

What marketers need to know about Google+

 By [John Beale](#)

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With another social network being launched by Google, the leader in search and most things Internet, the world is abuzz (sorry) with what [Google+](#) means. Well, if you're a marketer, you'd better get off your recliner and pay attention to what it means to you and your clients.

In its first month, [Google+](#) surpasses 10 million users and the [+1 button](#) has already been added to more sites than the "tweet this" button.

Third attempt

This is Google's third attempt at a social/collaboration platform. Its first attempt, [Google Wave](#), did not make much of a... well... wave as a collaboration platform. Google's [Buzz](#) failure, among other things, was attributed to how it required a different social behaviour than what users have become accustomed to. Buzz worked; it just didn't work for us.

In developing Google+, the search giant has taken advantage of what it learned from the Buzz and Wave failures and has combined it with the third mover advantage, following Facebook and Twitter's massive successes in the social space.

Google has essentially opened up a network that offers the best social features of Twitter and Facebook, the best bookmarking and aggregating of [Del.icio.us](#) and Digg, all with the added benefit of integrating every other successful Google product.

Yes, Google+ is a monster.

There are a few large influences that Google+ will have on the social web that marketers need to take note of:

- **It's going to read your mind**

Google+ is built in and around the concept of the [semantic web](#), where machines are able to develop an understanding of the semantic, or meaning, of the information to it (what some people are calling Web 3.0).

It may be more web jargon but what Web 3.0 represents is important. It's the holy grail of message management and targeted communication. Google has already started doing this with its content network advertising by targeting advertising and content that is most relevant to you (including what you've searched for).

With your integrated social profile now adding to the personalised information that Google can reference, the relevance and targeting of its content will take an incredible leap forward. It will know what you want to search for before you do. In case you're unsure, this is a good thing if you want more relevant results.

Previously, Google was able to decode much of your likes and dislikes based on how you used its search engine, but your social profile goes a lot deeper, giving Google a great view into what type of content it should be targeting to you.

With the integration of search and social, Web 3.0 is a close reality. With the [+1 button](#), Google will filter search data, music you want to buy and products your friends recommend, all through the power of your social profile. Yes, it's kinda scary but what the social web has been promising for a long time, Google is now delivering.

- **+1+1=3**

Google is one the most visited websites on the planet, and tops the South African charts. Optimising your site for the Google spiders, buying PPC advertising, and making sure your brand and your website's content is easily found when searching is something all marketers are (or should) be doing.

We're currently in the age of organised content, and Google is taking us one step further into the age of hyper-connected relevance. The +1 button has already been added to more sites than the "tweet this" button. It took one month. Go ahead and gasp; I know I did.

Recommend a website, a link, or a brand and you help it gain traction on the ever-difficult Google ranking system. Google says +1s on search will add weight to the link in the search algorithm and make it more relevant. It will also know who from your networks +1'ed a link, knowing that you're more likely to find a link relevant that has been +1'ed by your friends (a recommendation). The simple social idea of recommendations by friends has made its way into search. Click!

- **It's not new, but it's nothing you've ever seen before**

Google is everywhere. It doesn't just have fingers in pies; it owns the pie factory and has fists full of fingers in other people's pies, too. Google+ will integrate with and bring in features from every property the search monster owns, bringing sites we use every day into our social profiles - products such as [Google Maps & Places](#) (location), [Picasa](#) (picture sharing), [Hangouts](#) (Call), [YouTube](#) (video sharing), Android App (mobile), [Blogger](#) (blogging platform).

These are some massive platforms on their own. We already use many (if not most) of them, which means we don't have to learn anything new; it's something squillions of people already use. Ingenious.

- **Your brand and all of the Google+ awesomeness**

What you should really be getting excited about is how this all starts coming together. Google has started testing business pages with a few brands but so far I haven't tried it, so I can't comment much on what it is offering. Like any good blogger, I can speculate, though:

- More analytics than you can shake a stick at. Imagine the insight Google can generate, once all these properties are linked and we can see how many people are recommending your search, interacting on your Google+ page, where they found you, and how they ended up at your store.
- Google is integrating [Checkout](#) (online purchasing engine) to link to your Gmail account to a check-out system, which means companies can track where customers come from. Yes, please.
- Integrating the best it has to your brand:

- Google Maps & Places (location) - your store location is on Google Maps and you've registered the stores. You can add QR code redemption via your Google+ social page and integrate which of your friends recommend this restaurant and what other users say about it on their Google+ pages.
- Hangouts (call) - there's something in here for live broadcasts/customer service/dipstick research with Google+ brand fans.
- YouTube (video) - video on Google+ with likes and links now integrate seamlessly with your Google+ page.
- Android App (mobile) - we're waiting for the OS app to be approved, but it's coming, and it's going to be huge. Location-based search (LBS) integrated into social is highly relevant.
- Blogger (blog) - your blog and your brand page seamlessly integrate. Score.

Overall, Google+ is going to make social (the revolution to the web) searchable, bringing two of the largest web functions together. It's going to add the most natural of human interactions (recommendations and social circle sharing) to every aspect of what you do.

As a marketer you cannot ignore this huge shift in the way the web is being used.

If you aren't yet convinced, then simply [Google](#) it; it has already hit 10 million users.

ABOUT JOHN BEALE

Having spent several years developing marketing strategies across digital and traditional media, John Beale found his passion on the social side of digital and is now a digital strategist at Cerebra Communications (www.cerebra.co.za). His days are spent developing social media strategy and campaigns for clients and nurturing an unhealthy passion for cars. He blogs at jtbeale.com, talks everything motoring on the ZACarShow podcast (www.zacarshow.co.za) and tweets as [@jtbeale](#) on Twitter.

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