

Google+ circling the drain or a great place to hangout?

Description

For those who don't yet know, Google+ is Google's latest entry into the world of social networking. After Wave and Buzz, you have to wonder why – but more on the question why later.

Here are some thoughts based on a few days usage.

The Basics.

Upon registering you are asked to fill in a rather long winded profile. Annoying, but best to get it out of the way at the start I suppose.

Next you enter the site. It is clean and uncluttered. Facebook and Twitter should take note. Uncluttered is nice sometimes! There are a few sections that make up Google+.

There is the status page, circles, hangout and sparks.

Circles.

It is best to start with Circles. This is both brilliantly simple whilst being hideously complex. The idea is you can group your contacts in Circles. You drag people you know into the correct circles. Simple. However, your contacts are made up of anyone you have ever had contact with in gmail. So in my case there is something like 500 people to choose from. Not gonna happen!

I made a few circles and added a couple of people before I got fed up.

Status.

The other bit I will talk about is how Google+ handles status updates, as it ties in to Circles.

The status page is basically the same as Facebook. You see a stream of updates from people within your various circles.

To send an update you must choose if your update is to be public (like Twitter) or for one or more Circles.

On one hand this could be great and save a lot of embarrassing moments. For instance I can share a picture of a night out with my friends Circle only and then a great article with just my Work Circle.

But this relies very heavily on being bothered to manually organise everyone you know!

The rest.

Hangout looks like a bit of a killer feature. You start a Hangout and post a link on your status. Then up to 10 friends can join you in a video chat. Very nice and not reliant on a client like Skype.

Sparks seems to be a list of topics that you can look at and join in with. I have not really looked at it

though!

My Thoughts.

Some of this is great. It integrates with the recent Google facelift brilliantly. All Google products have a new bar at the top. On the right you see notifications and have quick access to your status page in a drop down. I love that it integrates so closely with Picassa as well.

It is very slick and I like the way Hangouts work.

It is much simpler than Wave (but what isn't), but not as simple as Twitter or even Facebook.

My problem is this. Why does this exist. What gap in the Market is this meant to fill. If you want a Twitter like status feed or conduit to untapped resources or Celebrity stalking you use Twitter. If you want to chat to friends etc. you have Facebook.

The basic principal of business (as taught to me by Bigweld in Robots)
"See a need, fill a need"

There is no need for Google+. People are not crying out for it. The only need I can see, is the need for Google to tie people in to their services even more by integrating their social life. It is a stream of revenue they have not yet managed to tap (not for want of trying).

People are talking about the vast potential of Google+.

For me I need to be given a really, really good reason to go through the pain of transferring my social life from Twitter and Facebook before I can give Google+ a serious look.

Category

1. Social Media
2. Technology

Tags

1. Google+ social networking

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