR MARKETING ON GOOGLE+ /22

CONCLUSION & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES /27

> *I expect brands will notice this and will build marketing plans around it.*
>
> **Bradley Horowitz**
> **VP of Product, Google+**

Launched in June 2011, Google+ is a new social network that has attracted the attention of marketers. In just over six months, the platform amassed more than 90 million users, posing a serious challenge to LinkedIn's 135 million membership base. Despite this impressive growth, the adoption of Google+ doesn't yet compare to that of Facebook, which has more than 800 million users.

Ever since its launch, Google+ has been open to individuals to share stories with their Circles, get involved in discussions, post photos, and participate in video conference calls (called Hangouts). However, the social network didn't provide **businesses** with much value, and many marketers were left wondering how to truly benefit from Google+.

In early November, Google+ finally rolled out business pages. Now the platform not only enables companies to create pages, but also encourages businesses to grow their following. "I expect brands will notice this and will build marketing plans around it," said Bradley Horowitz, vice president for products at Google+ in an article for *The New York Times*. His statement definitely reinforces the potential of the social network for marketing purposes.

On the day Google announced the release of Google+ business pages, hundreds of media outlets covered the story and drew attention to its importance. While many reporters and bloggers viewed it as a great improvement to Google+'s feature set, some decided to take a more controversial angle, viewing the story through the lens of a Facebook rivalry.

PCWorld, for example, led off with a story about how, in Mark Zuckerberg's words, Google "is trying to build their own little version of Facebook." It has long been discussed that Google seeks to penetrate the social market, which it previously attempted to do with Google Buzz (which has now been shut down). Will Google+ be the key weapon the search engine giant needs to achieve its goal? Can this new network, with its improved feature set, beat Facebook? These are all questions we don't quite have the answers for yet. But one thing is clear--marketers are provided with a completely new platform to explore and leverage.

In this guide, we will help you make sense of this new environment. We'll give you step-by-step instructions for how to set up and optimize your Google+ business page as well as the best practices to use in order to generate more buzz around your company. Lastly, we will touch upon different aspects of Google+ that will impact your search engine optimization and blogging efforts. Welcome, and we hope you enjoy the read!

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> *...make the same kinds of lasting connections with your customers online the way you can in real life.*

Dennis Troper
Product Management Director, Google+ Pages

CHAPTER 1

WHAT GOOGLE+ IS AND WHY IT MATTERS

Google+ is a social network powered by the search engine giant Google. Many see this platform as a challenge to Facebook's domination of the social media space. With more than 90 million users and a growing influence on search, Google+ has definitely emerged as a key player in the online marketing ecosystem.

Google+ allows businesses to create pages and develop relationships with prospects and customers on multiple levels. Individuals can add a brand to a specific Google+ Circle, share a Google+ page with their network, and interact with the content posted by that company. For instance, users can +1 (or in other words, endorse) the updates a company publishes, leave comments, upload photos, and tag the brand in them. An interesting aspect of this platform is that its Hangouts feature enables companies to engage with fans, prospects, and customers through video conference calls.

Video chat is definitely the element that distinguishes Google+ from other existing social networks. "We want to help you make the same kinds of lasting connections with your customers online the way you can in real life," wrote Dennis Troper, Product Management Director, Google+ Pages. Video communication is one way to make this happen.

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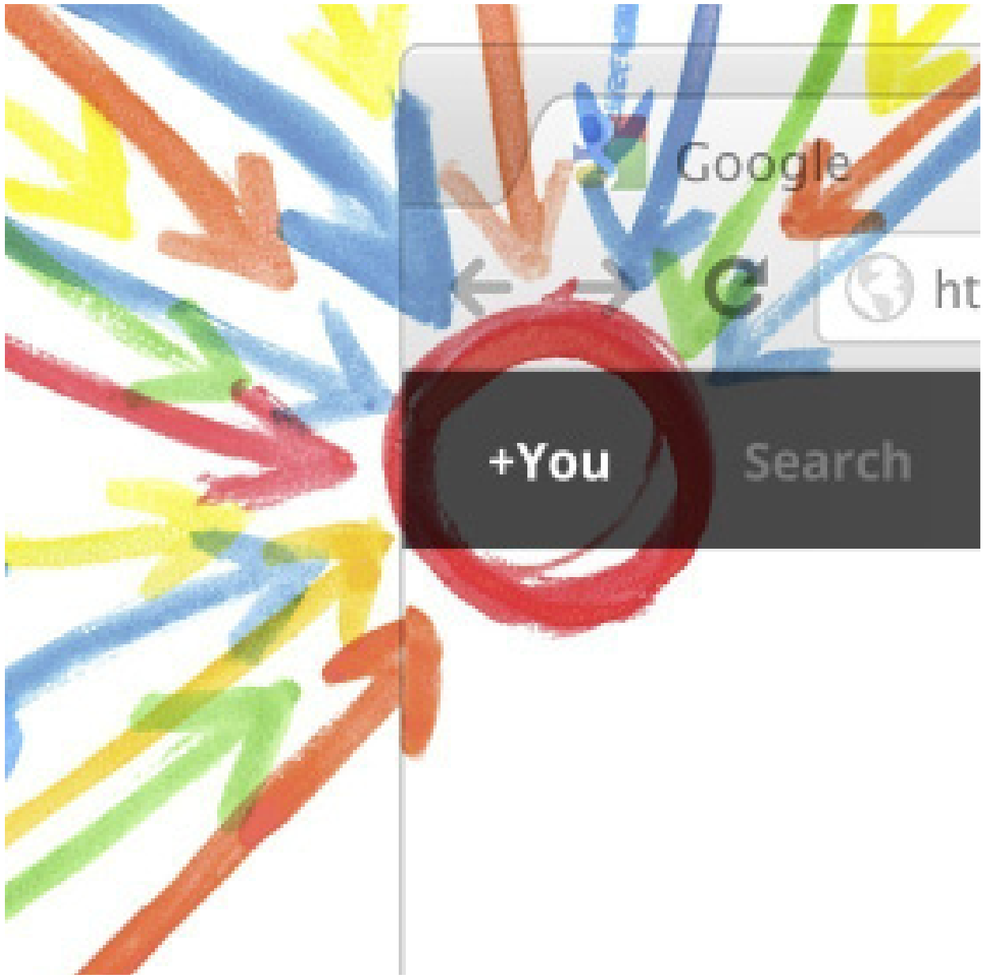
10 Quick Facts About Google+

1 Pages can't add people to Circles until the page is added first or mentioned.



2 Pages can be made for a variety of different entities, whereas profiles can only be made for people.

3 The default privacy setting for elements on your business page is public.

4 Google+ Pages automatically unfollow you if you unfollow them.

5 Pages have the +1 button.

6 Pages can't +1 other pages, nor can they +1 content on the web.

7 Pages don't receive notifications via email, text, or in the Google bar.

8 Pages don't have the option to share to 'Extended Circles.'

9 Local pages have special fields that help people find the business' physical location.

10 Google+ Pages can't even mention you unless you're connected.

CHAPTER 2

HOW TO SET UP A GOOGLE+ BUSINESS PAGE

Set Up Your Google+ Page in 5 Easy Steps

While Google indicated that Google+ Pages wouldn't be immediately accessible to all, they're actually becoming readily available. In fact, we've already created HubSpot's Google+ Page, so you can follow our updates and add HubSpot to one of your Circles by clicking here!

You are probably also eager to create a Google+ Page for your own business. The process isn't difficult, and in this section, we will walk you through it step by step.

① Choose an Accessible Gmail Account

If we learned anything from creating our own page, it's that Google+ Pages' administrative capabilities could use improvement. Avoid creating your business page through just any old account, such as a personal gmail account. Instead, choose a gmail account that is accessible to multiple members of your marketing team (e.g. companymarketingteam@gmail.com), and use that account to create your page.

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Step-by-Step Tutorial

Because Google+ Pages' administrative capabilities currently aren't as sophisticated as say, Facebook's (which enable you to assign multiple page admins regardless of the page's origins), you'll want to choose a host account that makes your page as accessible to multiple contributors as possible.

The 'Google+ Your Business' Google+ Page has indicated that Google has already started working on multi-admin support and ownership transfer. For now, we recommend making your account as accessible to other team members as possible.

2 Create a Page With the Desired Account

Visit https://plus.google.com/pages/create and if you see the option to create a Google+ Page, get started! Follow the wizard (it's much like Facebook's Page creation wizard), and choose the most appropriate option to classify your business.

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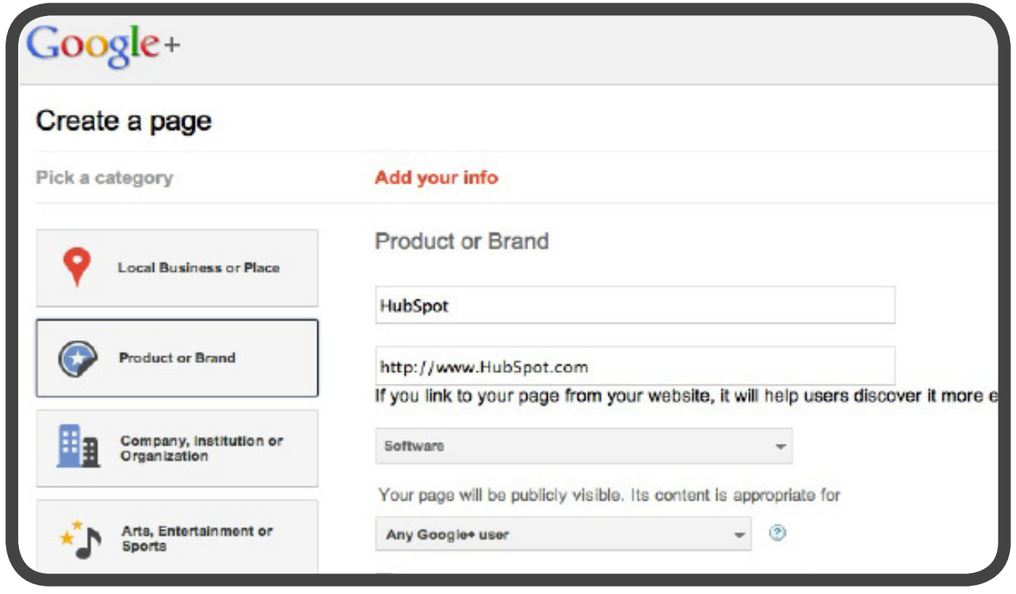
You'll be able to select from the following options:

* Local Business or Place
* Product or Brand
* Company, Institution or Organization
* Arts, Entertainment or Sports
* Other



HAVE QUESTIONS?

Post them to HubSpot's Google+ Page.

After selecting your classification, fill in your basic information, including your page name (i.e. your company name), your business' website URL, your category (i.e. your industry), and the classification of your page's content (i.e. any Google+ user, 18 years of age or older, etc.).

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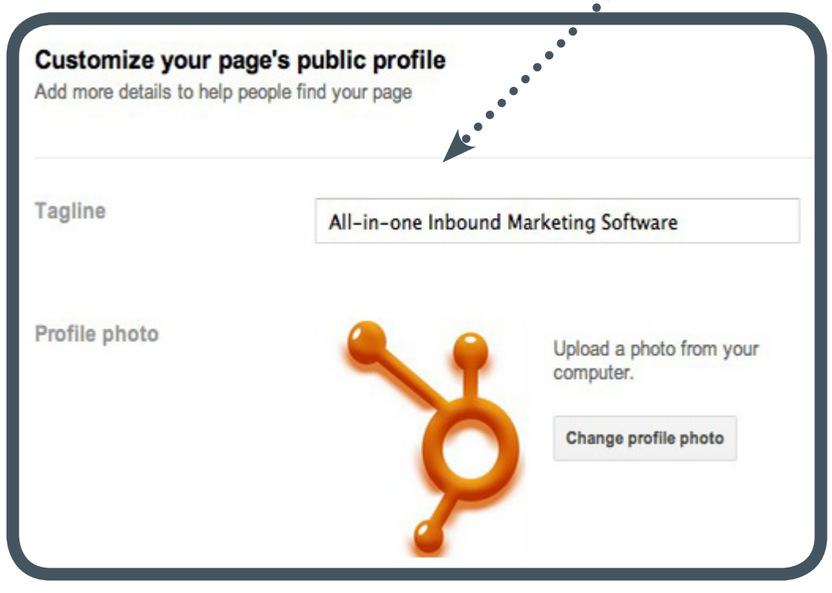
3 Customize Your Public Profile

The third step involves customizing your public profile. The profile basics include your tagline (think of it as your business' elevator pitch) and an image (your company logo is a great option). Keep it concise, yet descriptive.



4 Promote Your Page

At this point, you've created the skeleton of your page, and Google+ will now prompt you to promote your page. Our recommendation is to customize your page even further and start sharing a few updates before you begin telling the world about it.

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Promoting a blank page isn't a great way to convince people that your page is valuable enough to add to their Circles. So invest some time into optimizing your page and sharing a few links to valuable content before you start promoting it to the masses.

5 Optimize Further

At the most basic level, this is really all you need to do to get your page launched. But as any smart marketer knows, the 'basics' aren't usually enough. Intelligent marketers understand the importance of optimizing their page to make it not only more engaging, but also more valuable and effective for lead generation. In this step, follow Google+'s prompts to create an effective page, and remember -- Google+ is a social network.

Although every social network has its specific nuances and behaviors, many of the same best practices will still apply. Regularly share fresh content, react and respond to your fans, be engaging, and optimize for lead generation. Then measure, adapt your strategy, and optimize your presence based on your own individual results and goals.

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CHAPTER 3

THE BENEFITS OF GOOGLE+ IN SEARCH

5 Ways Google+ Changes Search

Here at HubSpot, we've picked out a number of ways Google+ will influence how you will get traffic from Google's search engine, whether by boosting your position in search results, increasing the chances that people will click into your site, or other factors.

① Improving Google's Intelligence

As a result of Google+, Google will be able to improve its search engine results pages through the enhanced information it will be able to collect from your social circle. Google+ offers a lot of elements that will allow Google to understand trends and what people are interested faster than ever before. Not only can they see what you share with your friends or what you are reading, but now they can also see which of your friends are most important to you. In the past, they could have had a broad vision of your followers on Twitter, but now they can directly see **exactly** how you interact with those people. For example, do you frequently share links with only a small handful of people?

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> *Google is getting deeper vision into how individual users share & discuss things on the internet.*

If you have a very tight relationship with a small network and a broader network that you are less engaged with, Google could know to promote your tight relationships in search results or use ads over the broad network.

Essentially, Google is getting deeper vision into how individual users share and discuss things on the internet. In the past, it had a limited vision of this. Now Google can own the complete picture. When placing recommendations on the results pages or looking for a certain page to promote,

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Google will now know which of your friends you trust and listen to the most. Also, Google will have better insight into who your favorite authors are on certain blogs. If a blog has many authors and you tend to prefer a few of them or specific topics that the blog covers, Google can better adjust its rankings to show what you are interested in.

Google can now more easily police who has a real profile and who is a spammer.

2 Improved Search Results Quality

Another benefit that Google+ brings to search is that results become much harder to cheat. Google can now more easily police who has a real profile and who is a spammer, and watch how they try to influence search results. When Google sees a profile that only shares and votes for things on one website and nothing else, it knows who target as a spammer. If it sees profiles dominated exclusively by +1s, it might get suspicious. Let's take this one step further.

If profiles are only following other profiles characterized by such behavior, Google might consider them suspect. Less gaming in Google's results is a long-time goal for the search engine giant. Some spam sites are trying to sell +1 votes already, but it is unlikely to be worthwhile--Google can easily watch for profiles that do nothing but spam votes and discount the value of those votes.

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3 Changing How You Get Traffic

Google also rolled out its version of the tweet or share button, the +1. These +1 buttons appear in Google's search results and can be embedded on other websites as well. They are tied to a destination page address, just like shares or tweets are.

INCORPORATING THE +1 BUTTON ON YOUR BLOG

The +1 count that is displayed on each button is based on the address of the page where it sits. This detail is really important to be aware of, because this may influence how you design your website. If you're creating landing pages for paid search campaigns, and your pages have several variations, all of the +1 votes that you earn will be broken down separately for each page address. Also, be aware that the number of +1 votes you have for a specific page can affect its Quality Score, which is critical when working on a budget for your paid ads. This isn't a huge problem, but it's important to be aware of. Every time you move a page or change the address of something, you'll be resetting the +1 count for that page.

Websites using Google's +1 button get **3.5X** the Google+ visits.

In order to determine the value of Google's +1 button, we looked at data from HubSpot's entire customer base of more than 5,000 businesses. We compared referral traffic levels from plus.Google.com (Google+) for websites that have Google's +1 button installed and for those that don't. The result? Websites that use Google's +1 button generated 3.5 times more traffic from Google+ than websites that don't have the button installed.

What's the marketing takeaway?

Use social sharing buttons! While this statement seems obvious, many businesses overlook the value of social sharing buttons and don't use them. Social sharing buttons serve two important purposes. First, they make it super easy and quick for a visitor to share your content on social media sites.

Second, social sharing buttons act as a call-to-action on your blog that helps remind visitors that their online connections might be interested in the content as well. If you aren't yet using the Google +1 button on your website, it's definitely time to start.

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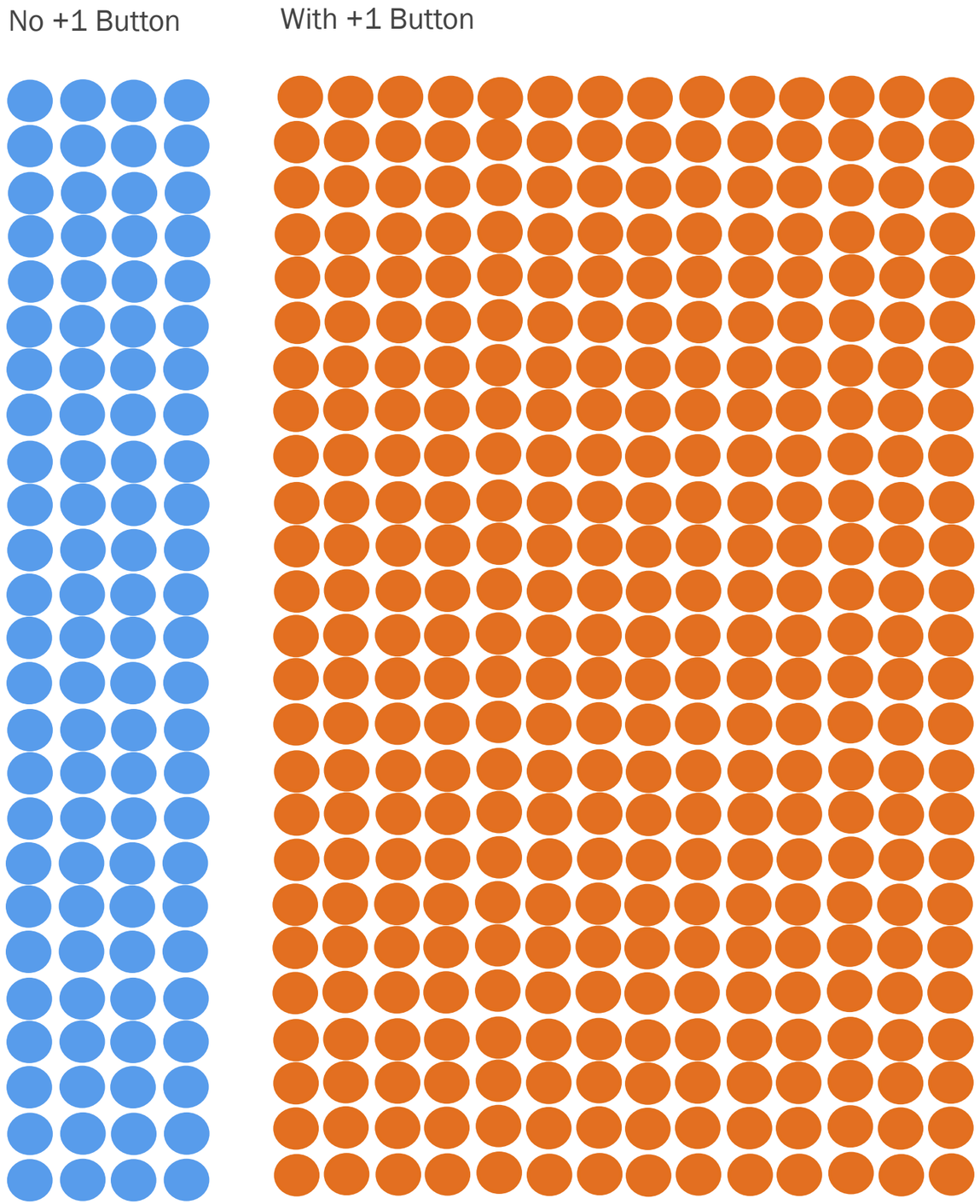

4 Improved Click-Through Rates

The fourth major factor here, which is an often forgotten attribute to SEO success, is click-through rate, or how often people who see you on their results page actually click on your page in the results. One of the powerful ideas behind the +1 votes is that if you can see that certain results are extremely popular, or that people found a specific resource particularly helpful, you have that information available without even clicking into the site.

> *You can see that 500 people have already found a certain page useful before you ever click or read any other details about it.*

You can see that 500 people have already found a certain page useful before you ever click or read any other details about it. This is similar to what Twitter and Facebook have given us access to with some of their customized buttons that reveal numbers of times something has been shared. In fact, HubSpot's Social Media Scientist Dan Zarrella has discovered some interesting data around social sharing.

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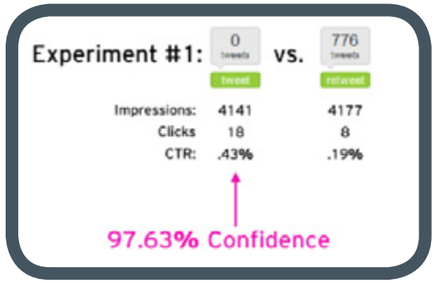

Dan suggests that there could be a powerful "first post" effect that marketers can leverage. In other words, people might be more willing to share a piece of content if they have a chance to be one of the first people to spread the word. In any case, now Google+ gives us more opportunities to speculate about social proof and its effect on social and viral behavior online.

The access to this insight will strongly encourage searchers to click on specific "good" pages and ignore ones that are not as popular with their readers. If you'd like to see an example of how this can work, look at your Google Webmaster Tools dashboard. Google provides a chart to show your click-through rate with and without +1 results in the search results.

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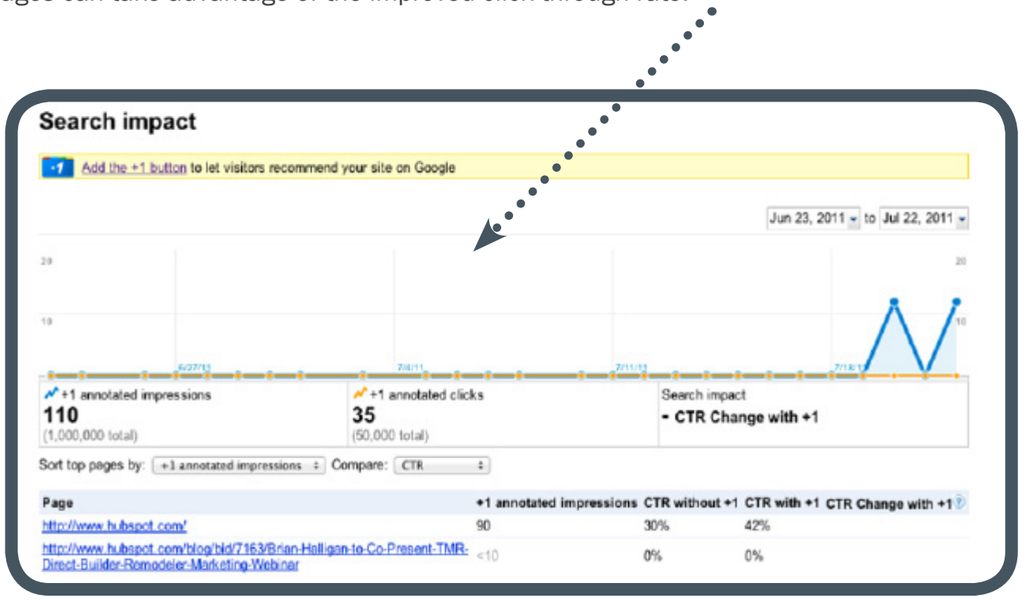
For example, in this diagram from Google, you can see that people who saw HubSpot in the search results with +1 information next to our website's homepage were substantially more likely to click on our link. This is great reinforcement for us to place +1 buttons across our site, so that all of our pages can take advantage of the improved click-through rate!



As you can see, Google+ is not just like any social network out there. It has the power to affect our search habits, and the search engine giant is not afraid to use that to its advantage to penetrate the social media space.

While here we covered most of the important ways in which Google+ will affect search results, there is one more element that needs to be discussed. With the launch of Google+ Business Pages, Google also rolled out an interesting new integration between Google+ and Google search. The name of this integration is Direct Connect, and in the next section, we will discuss what it does and how to set it up.

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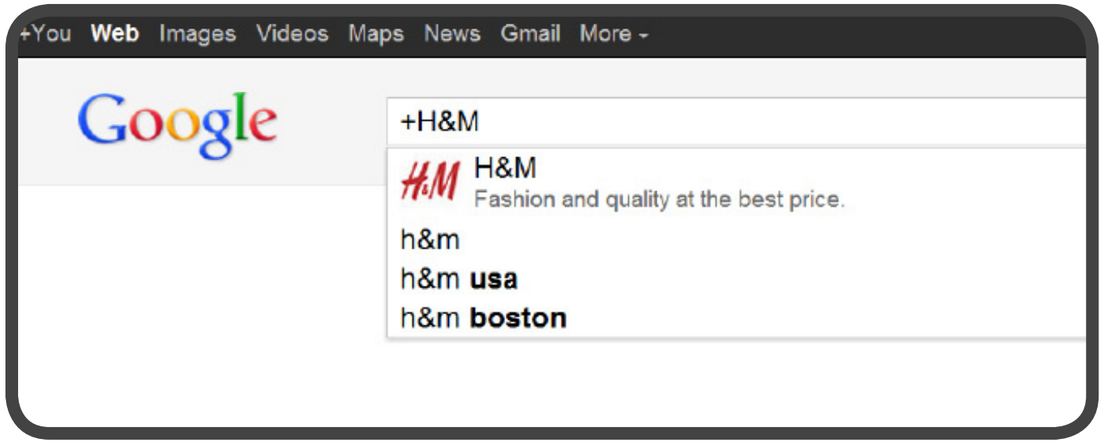
DIRECT CONNECT

How to Set Up Google+ Direct Connect

Users who want to find a company's Google+ page can now simply add a "+" in front of the company name in Google.com search to go directly to a company's Google+ Page and skip over the traditional search engine results page. In order to enable this awesome new "+" search operator to work for your business, you first need to install the Google+ Direct Connect code on your business' website to help verify that your Google+ page is the "official" page for your business.



To do this, go to your Google+ page, and click the "connect your website" link under the "Get Started" section. Once you have done this, you will be taken to a screen that gives you options for six different Google+ buttons.

One of your options is also to display no button and just install the Google+ Direct Connect code on your website. That said, don't you want people to connect with you on Google+? So go ahead and use one of the buttons to turn website visitors into Google+ Page subscribers!

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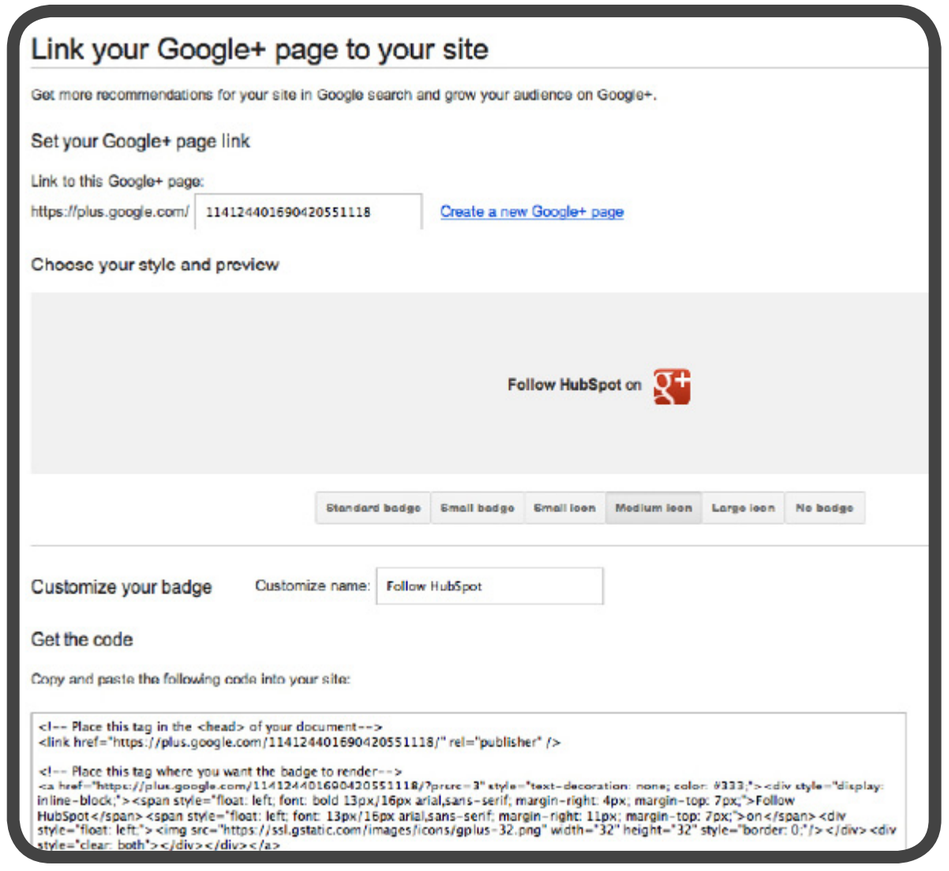

Once you add the code to your website, you will be eligible to be included in Google Direct Connect. But keep in mind that this doesn't happen automatically. Google has stated it will be using an algorithm to determine which companies get included. Make sure you are promoting your Google+ Page on your website, blog, and other properties off of Google+ in an effort to help influence the Direct Connect algorithm and get your business listed.

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CHAPTER 4

6 BEST PRACTICES FOR MARKETING ON GOOGLE+

How to Optimize Your Business Presence on Google+

Google+ is similar to other social networks when it comes to marketing, but it does have its own strengths and weaknesses. To get the most from your Google+ Business Page in terms or traffic and leads for your business, follow these best practices:

1 Share LOTS of Photos

Photos are very important on Google+. A quick look at a Google+ feed will tell you that lots of individual images are shared by users. This is slightly different from Facebook, where users might upload an entire album of images at one time. Think about your business and marketing visually. Which images, charts, or slides can you share on Google+ to ignite conversations and increase the viral spread of your content? Google+ is built for sharing images, so take advantage of it.

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2 Add Recommended Links

Under the ‘About’ tab of your Google+ Page, you have the option to add recommended links in the right side bar. Don’t let this space go to waste. Instead, add links to important blog articles and lead generation offers to drive more traffic and leads for your business.

3 Promote Your Google+ Page on Your Blog and Website

To get real business value from Google+, you have to have a community of people there to consume and engage with your content. In order to get people to add your Google+ Page to their Circles, you need to promote the page in places where you are already attracting visitors, such as your homepage, blog side bar, or other social media accounts. Cross-promotion is key to building a strong Google+ community.

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4 Encourage People to Share Your Posts

Sharing on Google+ is a catalyst for increasing the virality of your content. When you post a message, photo, or link on Google+, be sure to ask your subscribers to share your content with the people in their Circles. This is similar to asking people to “please retweet” on Twitter.

5 Analyze Traffic and Leads From Google+

So is this Google+ thing actually working for your business? To determine this, you’ll need to look at the traffic and leads that have been driven from Google+. You can do this by looking at referral traffic from plus.Google.com to your website, or if you are a HubSpot customer, HubSpot will segment all traffic, leads, and customers from Google+ for you as part of our marketing analytics.

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USE CIRCLES TO SEGMENT YOUR MESSAGES

> *The same messages you share with your family might not be the same messages you want to share with your boss.*

You must be thinking, "Why do we need yet ANOTHER social network?" Frankly, that is a reasonable question to ask. As you've read through this ebook, you have learned some of the reasons Google wants the platform to be successful: search. What about users? Why would someone want to use Google+ as an individual user?

Hangouts and the ability to collaborate easily with others is cool, but arguably the biggest selling point of Google+ is Circles. Unlike other social networks, Google+ was built with the unique idea that different groups of people prefer different content. Think about it this way. The same messages you share with your family might not be the same messages you want to share with your boss at work.

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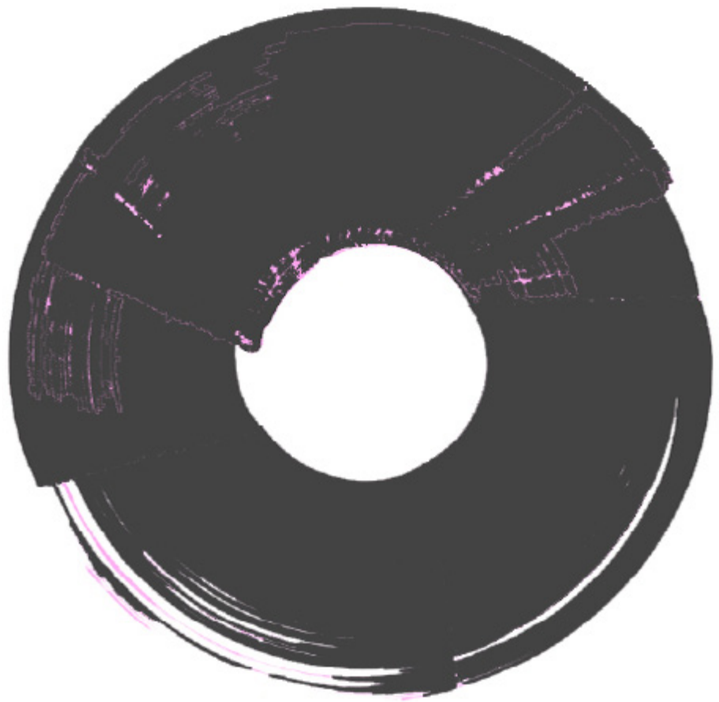
Segmentation is critical for organizing our lives online today.



Google+ solves this problem by using what it calls Circles. Circles are no more than groups of people that users can create and label. For example, you might have different Circles for friends, family, and coworkers, and you would place new connections into their respective Circle. And yes, people can be added to more than one Circle. Once you have Circles created, you can then decide to share a Google+ message with one or multiple Circles. Segmentation is critical for organizing life online today. Organize your online life with Google+. Create the Circles you need to properly communicate with everyone in your life.

CONCLUSION & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

> *Be a smart marketer, and keep a close eye on this emerging environment.*

Having read this ebook, you are now aware of the many aspects in which Google+ will impact marketers. The truth is, there will undoubtedly be a lot more features coming to the social network. Dennis Troper shared that Google has received some great feedback on Google+ Pages already and will be working on providing even more features soon. So what is coming to Google+ Pages next?

"A few of your top requests [are ones that] we've already started working on, such as multi-admin support, ownership transfer, and page analytics," wrote Troper. These are definitely popular features that are indispensable from a marketing perspective. What is more, Facebook already offers the ability to add multiple admins and to gain insights around sharing.

No doubt, Google will keep investing effort into improving both the functionality and usability of its social platform. It has to if it wants to compete with Facebook's dominance in that space. While many might be underestimating the potential of Google+

due to its low membership base compared to Facebook, it is worth recognizing its youth as well as its strong tie to search. As we already mentioned in this ebook, Google+ is not just any network. It is a platform that is directly impacting search results and reshaping our experience of doing research in Google. Be a smart marketer, and keep a close eye on this emerging environment.

Additional Resources:

- Add HubSpot's Google+ Page to your Circles.
- Guide: Learning SEO from the Experts
- Webinar: Google Instant - Major Change for SEO

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MEASURE THE IMPACT OF GOOGLE+

Start monitoring social media conversations and measuring your success on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Google+. Find out how through a free demo of HubSpot's all-in-one marketing software.

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