

A recipe ripe for success: why Google+ will work for Higher Education

by Blog Admin

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*Having spent some time exploring the new social networking platform Google+, communications expert and Webster University media manager **Patrick Powers** shares his thoughts on how the new service can work for academics and those involved in higher education.*



If I've learned anything from two weeks spent playing around in Google+, it's that when it becomes available, this service can work for higher education.

Google+ features a social environment where it is easy to build connections, focus on specific interests and keep track of who sees what. It's a recipe ripe for success when it comes to promoting higher education. It's only a matter of time before a Google+ page becomes a key component for quality communication. If our audience is there, we should be there, too.



To date, Google has discouraged colleges and universities—along with every other business out there—from setting up official accounts in the fledgling social network. Google developers say they're working on a space for business, but that space has yet to materialize. When Google opens the door for businesses, colleges and universities should be aware of the potential behind Google+. Get in there, play around and see the benefits yourself.

There are a handful of features that stand out in Google+ and should warrant our attention:

Robust Search

Both Facebook and Google+ encourage users to enter information about where they went to school. The difference is that this information is public and searchable inside Google+. Basically, this means one could search for XYX university and find scores of people identifying themselves as alumni. Without "friending" every fan out there, this information is difficult to track through Facebook.

Targeted Audiences

A benefit of the Facebook status update is that one can send the update to select users based on geography. Google+ ups the ante. A post in Google+ can be sent to select circles, meaning there can be circles for alumni, donors, current students and prospective students, and each can receive targeted messaging. It all depends on which circles you place people in.

Privacy Protection

The same "circles" feature that allows for targeted messaging also makes privacy easier to understand. There is no need for multiple profiles. Every item shared on Google+ allows you to choose with whom you wish to share it.

Hanging Out Made Easy

Open houses and information sessions are great, but with the growing popularity of online classes, who has time to drive to campus anymore, especially when the campus may be hundreds of miles away? Hangouts in Google+ provide group video chat capabilities and can be a great way to start a dialogue without leaving home.

Topics of Conversation

The “sparks” feature is great for aggregating news, posts and information around a single topic—think business education, fundraising or higher education in general. While it may not be designed to foster personal connection, it’s a great resource and access is convenient. Information, available as a spark feed, can be shared within circles with a click of the mouse.

Have you found your own favorite feature in Google+? Please share it in the comments below.

This post was originally published on [Patrick Powers's own blog](#), and was cross-posted with the [CASE Social Media Blog](#).

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