

Get socialising online



By [Luke McKend](#)

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Social networks have become an integral part of any business - if your customers are talking about you, why not join in the conversation? (video)

Social media lets you share content and ideas with other people all over the world, and allows you to make contact with thousands of additional people that you might never have had the opportunity to connect with before. Google+ has exploded onto the social media scene with over 500 million users since its launch in 2011, and is having a large impact on business interaction.

What's in it for your business? You can let your customers do your marketing for you as they share their experiences with you, your business and other customers. Social media platforms allows you to reveal more about what you can offer the people who are looking - breaking down the faceless barrier of traditional marketing methods and making you more visible to your customers.

As a business, nothing is more valuable than customer feedback. Social networks mean that business owners can receive direct feedback and react to it without any divide or difficulty, ensuring a happy customer and a positive customer experience.

1. Get connected

Take advantage of all the tools Google has to offer by signing up to Google+ with your Gmail address. Connecting on Google+ is more like connecting in the real world than on an online social media platform. This online space allows users to share and view content with the people, brands and organisations they care about.

Showcase all your business has to offer by filling your business page with rich and vibrant content. Your customers can be directed to your Google+ page directly from your business website by installing a Google+ badge. This makes for active engagement with future and current customers, whether they find you through a Google search, or on the social platform. With the millions of Google+ pages that have been created since its launch, it has become a platform for brands, large and small, to connect with their customers online, and to build these social features into their marketing campaigns.

2. Encircle your customer

Google+ is not just Google's version of another ordinary social media site, but rather a collaborative platform to engage with others. Google+ circles enable the user to group people together to make for easy sharing, distinction and interaction. Similar people respond to similar content - the engagement of followers can guide you to know how to circle them, and thus ensure the correct customised content is delivered to those who want to see it.

Create a community on Google+ to facilitate user generated content and open dialogue between the brand and its followers. Google+ communities is an exciting new engagement tool where groups of people are arranged around a Google+ hub page, and can share knowledge and ideas that are of interest to the community.

Use this social media tool to promote customer engagement and discuss new ideas, products or services with avid followers, creating a great space for feedback and customer opinion.

The creation of a prominent photography community through Google+ communities, has brought together the world's moment catchers who would not have known each other otherwise. These snappy strangers join the community and are able to share their knowledge, thoughts, photographs and business ideas with each other through the simple click of a button.

3. Extend your social influence

Embrace the global network that is created through the internet. Online marketing plays a large role in many business advertising campaigns, widening the reach and influence of advertising content. If your business has an active AdWords campaign, a service that lets you create and run ads for your business, quickly and simply online, then increase your click-through and conversion rates by enabling social extensions across the AdWords campaigns.

Social extensions link your Google+ page to your AdWords campaigns, so that all your +1s - from your page, your website, ads and search - get tallied together. This means more recommendations for your ads, helping inform users about your content. In 2012, social annotations (+1s) on the search advertisements saw a 5-10% increase in click-through rates when using Google+ as a social feature linked to their marketing campaign.

Case study

Yuppiechef.com, an online retailer of kitchen tools and appliances in South Africa, embraced the use of the internet and social media to promote its business and grow its customer base. It saw an opportunity to try a new social media channel when Google+ was born, and it was one of the earliest SA adopters. By enabling social extensions across all of the Yuppiechef.com campaigns resulted in a staggering 46% uplift in click-through rate and a 32% increase in the conversion rate.

The company has grown its Google+ following to over 300,000 followers with phenomenal growth rates in recent months. In fact, it has been voted SA's best e-commerce store in 2010, 2011 and 2012.

Marina Pape, Yuppiechef.com's community manager, and the Yuppiechef.com content team post rich content daily: the latest kitchen tools, recipes, food art, humorous photos, interesting facts, mystery competitions and user-submitted photos. All blended together, this makes for active engagement with their followers and a winning recipe for successful social marketing. Public posts on the company's Google+ profile receive an average of 14 +1's, two re-shares and three comments per post.

Pape has used circles to effectively manage posts and to share more customised content with different segments of followers based on their interests and preferences. "Circles have been helpful in targeting content, it is a labour of love learning which circles to put people into as they are strangers - but it has been worth it. People respond to similar content so you can be guided by their engagement to know how to circle them (i.e. baking, superfan, humour etc)."

Yuppiechef.com's Google+ strategy has had a significant positive impact on its AdWords campaigns. After it added the Google+ badge to its homepage it saw an increase of over 2,000 followers a day over a three-month period. There was also a significant increase in the number of people adding the online retailer to their circles and engaging with their content.

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ABOUT LUKE MCKEND

Formerly an industry head for Google UK, Luke McKend is the country director for Google South Africa (www.google.com/Africa; google-africa.blogspot.com; [@googleafrica](https://twitter.com/googleafrica); adwords.blogspot.com). For more, email press@google.com

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