

Google Counts On a New Social Strategy by +1's



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Google has floundered with the development of a viable social strategy, but Ignited SVP Dave Martin believes that its efforts in that area are about to become turbocharged with the introduction of +1. "Since Google is the dominant referrer of traffic on the Web, they should be able to establish an enormous footprint with +1 very quickly," he said.

[Google](#) (Nasdaq: GOOG) has launched what many see as its answer to the growing phenomenon of social search in general and [Facebook's](#) "Like" button in particular: the +1 button.

It is similar in concept, although in Google's case it will eventually be included in search results. When users see something they like on a Google property such as [YouTube](#) or a search ad, they can click the +1 button.

The icon will start to appear in search results within a few weeks, Google spokesperson Jim Prosser told TechNewsWorld. For the moment, it is available only to a small group of people who have opted in on Google's website.

"This is very early days for this button. Right now, we are working to bring it to publishers' sites in the coming months as well," Prosser said.

Once enough people are using the feature, it will begin to act as sort of a recommendation service for users -- or at least that is the intent. Someone planning a winter trip to Tahoe, Calif., may see a +1 from a relative next to the result for a lodge in the area, Google said in a blog post introducing the service.

If there is no one you know who has +1'd a particular search you are conducting, Google may just display how many people in general have +1'd the results.

A Signal for the Algorithm?

Google may eventually co-opt the data for its search algorithm down the road, using it as one of its so-called signals, but that is not a certainty. "All we can say is that we are paying very close attention to how users are interacting with it," Prosser said.

+1's -- or the lack thereof -- will not have an impact on ads, he noted. "We aren't changing how an ad ranks on search based on this information. It is just an additional piece of relevance to users' search experience."

Advertisers could theoretically benefit, of course. It is important to note that users won't be +1'ing the creative of a particular ad but the actual landing page -- that is, the company -- to which the ad is linked.

"If you saw that a friend +1'd an ad, it could have come from the organic side -- the company's site -- or from the ad itself," explained Prosser.

Taking On Facebook

Whether this is enough to catch up with Facebook's now ubiquitous Like button is unclear. Google and Facebook are so completely different that it is almost unfair to compare their initiatives in this area, said David Binkowski, EVP of Digital Marketing at [Lippe Taylor](#).

"Google makes tools for everyday life -- YouTube for videos, chat, email, docs. They all have specific features and functions," he told TechNewsWorld. "Facebook is where my friends are and the functionality is almost secondary to that."

Still, Google is starting to cobble together a viable social strategy from this foundation, he said. "It is making its various tools more social and letting people drive the sharing of those tools."

That strategy is about to be turbocharged with +1, simply because it will be attached to search, Dave Martin, SVP of media at [Ignited](#), told TechNewsWorld.

"Since Google is the dominant referrer of traffic on the Web, they should be able to establish an enormous footprint with +1 very quickly," he said.

Still, +1 is lacking the social graph that makes Facebook's "like" so valuable, he continued. "Without the social ripple that occurs when someone Likes a brand or content on the Web, Plus One will remain a one-to-one connection instead of a one-to-many or many-to-many connection."

Which is why Google's latest attempt at social media is a bold move for the search engine, especially given Facebook and [Twitter's](#) dominance in this area and the immense pressure mounting to maintain consumer privacy, said Ron Camhi, head of the advertising, marketing and media department at [Michelman & Robinson](#).

"For Google to roll this out demonstrates the importance marketing decision-makers and media management companies are placing on social media as a variable on how to spend marketing dollars," Camhi told TechNewsWorld. [ECT](#)
