

## 8 things you need to know about Google+

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I can tell it is December because all the media sites are producing their predictions for trends in 2014. What pops up on almost every Tech prediction list? The growth and increased use of Google+ (or written as Google Plus).

Are you on it yet? Should you be? Either way, it is worth paying attention to.

### Here are 8 things you need to know about Google+:

#### 1. It's not *just* a social network

Google describes Google+ as "the social layer that integrates all the other Google services". It is not just somewhere you check your friends' photos. It is an experience, integrating several services that Google expects most people like you use already including Gmail, Google Search, Google Calendar, Google Drive (document storage and sharing via the cloud), and YouTube.

#### 2. It is the second largest social network in the world

Google plus has a global membership of 540 Million users (second to Facebook at 1.2 Billion).

#### 3. The way that Google+ handles your media is awesome, or should I say Auto Awesome

Recently, Google introduced the Auto Awesome Video and photo features to Google+. Your uploaded content will be scanned, matched and can even be timed to a soundtrack for you. Pictures can be edited online to have moving objects removed or be strung together to make a movie.

More about these features on the [Auto Awesome Help page](#).

### **4. You can have better organization of contacts and privacy using Circles**

With all the buzz about privacy, Circles currently allow you to organize your contacts in groups as small or large as you like. Circles can be used to select an audience for a post, for an invitation to a hangout or for a direct message. Thus allowing more choices for where you direct your content, and giving you much simpler control on the scope of distribution than Facebook does.

Your contacts can appear in any number of your circles and you can create a circle with any title. The person in your circle will not see your membership list or the title of the Circle so if you want to group them in both "Friends" and in "people I am not talking to right now" then go ahead, you don't have to worry because they will only know they are 'in' your Circles, not which ones.

### **5. You can +1 content to like it**

Much like Facebook's Like button, the +1 allows you to mark something you enjoy and shares that information with friends. This way, when your contacts visit the company/link/photo that you +1, it will show your image and name. Note: the settings for this can be changed so that you only appear to certain circles or even to no one at all.

### **6. It is great for business or your brand**

There are lots of benefits of linking your business to your Google+ page or to creating a page for your business. You are reaching a audience that may not be on other social sites and giving them another opportunity to connect with you.

Google Search does give sites connected to Google+ a higher search ranking through SEO. SEO, or Search Engine Optimization, is the process of optimizing the information on a page (typically in meta data) to help that page show up at the top of related searches. Also, the more +1 a website has, the higher its Google search ranking. Bottom line: Google gives higher priority to pages affiliated with Google services.

You can create a community for your company to allow you to communicate with your customers or to allow them to chat together.

Additionally, you can use Google Ripples. This is a map that shows how your posts have spread and who has been sharing them

### **7. Hangouts are a fun and functional place to hang out**

A hangout is an area where you can meet up for an IM chat or HD video chat. It is like the marriage of online instant message and Skype. You can create hangouts with one friend, an entire circle or you can stream to YouTube and make it public.

One of the distinct advantages to a hangout for video chat is that it can accept many people at the same time. Services like Skype have a paid premium to do so. Works for global family chats or remote group projects.

### **8. You can search anything**

With the connection to Google Search, Google+ is backed by a fierce search engine allowing you to find just about anything inside the network. Additionally, content created in the network is given its own URL and indexed quickly. That means a single public post can appear in someone else's Google search!

Google also supports the use of hashtags so you can search on a topic for all public posts with that tag.

**Hopefully this has provided you with some insight and some tips to get you started. For all the basics, visit the [Google+ support page](#) or post your questions/comments below.**