

Google+

Google+ was once believed to be the new comer to social media that was set to take Facebook's crown, grow faster and bigger than any platform that came before it and have Google's innovation and technological insight to make sure it monopolised the entire industry.

Sadly, in reality it was something of a geeky cousin to Facebook. The interface did seem similar to Facebook in many ways, they incorporated the Twitter hashtag, and had LinkedIn's groups and communities. But that was where the similarities ended. On paper you could say that it has all the ingredients of a winning platform but in reality it just never took off.

It was more complicated to use than Facebook because you had to setup a Google account and then verify your business page as well as populate your Google+ profile. Google Authorship appealed to techs but alienated the masses of people deciding whether it was worth a shot or not. Many decided the traffic was on Facebook so that was where they were staying.

As it stands now Facebook leads to social media platforms, followed by Twitter, then YouTube and then LinkedIn. Google+ just came too late and yes in many ways it is slicker and has the elements of a responsive and intuitive platform but people were already familiar and comfortable with the other platforms. It just didn't offer enough to steal traffic away from the big guns.

So, with all that said is it worth posting on Google+.

Yes it is.

But why when you have just spent paragraphs telling us how underwhelming it is?

Here is why:

- 1) It is Google's social media platform. Google! They say that social media likes and shares are not a big ranking factors but we know they are a ranking factor in some way. And which platforms are they most likely to notice more – their own possibly?

- 2) Essentially once the platform is set up it takes little time to transfer your content over from Facebook and populate Google. Just assign it with a relevant hashtag and follow people as you would on Twitter – they will likely follow you back.
- 3) There could be groups/ community pages that are relevant to your industries where you can strike up conversations and reach out to your target audience – it is definitely worth a browse before you dismiss it entirely.
- 4) Google Hangouts is incredibly popular because it is a free video conference tool that works well so Google+ gets traffic because it houses that software that plenty of businesses use.

I am not going to scream and shout about how great Google+ is but I am going to tell you to post on there and maintain a meaty profile. Verify your business page and make sure you have a strong local SEO footing in that sense. Link your YouTube channel and just make it neat, tidy and full of interesting information, great imagery and video. This will give you a strong Google footprint and that really can never be underestimated. If it gives you any SEO benefit at all, which we strongly believe it does, then it is worth optimising. The integration between those channels is slick and Google+ does have a considerable audience. It might not match Facebooks but we are still talking about millions of people.

The Details

Hashtags – They are used in a slightly different way than on Facebook and Twitter. If you do not use them then Google will automatically scan your post and pull out keywords that have popular hashtags connected to them. It then displays the hashtag in the top right hand corner of your post. The best practice is to include relevant hashtags in your posts yourself. This makes sure you are highlighting relevant hashtags in a post. You can also post two hashtags and teach Google+ that there is a connection between them by doing so. This is a great way to maximise your reach and Google+ will start suggesting relevant hashtags to your content.

SEO – Creating great posts in Google+ can result in them showing up higher in Google's search results. Make sure you get people in the office to share your posts (perhaps even clients/suppliers/friends). If you have written a particularly relevant blog or article and want

it to do well put the effort into promoting it to people who are happy to share it and +1 it. To +1 something simply means to like it as happens on Facebook or favourite it as happens on Twitter.

Imagery – Google+ is a very image led platform so the more visual the posts the better. You do not really see text only posts and to be honest they are the worst performing style of post across all social media platforms. Create some collages of products and spend some time on some slick designs to make sure you stand out from the crowd.

Analyse – As with every other social media platform make sure you analyse the results. The Google+ insights page is incredibly useful in that it allows you to monitor how well your posts are performing and how you can improve your efforts. A nice feature is that it is split into relevant sub categories including Visibility, Engagement and Audience. Keep monitoring those findings and developing your content and approach to Google+.

Conclusion

That is really all there is to know with Google+ except communities. They work very similarly to LinkedIn groups in that you can be invited to some while others let anyone join. Do browse them and check out two factors:

- 1) Do people post on them and interact on them frequently?
- 2) Do they have a large number of followers or a small (not a bad thing to target a niche) number of followers

You can decide whether it is worth the time to manage those communities and stay on top of conversations. You can post to them and try them for a month to decide if you think they will work for you.

So Google+ in a nutshell = It isn't the biggest player but anything created by Google should not be overlooked and you could well find a chunk of your target audience on there to interact with. Give it a go but do not expect miracles.