



STONE WARD

Should Your Brand Be On Google+?

by Emily Reeves / 7.2012

Overview

[Google+](#) is a relatively new channel for social networking. Many brands are wondering if they should jump into Google+. This whitepaper provides an overview of Google+ and outlines the benefits of and uses for Google+.



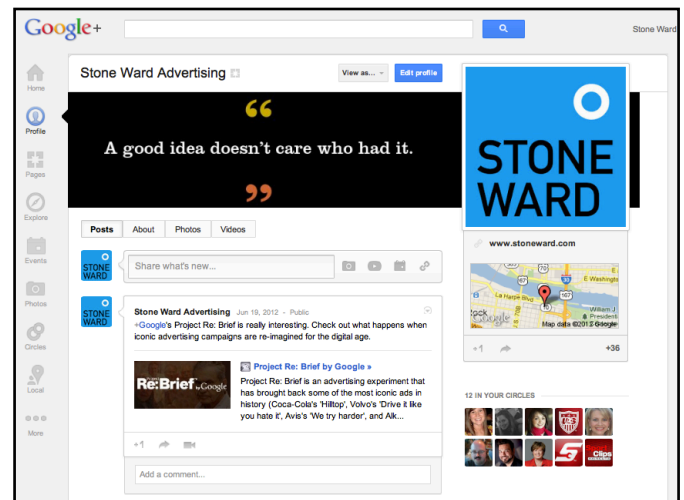
Introduction

By now, most marketers have harnessed the power of social networking channels to engage in conversation with consumers. These channels—like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Pinterest—are being used to give a voice to brands and show some personality. And every time a new one comes out, like Google+, marketers scramble to claim their brands' profiles and figure out what to do with this latest and greatest tool. However, just because there is a new tool, doesn't mean it is right for every brand. Should your brand be on Google+?

What is Google+?

Google+ is a social networking site that launched approximately one year ago. If you have a Google Gmail account, you have a Google+ account and may not realize it as Google has unified and linked all their properties under Google accounts.

Google+ is interesting mix of [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), with a layer of additional features on top. Google+ works a lot more like Twitter in the ways people follow each other. But the benefits of Google+ over Twitter are the long form posts with embedded links, images and videos right in the stream and aggregated comments, which are Facebook-like functions. Then there are Circles, which is a way to segment followers and are thereby valuable for segmenting messages. And there are Hangouts, which is a sophisticated video chat feature.



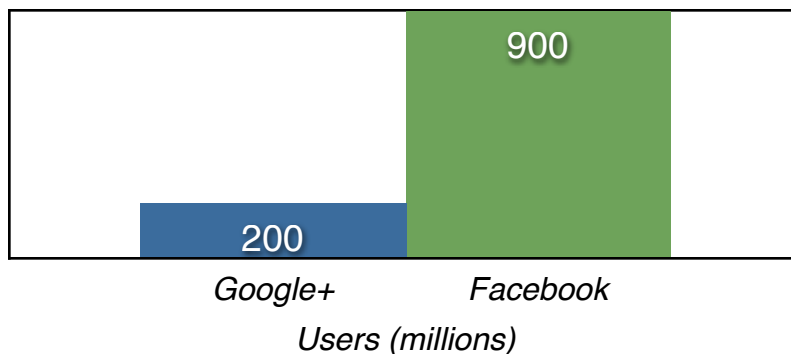
Who is on Google+?

As with any other social network, the true value comes from the people that are on it. The features and interface mean nothing if there is no one using it.

Though Google+ has been available for a year, it is still in its infancy in terms of audience. Many of the users are those that are tech savvy, curious and early adopters of social media. As of right now, a full two-thirds of Google+'s users are men. A sizable number of Google+ users (42%) are single, and the most popular occupation listed is "student." While it has a long way to go before it catches up to Facebook in popularity and adoption, with over 200 million users (compared to Facebook's 900 million), it would appear that Google is off to a decent start. However, since everyone who has a Gmail account is automatically signed up for Google+, whether they actually choose to use the service or not, means the user number is slightly inflated.

2/3 men | **42% single** | **early adopters**

But the people that are on Google+ are reporting a higher satisfaction with the network as compared to Facebook. Google+'s higher marks are attributed to the social platform's superior commitment to privacy, lack of traditional ads, and overall better mobile experience. Those surveyed by ACSI expressed distaste for Facebook's Timeline feature, ads and privacy policies. Another reason to be more satisfied with Google+ over Facebook is that it is too new to have a lot of changes flying at the users regularly; Facebook's rapid iterations always fire up a storm of complaints from its users.



Why should your brand consider a presence on Google+?

- **Google+ is influencing the integration of search and social.** Searches for brands on Google are showing Google+ pages near the top. Content and pages that have received +1s also show near the top of Google search results. For SEO purposes alone, Google+ is worth the investment in time and effort. For example, someone who is logged into Google (any Google account is a Google+ member, remember), and may have played around with Google+ by adding a few people to circles or uploading some images to Picasa, but is not really active on the network, will still see their connections' +1s in their search results, giving those results a great weight in importance. There is definite value in the tie to search results as Google turns on its social search function. This means that a brand's content that fans share will be more widely seen by their peers in relevant search results. These socially annotated Google search results with

friends' activities and recommendations are garnering an uptick in click-through rates of 5-10%. For a brand, that is a powerful reason to use Google+.

- **Claim your space.** Even if you are not sure if your brand will use it or how your brand will use it, claiming the brand name while your brand decides will save trouble later if you do decide to use it for engaging with your customers.
- **Google Hangouts.** Hangouts is a video chat feature that works much like Skype. The feature is unique to Google+ and makes the channel worth using if video conversations would be relevant and effective for your brand. Hangouts allow only 10 people at once. You can use Hangouts for broadcasting a panel discussion, hosting a small webinar, instant video conferencing for customer service, training or education for employees, live expert interviews, focus groups, or staff meetings. Hangouts work great on mobile devices, too, making it even more convenient to video chat with audiences.
- **Target segmented audiences.** Using Circles, you can target specific audiences for delivering really relevant content to the exact people who need and want it. You can send specific content—promotions, giveaways, white papers, blog posts, webinars, podcasts, and more—to the audiences to which each applies.
- **Drive engagement with photos and videos.** If your brand has highly visual content or can create a way to share highly visual content, Google+ may be a viable outlet for sharing and engaging. Take care, however, not to post the same information on Facebook; give fans more than that. Consider posting original content, like archival photos or live video chats with team members. Ask fans what kind of content they want and figure out a way to deliver that.

What should a brand expect from a presence on Google+?

Keep in mind that Google+ doesn't have the user base yet that Facebook has and the user base they do have is quite different. Therefore, using Facebook as a gage for expectations on Google+ engagement would be a mistake. And as with any other social network, your brand is only going to get results out of Google+ if you put effort into developing and maintaining good content.

As a benchmark, consider Ferarri. On Google+, Ferarri has a 1.2 million circle count, but has more than 8.8 million likes on Facebook. Or consider Adidas, which has a 3,000 circle count, has an equally impressive 8.5 million likes on Facebook.

How should you approach planning for a Google+ presence?

Google+ is a social media channel. Before deciding on a channel for communication and engagement, we must first have an understanding of what we are trying to achieve. This is a too common mistake when it comes to social media: brands want to be on a channel and don't think through whether it is right for them. And we shouldn't let a channel drive our strategy. We want to think first and foremost about:

1. **Who is the target audience?**
2. **What do we want to achieve?**
3. **Is Google+ a channel that will help meet those objectives?**

Interested in learning more?

Contact Emily Reeves at ereeves@stoneward.com for help planning your brand's digital engagements.

About Stone Ward

[Stone Ward](#) is a full-service ad agency. Established in 1984 by Larry Stone and Millie Ward, today the agency employs 49, with capitalized billings exceeding \$40 million. The agency's offices are in Chicago and Little Rock.

About Emily Reeves, Director of Digital Strategy & Planning

As the agency's digital champion, [Emily Reeves](#) proves that Stone Ward has the offerings, expertise and alliances to bring sound, measurable digital innovation to our clients' marketing efforts. A seasoned communications strategist with a passion for all things digital, Emily has distinguished herself as an avid blogger, social media speaker, industry observer and moderator. In her role as digital thought leader for Stone Ward, Emily collaborates with our team of agency leaders in creative, brand management, public relations, media, digital technology and video production to create relevant ways to tell our clients' stories in the digital space and to provide meaningful measurement and analytics as a tool for calculating our efforts. Emily's focus on measurement extends to her duties as the agency's research leader, where she works with Stone Ward clients to develop and execute research plans that inform integrated client marketing efforts.

Sources

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[Google Facing Demographic Fail](#)

[Google Plus Holds Promise](#)

[Why Ford Belives in Google+](#)

[What is the Point of Google Hangouts?](#)

[Google Plus Mobile Hangouts](#)