

Jesse Stay on Google Plus for Dummies

<http://www.contentmarketinginstitute.com/2011/12/jesse-stay-google-plus>

Patricia

Hi, I'm Patricia Redsicker, blogging for Content Marketing Institute and today I'm speaking with Jesse Stay, the author of the new book *Google+ for Dummies*. He also writes a really, really interesting text blog called 'Staying Alive,' where he talks about coding and social media and a lot of technical stuff that actually helps people to understand the relationship between marketing and technology.

It's great to have you here Jesse. Thank you for sharing your time with us.

Jesse

It's great to be here Patricia. Thanks for having me.

Patricia

You're welcome. Listen, I was hanging out on your blog a couple of days ago and I noticed that you have a whole bunch of recipes in there — tuna melts and all that. What's up with that? I don't picture you as a cook.

Jesse

That's actually a link to my daughter's blog. I have a whole family of bloggers. My wife blogs about travel things; my oldest daughter blogs about cooking and recipes she likes, and that's what you were looking at. I actually have a nine-year-old son who blogs about python programming, so we cover the whole gamut here.

Patricia

Let's talk about Google+ because that's the reason that we're here and a lot of folks want to know about this new platform. I don't know if I'm the only one or there's a lot of people out there, Jesse, who are just not really feeling it right now; they're not really warming up to Google+. So I guess my question here is what the heck is Google+ and how does it fit into this already crowded world of online communication?

Jesse

There's two sides of it that you have to consider. There's the consumer side and then there's the business side. From the consumer side, I think that's where a lot of people are seeing the "I'm not really feeling it" type feeling, as you mentioned, and that is they get on Google+ and they start posting and they start playing with it and they don't see anyone commenting on their posts; they don't see any activity, and none of their close friends and family are there so they leave, or they stop using it, or they just have a bad experience.

And what I've written about in *Google+ for Dummies* is that there are ways you can improve that and you can turn this to be a good experience for you — particularly from the consumer side, Google+ is a great networking tool for you to be able to build new connections, and new friends and new people that you may not have been able to get in contact with before. Not only that, but you also have to realize that Google+ is not just a social network — it is a feature of Google, and whether you want it, or like it or not, Google is looking to integrate it into every

single one of [its] products in some fashion or another, and down the road I think these things will be built in by default into Google products. In fact you're already seeing it if you look at the latest version of Android — it has Google+ installed by default.

Patricia

Right, and we'll touch on that a little later, but let's just go back a bit to the socializing part — the socialization part of Google+ — because there had been a charge (and I don't know how true this is, and you can speak to that) that Google+ is attracting certain kinds of people and not others. For example, techies such as yourself, social media experts, celebrity definitely, and men in general, and then you have your regular Jane Doe who feels a little lonely in there; a little out of place. So have you noticed any demographic patterns that are congregating on Google+?

Jesse

Yes, definitely there are specific demographics that Google+ is attracting, and this is normal — I should be clear that this is normal for any new social network. We saw it on Facebook; originally Facebook attracted the school systems and students because they started in different schools and only allowed students at first.

Twitter attracts celebrities and news media, and kind of techie people as well. Well, Google+ is actually attracting a similar type of audience to what Twitter is attracting, and that is specifically the techie audience (as you mentioned). You are seeing a couple of celebrities, Jeri Ryan is a really active one; she does a great job on Google+. And actually if you want to interact with a celebrity she's the one to circle because she often comments and talks back to her fans.

You're seeing celebrities, you're also seeing the news media are starting to get involved in it as well, and photographers especially. For some reason, Google+ has really attracted photographers and there's a huge audience of photographers on Google+.

Patricia

And that's all cool, but I'll ask you what I think is a very rational question that has to do with the number of networks that we have out there to begin with. Now, we have all these other networks and people haven't even gotten used to them — people are still struggling with Facebook because of all the different changes they keep coming up with — and now you have this new toy to play with. Why should we really care about Google+? I know you were starting to touch on that earlier, but could you just complete that thought and tell folks why they should care about Google+ — especially from a marketing perspective.

Jesse

Yeah, well I'll start from the consumer standpoint really briefly. From the consumer standpoint, if it is just a toy and you don't have much of a reason... you may want to step back and see if there is a reason for you to get on here. My book will help with that and help you, if you need the network or to learn how to grow your professional network, it can be a great tool for that. If you have friends on there that participate on there pretty actively, it can be a good place for you to participate. So look at your network and see if it's something worth considering.

Also, if you use Google products and you need better ways to share the Google products, Google+ is the place to do that.

From the business standpoint, from a marketing standpoint, it's a great tool and it's something

that you definitely need to be considering, no matter what. Particularly for one main reason, and that's search.

Right now Google+ is integrated into Google search (if you currently have a website and you integrate Google's +1 button onto your website, which is just copying and pasting a little snippet of code that they provide and you can have your developer do that if you don't want to do it). When people +1 your site, it appears in Google search results. So what happens when I go and do a search for (let's say) marketing consultants? If I do a search for marketing consultants well, if your website is for a marketing consultant I'm going to go and in the search results, I'm going to see your website, followed by a list of people who have +1'd your website that are my friends on Google+.

Patricia

Awesome.

Jesse

Which makes your website stand out to me, and also Google is starting to factor that in to the search rankings, as well. So if your site has more +1's, it will rank higher in Google search results on top of the other search engine optimization rankings. So among all reasons, that's a big reason for you to get involved. But, we can talk about circles, we can talk about building a network using + pages — there are all kinds of options that you can use as a marketer to increase your audience, and you really should be considering Google+ as an additional option; it's not something that's going away, it's something that's growing Google just had [its] biggest traffic week ever in the last week, so it's something that you need to be paying attention to.

Patricia

And that surge in traffic certainly had to do with the launching of their business pages, correct?

Jesse

That's correct. They just recently launch what they call + pages, which are their business pages, or the equivalent to Facebook pages, and since they launched that, [Google has] seen a huge surge in traffic. If you don't mind, I'll explain + pages a bit?

Patricia

Yeah.

Jesse

So + pages are the equivalent to Facebook pages, if you're familiar with that. They give your business a presence or a profile on Google+. What you can do is you can set up the profile, and then you can post as your business, and then people do what's called "circle you," which is equivalent of a follow — if you're familiar with Twitter, people "follow" you on Twitter. Well on Google+, they just check a box, which "circles" you, and now all your updates will appear in their news streams.

In addition to that, you can also put a little badge on your site that ties your site back to your + page, and in the future (right now it's not automatic but Google is working towards making this an automatic feature), when you have your Google+ badge on your site and you've created a plus page, when people go to Google search and they type + and your business name, it will

automatically take them to your + page on Google+. So that's a powerful feature as well.

The last powerful feature on + pages is they also allow you to segment your followers, or people you want to follow as a business. So you can say, "I want to follow these people," so you circle them, and you can put them into different circles and then you can target updates to those circles. So if I have a circle of customers, I can target and update just "my customers", or if I have a circle of people who like cars, I can create a circle of people that I know who "like cars" and target updates just to those people. So you can do some very targeted updates with that.

Patricia

And again, going back to the struggle between... I don't want to say moving from Facebook to Google because you don't have to choose, you can be at both places, but a lot of small businesses that are stretched for resources are going to have a hard time managing all these different platforms. What do you say to a person who is very, very heavily invested in Facebook, has known Facebook to work for them, they're doing a great job on Facebook and... I hear what you're saying about search, but could they not get a similar bump in traffic through Facebook?

Jesse

You definitely can, and if you only have the energy and the resources for Facebook, then stick with Facebook; you don't have to go to Google+. I'm not going to be sad in any way, but look at where your resources are and if you have time for it. If you don't have time for it, please keep doing what you're doing. If it's not broken, don't fix it.

But if you're looking for additional ways to expand your reach or expand your growth, you may consider Google+, and there are ways to manage that. There are numerous tools out there, the cheapest one out there that I'm aware of is Hootsuite.com, and Hootsuite integrates with Google+ and you can add multiple Google+ pages on there, along with your Facebook pages, and you can manage it all from one central location. You may consider doing that to be able to post and manage all of that in one place.

Patricia

That's an excellent tip. I think that would be very useful.

Talk about — and I know your book addresses this — the different features on Google+. When it first came out, everyone was raving about the different features that made it so cool. Talk to us a little bit about how the user experience on Google+ is different from the user experience on Facebook.

Jesse

The user experience on Google+ is going to be a lot simpler than Facebook, partly due to the fact that they just launched. So when you get on to Google+, you're not going to have the filtered news feed like you see on Facebook. When you go to Facebook, Facebook kind of organizes your news feed and brings similar posts and combines them next to each other. If you have the summarized feed, it will even try to summarize your feed for you into top news, and stuff like that. You're not going to see that on Google+. It's everything. You get the fire hose on Google+.

In addition, I mentioned circling on Google+. On Google+, instead of friending people, it's a one way relationship on each side, so if you want to follow someone or follow someone's updates,

you circle them (instead of friending them), and that will put any of their, at least their public updates, into your news stream. Now if they circle you back and they target updates to that circle and you're following them, then you will still get those updates in your news stream.

However, if they target updates to another circle that you're not in, you won't get these updates in your news stream. So it's all about, circles are the equivalent of Facebook lists, if you're familiar with Facebook lists, and you can do similar things with Facebook lists, and I guess circling would be similar to subscribing on Facebook, which Facebook just launched.

Just lastly, Facebook has the "like" button; Goggle+'s equivalent to the "like" button is the "+1" button.

Patricia

And do you see +1 being a very hot commodity as we move forward? Do you see it actually overtaking the "like" button, as far as the social media currency [is concerned]?

Jesse

You know, I think *like* is a more generic term, so +1 ties to Google+; it has the "+" in it, and Google+ is really trying to brand that + type theme, so I have a feeling that "like" is still going to hold its value. Now Facebook is trying to move into other types of verbs, per se, so it's hard to say. I think Facebook will have its own, Google will have its own, and I'm seeing more and more sites embrace the "like"-type functionality over the +1-type functionality. So my guess is that "like" will hang around.

Patricia

Jesse, talk to us a little bit about some of the other features on Google+ that are all the rage; that are really cool and unique. Maybe you experimented with some of those handouts? Talk to our audience a little bit about those, and tell us which ones you have personally found to be extremely fulfilling?

Jesse

Sure. Well I'll start with, I mentioned earlier that photographers have really caught onto Google+. Part of that is because Google+ has really built a compelling and beautiful photo interface for photos, so when you upload photos not only does it provide a beautiful interface but it stores them for free through [Google's] Picasa web engine that it stems from. So photographers have really caught on to this, and many people are actually flocking from Flickr as a result of building a beautiful interface that shows beautiful photos and that photographers can enjoy.

The second, probably most popular or unique feature to Google+ that's "all the rage," as you say, is what's called Google Hangouts that you mentioned. Google Hangouts is, if you think about it, it's kind of like a multi-person Skype video chat — that is the easiest way to put it. There are similar enterprise products on the market — there's one called Vedyeo (I think) that allows you to chat with multiple people, and in fact, I think Hangouts are powered by this same technology — but hangouts allow you to chat with up to 10 people at a time, all of them on video and as people leave new people can enter the chat. So it makes for a really great way to meet people. [Google] just added new features, where you can share your desktop with the other people on the screen, you can share YouTube videos with them, and other things. So it's

really a fun little product that they're doing some really cool things with. The Dalai Lama just said he had a chat with Desmond Tutu with the Anglican Church, so there's really some amazing things that you can do with that.

Patricia

And all this for free, and you don't see any chance of this having to be a paid service in the future, do you?

Jesse

Not that I can see. Where I do see paid services occurring, and I don't think Google+ itself will be a charge service, is Google Apps, which they recently launched Google+ integration into. Google apps is the business product of Google that they sell to businesses for allowing better communication and collaboration within a business environment.

And they just launched Google+ in Google apps, where you can now target updates just to your company and just into your company's network, so only they see it and they become their own circle that you can target updates too.

But even with that, Google is not charging anything extra to get Google+; if you already have a Google Apps account, it comes with that.

Patricia

Jesse do you have any criticisms about Google+ so far?

Jesse

I've got a couple. A lot of them are going to be resolved, I think. I think Google has a ton of potential, and I think it's already seeing tremendous results and it's a great tool that I think everyone should be embracing. I think the concern is how do you get people's close friends and family on there, and right now, when you join Google+, there's a good chance that your close friends and family that you do see on Facebook may not be on Google+ — it's just not big enough a network and it's just not active enough a network for that to happen. And I think that's going to fix itself through things — I think as some of the audience that's on there now will start to attract their family members on to Google+, and you'll start to see them attract their co-workers, and other things, and as they do that, I think it's gradually going to grow and that it will gradually attract more people — even Facebook did that. Facebook originally was the younger audience and they got on, and the only way that the parents were able to keep in touch with them was by getting on Facebook and friending them on Facebook, and so the parents started joining after that. So that will happen as Google+ grows, but that would be my main criticism right now — that it's still not growing, but there are ways to still use it as a productive and valuable tool.

Patricia

Very cool, very stimulating conversation, Jesse. Unfortunately we have run out of time. So before we go, where can people find you online if they want to get in touch with you?

Jesse

You can find me on my blog at staynalive.com. You can also follow me on Google+ if you go to profiles.google.com/jessestay, or search for *Google+ for Dummies* on Amazon.com and you can

find me through there, too.

Patricia

Ok, there you have it ladies and gentlemen. We've been talking to Jesse Stay, the author of *Google+ for Dummies*. Be sure to pick up your copy at Amazon.com or wherever books are sold. Jesse, it's been a pleasure. Thank you so much for taking the time to chat with me. Thank you all for listening.

Jesse

Thanks, Patricia.