



## Working the Web

Ellie Becker and Bernadette Nelson | September 2011

## Google Plus: What's in it for your business?

By now you've likely heard about Google Plus – or G+ as it's known. In fact, Ryan Doran wrote an excellent introduction to G+ for the Business Journal last month. In case you missed it, G+ is Google's new social network, which is still in test mode, or beta.

### The G+ features getting the most attention are:

- You arrange the people you follow in Circles -- as many as you want, i.e. Customers, Colleagues, Family, Friends. Then you can choose which Circle/s to share any given post with. This is a key improvement over Facebook.
- You can use the Sparks feature to follow topics or issues of interest.
- You can video chat with up to ten people using the Hangouts feature.

Since it launched at the end of June, G+ has attracted about 11.5 million users, a very fast ramp up, even by social media standards. As of now, Google+ supports only individual users, not business pages. So what's in it for your business right now? A few ideas:

- As the owner or marketer at a company, you can represent your company on G+.
- Learn your way around to be ahead of the pack when business pages come online.
- Use G+ to explore new communities/markets. For example, Ellie is following people in the jazz/music industry seeking ways to merge business with personal passion.
- If you're selling outside the U.S., use Google Translate in conjunction with Hangouts to host multi-lingual video meetings, a truly unique feature.
- Lots of journalists are poking around to see what it's all about so G+ may be an uncluttered place to connect with publicity opportunities.

Consider, though, that G+ almost forces you to post good content and comments to get into the conversation and be added to Circles. There's no 'follow' reciprocity. Whether anyone sees your content can depend entirely on how they've configured their settings. And at the moment, Google Plus is not necessarily user friendly. Case in point, here's a recent, somewhat frustrated G+ public post from a tech savvy user:

"So let me get this straight (sorry for being so dense, but it isn't intuitive): When somebody adds me to G+ it's an auto follow of me. I do NOT and should NOT add them to my circles unless I want to follow them. Got it! So if I delete all of those people from my followers circle they'll still be following me?"

These issues aside, why not take a quiet hour and jump in. There's a lot of help from other users if you get stuck. The only rub is that G+ is open only by invitation. And each user gets a limited number of invitations to share. We'd like to help. We'll provide invitations to the first 25 people who email us a request.

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