

Google+

A Hidden Treasure?



By Jennifer Mart-Rice

When looking for an answer, where's the first place you look? Why Google of course! Have you considered expanding your Google experience to join Google+, a free social networking site with many features similar to those on Facebook?

You may be wondering why you should join yet another social networking site. Think of Google+ as not only a social network, but rather a place to share documents, video chat with screen share options, broadcast live and much more. Adopting Google+ could put you at an advantage since this relatively new site is populated by innovative business leaders who jumped on the bandwagon early on. Besides, people are no longer sticking to one social network, rather they are joining multiple sites so they can connect with a wider variety of individuals and increase their online visibility/presence. It will not be long before Google+ will be in full bloom and it's always better to be ahead of the game. This article will provide some useful tips for creating your own profile as well as highlighting some of the better features of Google+.

Tips on Creating an Account and a Helpful Profile

Setting up your own Google+ account is very easy. To set up an account, simply visit www.google.com/+ and

select the appropriate option. From that point, follow the onscreen instructions to set up your initial profile and add people from your contact lists or search for them by name.

Creating a complete profile is very important because it tells a viewer who you are as an individual/professional. Try to use your own words, descriptions and interests to reflect your personality.



Copying your company's bio or having someone else create a profile for you could make you less approachable and close off possible connections. Links can be placed anywhere in your profile—make sure to use this option without overdoing it. For example, create links to your personal

blog, company profile or LinkedIn account.

It is helpful to provide a profile photo as this is key to a good first impression. Avoid becoming another "blue head" by posting a picture that portrays you or your interests. Keep in mind that others will be viewing this profile and keep photos appropriate and professional. You can also personalize your cover photo, the photo behind your profile picture, with an uploaded image or one of the default Google images by clicking on the larger image and choosing "change." This is the place where a generic photo portraying your area of specialization would work without prejudice.

After filling out your initial informa-

tion and choosing a picture, you must complete your Google+ profile. You can edit your profile by using the "profile" tab and filling in any key information such as your present employer, educational background and your hometown. These are not mandatory fields but they can help to provide more information when searches are done for attorneys in your area. You can then fill out additional information such as an introduction, contact information, links to your company website or a link to your blog. You can provide as little or as much information here as you'd like, just remember these are the access points that will be used when people search on the network. You can hide some of your information from certain groups by clicking the circles next to the information and choosing which groups can access this information.

Creating Circles and Managing Your Own Comments

Once you have a Google+ account, you can begin creating "circles" of clients, colleagues, friends, family, etc. Google encourages you to create circles of people/companies so you can maintain your privacy and prevent oversharing. The more connections you have, the more you increase your own page recognition and expand your social net. Google+ automatically creates circles for your friends, family and acquaintances but you can create as many new circles as you like and add your connections to them accordingly. Once you have created a network of circles, you can see >>

what people are sharing and how they are interacting by visiting your stream or homepage. It's important to note that individuals can belong to more than one circle at a time.

The more connections you have, the more you increase your own page recognition and expand your social net.

There is a list of public circles that you can browse in order to locate people or interests at <http://publiccircles.appspot.com>. You can also use Google search to find brand names and/or companies by typing in "+name" into the Google search box. You can also share your own circles by using Public Circles, just be sure to add yourself to the circle so you are included.

Once you have placed all of your connections into your circles, it is much easier to pick and choose who you would like to share certain information with. To limit the viewing, add the circles, names or addresses of your chosen viewers to the open dialogue box prior to submission. If you choose not to limit your audience, comments will be viewable by all of your connections or the general public depending on your personal settings. There are no limits on how many or few circles/people you share with so the posting of professional or personal information is much easier and prevents oversharing.

Promotion and Plus 1

Google+ also allows you to promote and appreciate the posts of others by clicking on the "+1" or arrow boxes beneath their comments. Unlike Facebook, +1 does not only mean that you like a post, it can also mean you agree with the comment, thank the poster or recognize the comment. Another good use for +1 is to show support for particular brands or businesses without having to add them to a circle or being a recipient of their commentary. Promotion, on the other hand, allows you to share others comments with your own circles so that they do not miss out on potentially useful information.

Google+ can also be used for personal promotion purposes. You can easily upload YouTube videos, create a direct link from your email to your profile or add a badge to a personal website that

links to your profile. The best way to get people to connect with you is to let them know you have a Google+ page and encourage them to follow you by posting useful information.

Google+ Hangouts


Google+ provides "Hangouts" where users can collaborate as a group, or conduct a live video conference. The first type of hangout, a regular hangout, allows users to video conference with up to nine people and is capable of handling multiple cameras per person. These hangouts are accessible on the Android or iPhone platforms and have the capability to share documents, computer screens, or YouTube videos simultaneously. Participants in the hangout can create shared whiteboard presentations and utilize additional calling features to add in other users. If you choose to create a professional hangout, you should choose wisely when naming the hangout so that others may find you more easily and the overall appearance is more formal.

The second type of hangout is an "on air" hangout. These particular hangouts include the above features, but are live broadcasts to an unlimited audience. You begin this hangout like all others and select the on air option once the broadcast has opened. When the broadcast ends Google automatically transfers the recorded draft to your verified YouTube account, which you need to create prior starting the hangout, so that you can edit the video, publish it to your YouTube channel or share it with others elsewhere.

Google+ Hangouts can be used for a wide variety of functions such as providing live client services, Q&A on current issues affecting a designated circle, group

collaboration projects with shared documents or white boards and virtual client assistance when needed. The possibilities are endless if you simply take the time to utilize this feature by clicking on the "hangout" tab and following the onscreen instructions. The only requirement is to install the Google talk plug-in via the link provided when you begin using Hangouts. If you are going to use Google hangouts professionally, you should practice using this feature with your family or friends beforehand. This will provide you with an opportunity to test the features, adjust your settings and learn how to use the available tools to your benefit.

Conclusion

Once you have a following on Google+, you need to remember to stay engaged by posting unique and original comments, sharing other important comments and responding to the comments in your stream. In the end, the important thing is that you are able to connect with people on whichever site they have chosen. In addition, why wouldn't you want to take advantage of Google+'s free social network that has the added benefit of free advertisement via Google search? Google search already sends traffic to your firm's website and this same tool can now send traffic to your Google+ site. All it takes is a well thought out profile with key search terms to separate you from others to take advantage of what Google+ can offer you. 

Mart-Rice is the Assistant Director for Collection Development, Acquisition & Serials at the Salmon P. Chase College of Law at Northern Kentucky University and is a licensed attorney in Indiana. Mart-Rice can be reached at ricej2@nku.edu.