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smart **Advice for Success!** Business™ matters

A New(er) Kid on the Social Media Block: Google+

Google+ moved into the Social Media neighborhood in June 2011. Tech-savvy adopters have flocked to the platform. Should your business sign on?



Google+ exploded onto the scene in June 2011 and as of November has 40 million users. However, interest seems to have peaked in September and tapered off, so the question is, is it worth the time? Consider the pros and cons.

PROS

Brand Pages. Business pages were unveiled in November, enabling businesses to join.

Administration. Your business page must be created from an individual account, but Google+ now allows multiple managers, a relatively new addition.

Interface. It features a sleek, clean, uncluttered interface that is relatively easy to use once you familiarize yourself with the platform.

Selective Sharing. We live our lives in social circles and not everybody is our "friend". Google+ gets that and features selective sharing. You share information with "circles" – including Friends, Family, and Acquaintances. Business page circles include Customers, VIPs, and Team Members.

SEO. It's a Google product, so expect a boost in SEO. A +1 button for product or services (or other pertinent content you want to share on your website or blog) can help spread the word.

Hangouts. With the hangout feature and a web cam, engage with clients, customers, industry leaders, team members, and business associates face-to-face to get feedback, hold meetings, network, or collaborate.

Data Sharing. As Google integrates more of their cloud products like Google Docs, Google Calendar, and Google Reader, Google+ could become a primary means of sharing data with others.

Blogging, Sort Of. Users are finding that Google+ can function similar to a blog. Photographers appear to be

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Leadership: Twelve Reads for 2012.

Looking for a few good books on leadership? Here is a list of twelve “all-time” leadership books, from 5th Century BC to 2011, compiled by Inc.

Endurance: Shackleton’s Incredible Voyage, Alfred Lansing. Stuck on an ice floe for over a year and not one man lost. Darned. Good. Leadership.

Delivering Happiness: A Path to Profits, Passion and Purpose, Tony Hsieh. Hsieh’s unconventional approach to management of Zappo’s fosters happy, passionate staffers and great customer service for shoe lovers everywhere.

Never Give In! The Best of Winston Churchill’s Speeches, Winston S. Churchill. This candid collection of speeches from World War I through 1963 is all Churchill. No spin. No speechwriters.

Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln, Doris Kearns Goodwin. President Lincoln surrounded himself with a strong-willed team of varied ideologies who were unafraid to challenge him.

Wooden on Leadership: How to Create a Winning Organization, John Wooden. Wooden knows a thing or two about leadership. This 10-time NCAA champion UCLA basketball coach provides a bullet list of actionable steps for you to reach your ‘A’ game.

Onward: How Starbucks Fought for Its Life Without Losing Its Soul, Howard Schultz. Schultz tells how he helped Starbucks rise back to the top in the java wars.

On Becoming a Leader, Warren Bennis. Bennis answers the question, “What makes a good leader?”

Alive: The Story of Andes Survivors, Piers Paul Read. “A study in the human will to survive” and the hard choices that needed to be made for 16 men to survive a deadly plane crash in the Andes.

Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence, Daniel Goleman, Richard E. Boyatzis, Annie McKee. This book draws from decades of research and demonstrates how leaders channel emotions in a positive direction to get results and how they can change leadership styles to meet the demands of various situations.

The Art of War, Sun Tzu. Business can be war, and this ancient Chinese military manual outlines how to react “swiftly and appropriately” to any situation.

The Prince, Niccolo Machiavelli. An infamous position that may be more nuanced than we are led to believe. One oft-missed point – it’s important not to be hated.

Questions of Character: Illuminating the Heart of Leadership Through Literature, Joseph L. Badaracco Jr. Badaracco looks to some of literature’s greatest characters to illustrate leadership skills in answer to eight questions leaders commonly face.

The Power of Praise

Do not overlook the power of praise in print. Your best salesperson may be the client who is thrilled with your work.

Ask for referrals. Have happy customers? Follow up with them, and ask them to write short testimonials about how your business met their needs. Encourage specifics.

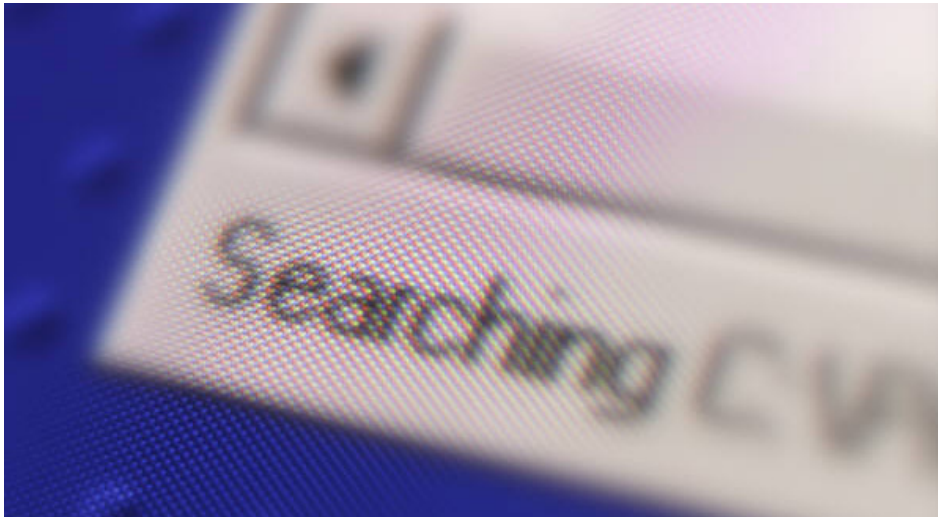
Keep it real. Do not over-edit testimonials. You are trying to appeal to readers with testimonials from real people, not impress them with grammatical excellence.

Use them. Place testimonials strategically on your website, brochures, flyers, sales sheets, social media, blog, etc. to highlight a particular point you want to make to future prospects.



White Hat, Black Hat

You may have heard of two “types” of SEO (search engine optimization). “White Hat” and “Black Hat” practices are two opposing views on how to optimize websites for search engines.



“White Hat” SEO providers follow search engine guidelines to optimize their site. Techniques help clients to avoid errors that may prevent search engines from fully indexing their sites. Their focus is to make the architecture of the site easy to “crawl”, post relevant and useful content and services, and create smart marketing moves to help people find your site.

The approach is considered to be ethical, organic, accepted by search engines, beneficial for visitors, and helpful in avoiding penalization from search engines. It is a slower process that yields results over time. White Hat techniques focus on Content, Coding, and Linking.

Content includes the addition of relevant keywords (including keywords in titles and headings), link anchor text, and relevant, fresh, frequently changing page content. It also includes use of alt tags for photos, use of analytics reports, fine-tuning of content for targeted keywords, directing traffic to relevant pages.

Coding focuses on use of correct HTML markup (heading tags), valid

coding or coding that won’t stop search engine bots, site maps, page-to-page links so that search engine bots can crawl every page, and CSS to separate content from markup thereby increasing keyword density of content.

Linking includes linking to quality content that people will want to use, asking directories and relevant websites to link to the site, and optimization of pages for social media in hopes of attracting social media links. It can also include arrangements for link exchanges with relevant sites (“Gray Hat” SEO).

“Black Hat” providers are more likely to use cloaking, back doors, and tricks to optimize sites. Their tactics might include spamming the web with dummy pages full of links to make their sites seem more popular, hidden text, hidden links, cloaking, or suspicious redirects. These are considered spam by search engines like Google.

Tricking search engines to give pages higher positions in search results has no benefit to site visitors, but it can improve positions immedi-

ately and work until search engines discover the techniques used. Some techniques can lead to sites being penalized or banned from search engines. Black Hat techniques focus on Content, Deceptive Content, and Linking.

Content techniques include keyword stuffing (overusing keywords in comment tags, alt tags, meta tags), placing keywords in hidden text (using a font color the same color as the page background), and overusing keywords in visible text.

Deceptive Content like doorway/gateway pages are stuffed with keywords only search engines can see because customers are redirected to pages with real content. Cloaking, displaying different content to search engines than to people by identifying visitors via IP or other methods, is also another use of deceptive content.

Linking to link farms, pages with unrelated links created solely for the purpose of creating more links to target pages, as well as spamming forums, blogs, and social media are other ways that Black Hat SEO providers utilize linking.

Whether you decide to play by search engine browser rules, which change when new threats develop, or use any means to get your site first, or use “Gray Hat” techniques that take more risks than White Hats (high keyword density but not stuffing, duplicate content, different sites, less relevant link-building, paid links), you should be aware of the strategy used as well as its benefits and pitfalls.

embracing this platform; it provides them with a beautiful showcase for their photo or video and room for a long post. However, you cannot work a photo, a link, and a video into the same post.

Search Plus Your World. In 2012, Google is rolling out a new search feature, 'Search Plus Your World'. You can search from one place for content that has been shared privately along with content on the public web. Private information will not be available publicly.

CONS

Light Traffic. There are 40 million users on Google+, but only 17% are frequent and active users. It is not uncommon to hear new account holders say, "I'm on Google+, but I don't know what to do with it."

Timeline. The Google+ feed initially showed updated stories vs. a chronological order of posts in the timeline, but Google has been tinkering with that. While the timeline has not been customizable, this could soon change.

Building a Base. While Google+ is growing, compared to Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, it feels a bit like a ghost town. It can be difficult to find customers and clients hanging out on Google+, and businesses can only add other businesses to their circles. Customers and clients must seek you out. It is easier to gain traction on Twitter, and Facebook pages allow you to tap directly into your friends list and invite them to like your page.

Integration. Only a handful of social media management dashboards have included Google+, making it more difficult to manage all your social media accounts from one place.

While it might make sense to establish a page for your business, you need to weigh ROI on your time. At the very least, you should be aware of this new kid on the block and be ready to take advantage if it fits your needs.

Google+ Resources: Learn More

[Heidi Cohen's Google Plus: 62 Must-Have Resources - a comprehensive list of Google+ resources](#)

[Google+ Demo - a Google promotional video](#)

[Google+ Help Center](#)

[Google+ Tips and Tricks Manual](#)

Three "Shares" to Drive Sales

Beefing up your marketing is great, but don't stop selling. Marketing provides you with brand recognition, but selling can close the deal. "Share" these three things with your prospects.



Share Your Knowledge. As a small business owner, you probably have the best knowledge of your products and services. Use that knowledge. Planning on pitching to a client? Jot down some features and benefits your services or products provide to your customers. Anticipate questions that may arise and be prepared to answer them. A few details can help to sway a customer, but beware of boring your prospects with too much detail.

Share Your Passion, Create Desire. You love your business; expect that others will too. Be enthusiastic when sharing information about your business and your products or services. Your passion for your work will not go unnoticed, and you might more easily create desire for your products and services. Remember that buying decisions are not always made logically, but are often driven by emotions. What emotions might your products or services trigger in prospective clients?

Share Innovation. Solve problems and anticipate "wants". What solutions are your customers looking for to help their business or benefit their lives? What "wants" might they desire to have met? Sell solutions. Get a handle on your prospects' needs and desires, tailor products and services to fit, and show them how your products and services are uniquely prepared to meet those needs and desires.