

On the Bandwagon – A Look at Google+

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What do Snoop Dogg, [Lance Armstrong](#) and Newt Gingrich all have in common? Each has a Google+ account. As of early this month, the “latest and greatest” social networking site has entered the limelight.

According to [Eric Schmidt](#), executive chairman of Google, the network had millions of followers in its first week running, despite it being in “field testing” stage and not yet available to the public.

This new hype may leave some business owners cringing, questioning whether investing more resources in yet another social site would be worth it. In order to answer this question, we need to take a step back and examine the facts.

As the instant popularity of Google+ would suggest, the new social networking site is addressing new desires of the online community. It's natural, though, for the pressed-for-time entrepreneur to question the relevance of a new program: after all, what will Google+ provide that Facebook does not? How can we be sure it's here to stay?

Many Facebook users find themselves fed up with the inability to stay current with updates from those they care most about. They have accepted so many friend requests that the updates from their real friends get lost in all the noise. They no longer feel in control, which Google+ addresses through the “circles” feature, allowing the site-holder to determine who can see each status update (e.g., friends, co-workers, family, acquaintances) and which groups they want to read updates from at any given time (e.g., I just want to read updates from my family).

By enabling organization of contacts, Google+ cleans up the social networking experience, potentially rendering it a more efficient communication tool. This could be a marketer's dream in regard to reaching highly targeted customers, though Google+ hasn't yet rolled out its version of business pages, making the ultimate marketing benefits uncertain at this point.

There's no doubt that Google has enough critical customer mass to become a serious player in the social media arena. It has already gained more followers in less time than Facebook or Twitter in their beginning stages, and the current buzz surrounding Google+ will only serve to bump up consumer desire.

For this reason, the minute business profiles are introduced, you will want to jump on the Google+ bandwagon before your competitors do. When you're the first in your business category to create a strong Google+ presence, it will be difficult for your competitors to overtake you.

Keep in mind that companies not found on mainstream social networking sites may not be taken seriously by an audience that's grown accustomed to doing everything online. It calls the relevancy of the company brand into question, as online mentions have become the modern word-of-mouth advertising. In addition, a great deal of customer service now takes place through social networks, a trend that will continue snowballing as time goes on.

Businesses will do well to recognize the advantages this new social media contender offers and embrace the chance to expand their online audience.

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