

Chapter 1

A Marketer's Overview

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding the Google+ audience
 - ▶ Getting around in Google+
 - ▶ Focusing on people over content
 - ▶ Measuring your Google+ campaign
-

The future of Google+ is Google.

If there's one phrase I want you to remember, it's that one. The fact is, as a marketer you're not going to get the same results on Google+ (said *Google Plus*) as you do on Facebook or Twitter or any other social network.

Google+ is a social layer on top of the entire Google experience. The destination site centralizes it all: `plus.google.com`. The cool part is that you don't even have to visit `plus.google.com` to use Google+. The team working on Google+ frequently calls it "the Google+ Project," and for a reason — it's a layer (maybe even a glue?) that gives the entire Google infrastructure a common social bond.

In this chapter, I give you a look at what Google+ is and help you get acclimated to the environment. You'll quickly find it isn't the same as Facebook or Twitter. It has its own personality, strengths, and quirks. This chapter gets you going quickly so you can hit the ground running and not the wall.



This book doesn't explain how to set up a Google+ account or how to circle people. For that information, I recommend my other book, *Google+ For Dummies*, Portable Edition (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.). However, I do show you the different pieces of Google+ so you're familiar with the tools at your disposal.

Appreciating the Typical Google+ Audience

As with any social network — or marketing strategy — understanding your audience is your number-one priority. The minute you set up your Google+ profile, or a Google+ page after that, you'll notice that your audience just isn't the same as the one you're seeing on Facebook or Twitter. Maybe you're seeing no audience at all. That's okay, because on Google+, you have opportunities to grow new audiences while bringing existing audiences to your Google+ presence through Google search.



Besides remembering that the future of Google+ is Google, keep in mind that Google+ is about people. The more you focus on people and building real relationships, the more success you're going to see on Google+.

The following points can help you:

- ✓ Google+ is a powerful way to bring together like-minded interests. This point is most important for effective marketing.
- ✓ If you focus on just your brand, and not the people within your brand, you probably won't survive on Google+.
- ✓ Audiences on Google+ are typically a little more analytical than usual.
- ✓ Typically, at least at the start, you won't find close friends and family of individuals on Google+.



Because Google+ caters to a more analytical audience, it's easy to find people who like the same things you do — or people who like the same things your customers like — and start conversations with them. Photographers are a good example: They can see their photos right in line with the stream. In addition, I can search for *photography* and find a whole list of people with the same interest.

As a marketer or business owner, you can take advantage of how easy it is to find people this way. Say your customers are moms. Search for *mom* and you'll find a whole bunch of moms on Google+. (See Figure 1-1.) Add your favorites to your circles and have a few conversations with them; you'll be building community and relationships with other moms all around the world. That's when you start to create a platform for your brand.

Figure 1-1: Searching for *moms* on Google+ reveals a list of people who are mothers (or are interested in moms).



Becoming a Member of the Google+ Community

As I mentioned, Google+ is about people. This means you have to focus on people to see results. Building community and relationships within your community is an important aspect of your Google+ strategy. Think about who your audience is, and how you can build community with those folks from the very start.



Reading books and influencing people

Consider reading *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie or *Enchantment* by Guy Kawasaki for some great

tips on how to build genuine relationships with people and build your network the way Google+ intended.

Because you can bring people with like interests together so easily with Google+, seek out people who have interests like yours. As a marketer or business owner, you may also consider seeking out people whose interests match those of your customers. If your customers like toothbrushes, find people who like toothbrushes and participate in the conversation with them. Use your own personal profile and employee profiles to do so.



Consider these tips when you're trying to make yourself or your brand a member of the Google+ community:

- ✓ **Treat people with respect.** Remember that others do have different ideas and interests — and that you represent more than just yourself; you represent your brand. Users are always notified when you comment on their posts or mention them. If you say something negative, you can get blocked — possibly resulting in a loss of respect for you and your brand.
- ✓ **Comment, comment, comment.** Of course, commenting on every single post a person makes can make you come across as annoying, but showing interest in an individual — and in what he or she says — has a personal effect. Commenting on someone's posts leaves an impression on that individual, and the more you participate in his or her conversations — especially when you build up and contribute to what that person has to say — the more he or she remembers you. That person is more likely to follow you in return and participate in your conversations.
- ✓ **The power of the +1.** A +1 button is next to every post (and now on many websites). If you like the post, click the +1 button. (To see what the +1 button looks like, look at Figure 1-2.) When you "+1" a post (click the +1 button), its author sees that you've done so. People notice +1s especially well among the people they're following — and they take note. The attention you generate by +1'ing posts helps you build further relationships.
- ✓ **Participate in Hangouts.** I have a tough time doing this myself. Believe it or not, I'm actually a shy person and would much prefer to write out my thoughts than to engage someone in person. Participating in Google+ Hangouts, which allow up to ten people at a time to chat through video, can be a painless way to build relationships. Start your own Hangouts or join others. The more potential customers see your face and hear your voice, the more "real" the Google+ experience becomes for them; in turn, they recognize and pay attention to you. In addition, you can broadcast your Hangouts to the world through Google's On Air feature, giving even greater opportunities to meet new people. You can read more about Hangouts in Chapter 9.



Figure 1-2:
The +1 button looks like this.

- **Focus on relationships.** Find ways to help and build up relationships with the people you're following.



The word *hate* should not be in your vocabulary. Avoid harsh criticism. Instead, seek to grow — and to show you're on the same team as those you're following. The words your mom always told you ring true: If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all. This is especially true on Google+.

Discovering Google+ Tools

The following sections explain the most important components, which are the basic building blocks for your marketing strategy on Google+.

User profiles

Your user profile is the foundation of Google+; look at Figure 1-3 to see my profile. Every post on Google+ is by an actual person. Even brands, through Google+ Pages, have to be linked to an actual person's Google+ profile in order for that person to post on behalf of the brand. (In Chapter 12, I talk later about linking content from your website to the Google+ profiles of people who create that content.)

Figure 1-3:
Your Google+ profile is an opportunity to say, "This is the real me."



When, as a marketer, you're thinking about Google+ profiles, think about *who* in your company is behind the brand. Your Google+ presence should be less about the brand itself than it is about the people who make the brand what it is. For example, your employees or notable execs can share content from your Google+ page or participate in Hangouts representing your brand. Or your Google+ page can share experiences of actual people who have Google+ profiles and use your product. These people and their user profiles are critical in your marketing strategy on Google+.

Circles

On Google+, instead of following, friending, or subscribing to someone, you add a person to one of your circles. The Google+ Circles feature gives you a way to gather individuals into a group by clicking the Circle button.

By using Circles,

- ✔ You can connect individual user profiles.
- ✔ Users can organize the content they share on the web.
- ✔ You can separate your friends and associates into groups.

Separating people into groups, from the very start of your marketing campaign, allows for some unique opportunities:

- ✔ You can target content to audiences who will be interested in that content.
- ✔ Staying on top of the activities of people with similar interests becomes easier because you can separate your news feed into content only from specific circles you select.
- ✔ You can send an e-mail notification to an entire circle, notifying as many as 100 people of your post.

You must choose which circles to share with when you post content. Google+ leaves the Add Names, Circles, or Email Addresses field blank by default. If you select Public, your posts default to Public until you change the setting (see Figure 1-4). That's important to you as a marketer because you may not see every post that your customers (or folks in other relationships with you) share. Consider it one more reason to focus on relationships among those you work with: You want to get into as many circles as possible so you can see what your contacts are sharing.

You can benefit your marketing strategy in many ways with Google+ Circles. I share several such techniques throughout the book.



In addition to circles, you can target posts to individual people or e-mail addresses. You can have fun with this. For instance, you can use a special e-mail address Evernote gives you to archive certain posts from Google+. Or you can decide which posts you want to send to your blog.



Figure 1-4: Publishing to Public puts my posts available to anyone by default.

Google+ Pages

Google+ Pages are your brand's presence on Google+. When this book went to press the pages were sparse, but expect them to become more a part of the core Google experience when they represent businesses on Google itself.

The pages created in Google+ Pages are timeless, and specific to your brand. Google+ Pages can add people to circles, but only people who have added *them* first. People with Google+ profiles can add brands to their circles just as they can add people. Make sure, however, that your employees, owners, and executives are interacting on your brand's Google+ pages in a responsible manner.



To help prevent spam, Google+ holds a No Touch policy for Google+ Pages. Bottom line: Your Google+ page can't *touch* (circle, interact with, or notify, among other things) anyone's Google+ user profile unless that person has already added your Google+ page to his or her circle. Thus the following restrictions apply until each user profile you want to touch has first circled your Google+ page:

- ✔ You can't add other user profiles to your brand's circles.
- ✔ You can't mention user profiles.
- ✔ You can't comment on a user's posts until they've added you.

Google+ Events

Google+ Events (see Figure 1-5) are a great way to get the people in your audience coordinated around a specific event related to your brand. When you create an event, it's added to your Google calendar as well. Then the event is added to the Google calendars of everyone who RSVPs your event. The cross-integration between Google+ Events and Google Calendar is a powerful combination.



Figure 1-5:
A simple
Google+
event.

Google+ Events allow you to schedule real-life events and virtual events through Google+ Hangouts (described in the next section). You get to invite guests in the same manner as you add posts to your news feed — select the person, people, or circles you want to invite, and they're added to the guest list with an invite to RSVP.

You can also opt to make the event “on air,” and all interaction between the people you invite to the event are made public for the world to watch. This strategy becomes especially interesting when guests turn on party mode. In this mode, all photos that guests take during the event are shown on their phones (that have the Google+ app installed). The event then provides a slideshow of everyone’s photos taken during the event. This option can provide a fun way of sharing with your friends what happened at the party.

You can use Google+ Events in a few ways. You can

- ✓ **Schedule appointments.** Keeping your event private and visible to only those you invite can be a great way to collaborate among the members of a small group of people — sharing photos, screen shots, and other material with those who were in the meeting. The feature also sends an invitation to each attendee through Google Calendar.
- ✓ **Schedule Hangouts.** You can make an event entirely virtual. Just select the Google+ Hangout check box under the Advanced Options for the event; doing so attaches a link to a Google+ Hangout where the event is happening — right when it’s time for the event to start. Then all those who were invited can join the Hangout, comment, and post photos, screen shots, and other relevant content inside the event.
- ✓ **Remember events.** A Google+ event allows you to capture a snapshot in time for those who attended the event. As users turn on party mode for the event, sharing photos *while they’re at the event* is easy as pie. Then the photos are captured in time so everyone can go back and remember — which is hard to beat as a way to get close family and friends using Google+. Everybody can look back and reflect on the good time they had.

Google+ Hangouts

Google+ Hangouts allow up to ten people to chat via a video webcam session. A feature called On Air lets you also broadcast your Hangout to the rest of the world. See Chapter 9 to learn more about Google+ Hangouts.

Invite specific people in particular circles, or invite the entire public, to your Hangout. This means you can invite a group of influencers to join the Hangout, and then broadcast that group of smart and influential people to the world, bringing even more attention to your brand and the people involved with it.

To explore some other highly effective ways to use Hangouts, check out Chapters 9 and 14.

Search

Search is at the heart of Google+; *search engine optimization (SEO)* is just as close to the heart of your marketing campaign. (For a look at farther-reaching implications of SEO outside `plus.google.com`, flip to the “Seeing people as the new SEO” section later in this chapter.)

The search capability on `plus.google.com` itself is very robust compared to what you find on competing platforms. With Google+, images and videos are embedded right in the stream — and the stream is not only real-time but also refreshes automatically as you watch it. However, perhaps the neatest feature is that you can participate in a conversation without ever having to mention the search term itself. For instance, as you watch the Super Bowl, search for *Super Bowl* to see a live view of updates, videos, and images about the game. Now post an update in the same stream, and don't mention *Super Bowl*. Your update appears with the rest of the search results, even though it didn't have that search term in it. You're now a part of the Super Bowl conversation, which is so much more than just a search result on a social network.



Google+ search allows you to search not only content and posts on Google+, but also people. Here are some very marketing-friendly ways you can do so:

- ✔ **Use hashtags.** Google+ supports hashtags, one of which you can see in Figure 1-6. When you see a hashtag on Google+, the following word hyperlinks to the search for Google+. Clicking it immediately takes you to a live view of the people talking about that topic. You can also participate in the conversations.
- ✔ **Participate in trending terms.** The Trending Terms section at the upper right of your stream (and in the search results) is where you find the most popular topics at any given time. If enough of your customers post about a particular topic, your own products and messages could be reflected in these terms. Even if they aren't (yet, anyway) seek out the trending terms that match your brand's purpose — and make sure you participate in the conversation.
- ✔ **Find people with like interests.** Search for *football*, and you'll find people interested in football. Search for *tech*, and you'll find people interested in tech. Also returned in your search results will be circles related to your search that people have shared with their friends. Seek those out as well; you'll find a terrific resource: people's circles in which their friends have identified them as having an interest in the topic of your particular search.



If you're contributing to other people's conversations, don't just broadcast content that reflects only your own interest; that approach smacks of spam. *Join* the conversation — don't pollute it! Finding people with similar interests means you're learning from or associating with other users. The sales and conversions will come naturally from these relationships. Going in and commenting just to comment will never end up well. Focus on real people and relationships.

Figure 1-6:
Hashtags
are a great
way to
organize a
conversa-
tion about a
topic.



Photos (and videos)

Not only can you store photos and video on Google+, you can also upload photos and videos you take on your phone — automatically — through Google+ apps for iOS and Android. Animated images are also supported — what better way to bring attention to your posts or bring home a point? When I add an animated image to a post, my followers are much more likely to see the post because it's moving and drawing their eyes toward my post. (I talk more about content strategy in Chapters 5 and 6.)

Games

Games — at least from a marketing standpoint — are a way to build relationships with people. You may consider building a game that helps integrate your brand in some unique way (see Chapter 14 for that topic). Selected developers can get an API from Google+ for building games; if games are your product, check out *Google+ For Dummies*, Portable Edition (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.), which devotes entire chapter to this API.

Building Social on Top of Google

Because the future of Google+ really *is* Google itself, the `plus.google.com` portion of Google+ will become less significant over time. Google+ allows you to respond, comment, +1, and even start Google+ Hangouts directly inside your Gmail inbox. I don't even have to go to `plus.google.com` anymore to participate in conversations I've started. That's the true power of Google+: It's everywhere in the Google universe because it's simply a social layer on top of everything Google.

Seeing people as the new SEO

Your `www.google.com` search results now include people. If your content has an identified author, it will likely rank higher than content that doesn't have an author listed. For example, because my blog lists my Google+ profile as the author of my content, my content is likely to rank higher than similar content from another website of the same ranking that has no link to Google+. (You can find the details of this topic in Chapter 12.)



Even before Google+, Facebook included websites in its own search rankings through its Open Graph Protocol. These days your content's rank in the search results has a direct connection to how many people click the +1 button to show that they've seen it and have responded positively to it. As people discover more content through their friends, they affect search engine optimization. People are quickly becoming the new SEO.

Making Google+ a path, not a destination

Think about how Google+ integrates with Google Contacts. As you talk with people on Google+, those new contacts get archived in `google.com/contacts`. When you open Gmail, you see the people who have Gmail accounts; you can also see and do much more:

- ✔ You can see which people have their Google+ profile data integrated on the sidebar of Gmail next to their messages.
- ✔ You can see recent conversations you had with those individuals.
- ✔ You can add people to your circles from right inside Gmail.
- ✔ You can search inside `www.google.com` and see content that your friends on Google+ have +1'd or shared.

Knowing when to post on which network

As I write this, Facebook and Twitter are the two biggest social networks — at least they're the ones with which brand managers, marketers, and business owners are most concerned. Google+, as a social network, really carries some of the best elements of each:

- ✔ **Google+ supports threaded comments.** The +1 button is very similar to Facebook's Like button. Google+ has pages similar to Facebook, and its lists format is much more similar to Facebook's than Twitter's.
- ✔ **Google+ has public search, hashtag support, and trending terms.** Although Google+ has no mutual "friend" agreement like the one on Facebook, following people on Google+'s circles is similar to following on Twitter.



Your Twitter strategy may be closer to how you approach Google+:

- ✔ Embracing hashtags
- ✔ Deciding who to follow
- ✔ Posting frequent and real-time content

However, consider that because threaded comments are attached to each post, moderation of comments is also necessary. Also consider how to create engaging posts, much as you might do in your Facebook strategy.



In general, cross-posting the same message to multiple networks won't give you the best results. Your Google+ audience will probably be different from your Facebook and Twitter audiences. Adapt your messaging to fit the audiences and strengths of each network. If you have time and resources, you'll see the best results from this approach.

Getting and Measuring Solid Results



The key to any good social media campaign is to *measure, measure, measure*. This goes for Google+ too. You'll have to do a lot of the measuring on your own. I anticipate at some point Google Analytics will integrate with Google+. Until then, be sure to track your own posts and determine a strategy that works best for you.

I suggest this approach:



- 1. Make a spreadsheet.**
- 2. Mark the Google+ posts you make.**

Categorize posts by topic, time, and frequency.

- 3. Experiment.**

Look for patterns: Do certain types of content resonate better with your audience? Play with the capabilities of Google+ Circles; does applying different circles to different content produce better results? Experiment with posting at different times or more frequently. Try to duplicate your posting on occasion in order to catch eyes that may have missed your post originally.

Then return and report — look at your results and see what works best for your message. No single formula works the same for every brand or person out there. Come up with a custom formula that works just right for your brand. (I detail some strategies you can try out along these lines in Chapter 13.)

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