

# Seven Ways Writers Can Build Online Authority with Google+

by [Demian Farnworth](#)



Google was founded on a simple principle — *some web pages are more important than others.*

How is that importance quantified? Ideally, it's based on the fact that *people think that page satisfies their questions about the topic* better than other pages.

Google changed the face of search technology by evaluating a web page's importance by the links that pointed at it, both in sheer number and by how much Google trusted the sites those links came from.

But the web has changed radically since 1998. While plenty of people can start a website or blog and link to things they like, the majority of people vote for things they like via *social media sharing*.

That makes social sharing a great signal for a search engine to use ... but Twitter and Facebook are [not exactly cooperating with Google](#). And until recently, [the web page itself](#) — and not the writer — was still the central part of the story.

## The beginnings of Author Rank

**Google has always acknowledged that *great writers create great content* — and better content would result in better search results for end users (an important business objective for Google). One of the natural ways to encourage the creation of more great content is to reward the writer.**

**With that in mind, they [filed a patent called \*Agent Rank\* back in 2005.](#)**

**Agent Rank is supposed to create digital signatures for “agents” (think writers and other content creators), which would then accumulate reputation scores based upon public reaction to their content (comments, social shares, links).**

**The important distinction here is that this score was “portable.” It wasn't tied to a specific site (which doesn't move across the web), but a person (who does). That's impossible to do, however, unless you establish a platform to identify “agents.”**

**In other words, the cart was still before the horse.**

## **Why web writers should care about Google+**

Google+ is less social media platform and more [backplane](#) social layer that transformed all Google *products* into *features* of Google+.

As head of Google+ Vic Gundotra said:

We already have users. We are just upgrading them to Google 2.0.

Furthermore, Google+ is the [identity platform](#) they *so* needed to pull off Agent Rank — which is another signal that we were another step closer to an actual Author Rank algorithm.

So, what's the moral of the story for you — the *writer*? Why should you care? Well, if you are a content creator who cares about:

- Your reputation
- Your work
- Establishing online authority
- Building an audience (which tends to happen faster on G+ than other social sites)
- Driving more traffic to your website or blog
- Growing your email newsletter subscriber list
- And boosting sales and opportunities

Then [you need a Google+ account](#).

But nabbing that account is not enough. You need to build a credible and authoritative profile on Google+ to enhance the sharing signals for you content in a way that Google can definitely see (unlike Twitter and Facebook).

Here are seven ways to do that:

### **1. Beef up your Google+ audience (faster than Twitter)**

In the [scheme of Author Rank](#), your Google+ profile is going to be your verifiable identity, and there are several factors that influence your reputation:

- The number of followers you have.
- The number of re-shares your content gets.
- The number of +1's you get. (By the way, when someone +1's your content, it's not just your content getting a vote — it's *you*. Your reputation grows in the process.)
- Activity. Are you posting regularly? Commenting? Resharing and plus one-ing?

The cool thing about a Google+ profile is that it seems to grow faster than what you can do on Twitter or Facebook (another reason to get over yourself and [jump on Google+ if you haven't](#)).

So, how do you beef up your Google+ audience? For starters, remember that in the end it's a social media platform — and so you need to treat it that way.

- **Create a solid bio** — Great G+ bios start with a summary of who you are, what you do, why you are on G+, and the kind of content you'll share. Be sure to weave keywords into the Introduction, Employment, Education, and Places section of your bio.
- **Build relationships** — Start by following people you know, and then branch off into following people you want to know. *Interact liberally.*
- **Share content** — Create original posts (whether text, photo, or video), share links, and re-share content by other G+ users. When you share a link to an article, create a headline, add a brief description of your thoughts, and end with a question to promote discussion in the comments.
- **Join Communities** — I'll talk more about Communities in a moment, but let me just say these are potent places to network.
- **Leave comments** — Leave comment on posts, photos, and photos people are tagged in. Ask thought-provoking questions. Refer to other Google+ users (type "+" and the person's name and Google+ will display options to choose from).

You can accomplish a steady diet of Google+ without sacrificing your life and still get great results. Besides, if you weren't mingling on the Internet you'd have to do it in person at a Chamber of Commerce event or something — which can be time consuming, expensive, and boring.

Your choice.

## 2. Target traffic to your blog with Circles

Let's not forget a [cardinal rule of social media](#): social media is a channel, not a campaign. In fact, you can view social media audiences as one step towards boosting your blog readership.

Unlike Twitter and Facebook, however, where everything you share is visible to your *entire* audience, the benefit that Google+ provides is that it can help you [segment your audiences](#) and deliver appropriate content.

Google+ Circles will allow you to do that.



Circles allow you to segment your audience into topic-specific groups. For example, you could create a Circle for copywriters, fiction writers, politics, dark humor, and family. Then you share content relevant to each one of those Circles.

The beauty of this strategy is that you will see higher rates of interaction with your content. Just ask [Martin Shervington](#) who builds some highly-interactive circles (and then interacts liberally through Hangouts).

Let's say you absolutely must rant on a political situation — sharing *that* with your general audience might not be helpful. In fact, that's typically how you lose followers in Twitter or Facebook.

But if you have a circle dedicated to political rants, you will probably get a higher rate of activity relative to the audience size. The same goes for every other topic-specific Circle.

By the way, avoid creating too many Circles (if you don't you'll eventually suffer from Circle fatigue). And devote one Circle to your core group of readers, since it's difficult to grow a large audience in more than one Circle.

### 3. Hustle Hangouts

One of the standout features in Google+ is their video chat feature — [Hangouts](#).

On the initial rollout you could host a hangout with up to ten people where everyone sees everyone else during the conversation.

This worked out great for casual wine chats, a loose brainstorming session with peers around the world, or small company meetings.

Then Google released [Hangouts On Air](#), a feature that allows you to broadcast a live video session to the public. [Tommy Walker](#) has created a handful of compelling On Air shows, most recently one on [Storytelling, Marketing and Modern Media](#) featuring Brian Clark, Doug Pray, and John Jacobsen ...

Can't see the video? [Click here to watch it on YouTube](#).

You could also use Hangouts to build a following by hosting a weekly or monthly interview series. Then promote the event regularly and you'll start to build a solid audience.

### 4. Maximize the life of your content

I've written a few articles on Google+ and then expanded on them on my blog.

This has worked out well because I capture the traffic on Google+, and then capture the traffic through my subscribers and search traffic. Or, you could post it on your blog first, then Google+ second.

Either way, this lengthens the life of your content.

After I post on my blog, I then edit the original Google+ post with the link to the blog post — and I also include a link on the blog post pointing back to the original Google+ post:

## Demian Farnworth



**Demian Farnworth** 12:03 PM (edited) - Public

**8 Rules Every Writer Should Live By**

*Update:* See the blog post: <http://thecopybot.com/2012/12/writer-rules/>

1. Learn how to defend your work. Great writers are courageous in the face of a hostile audience.



By the way, don't be worried about duplicate content issues. According to John Mueller (Google's Manager of Webmaster Tools), [Google is pretty good about recognizing](#) that your content originates from your own site.

## 5. Attack a narrow topic

In many ways, Google+ is just another blogging platform like WordPress, since you don't have a character limit, you can edit every post, publish images and videos, and even use simple markup to format your posts:

- **Bold** — Add an asterisk (\*) around the word or words you want to bold like this: \*These words will be bold\* in your post. This is also how you create a headline.
- **Italics** — Put underscores (\_) around text you want to italicize like this: I\_love\_ Google+.
- **Strikeout** — Put hypens (-) around the word or words you want to strikeout. Like this: I -dislike- hate Facebook.

Once you publish the formatting will appear.

Being such a near-perfect blogging platform (but please read more on why it's actually *not* in no. 7) can allow you to treat it as such. In fact, you could use your Google+ account to drill down into a particular topic your main blog may not support.

For instance, my personal blog's main focus is on web writing, but there was a time (before Google+) where I shared a lot of content on [working as a freelancer](#).

This didn't always jibe with my audience, so with the launch of Google+ I've focused more of my work and inspirational posts there.

This is important on both the human and machine level.

- Your readers subscribed to your blog because of your [cornerstone content](#). Deviate from that mission too much and you may alienate them.
- Search bots are crawling your site and evaluating the words to determine the topic of your blog. Introduce widely unrelated topics and you tend to [dilute the focus of your blog](#), thus confusing the bots.

In the end, Google+ is a great outlet for content not suited for your blog.

## 6. Create a community

Recently Google+ released their Communities platform. This is basically a group of people centered around a common interest. Popular Communities include:

- [Doctor Who](#)
- [Cult of Mac](#)
- [Freelance Writers](#)
- [Google Authorship and Author Rank](#)

When you join a Community, you'll start to get the posts shared in that community (as if it were a Circle) showing up in your Google+ stream. It's a great way to network with like-minded people and get in front of an extended audience, especially if you post, share, and comment within that community.

If you are gutsy enough, you can even become a Community founder and moderator. If your Community grows in popularity you'll naturally attract the attention and influence that involves.

## **7. Park all your content on Google+ (don't do this one)**

This is tempting, but it's a mistake that sensible people will not make.

Building your content solely on Google+ would be nothing but [digital sharecropping](#). And as we've said many times, you don't truly own your content if you park it on a social network or "free" platform.

If you don't think this matters, let me just remind you that [when Posterous closes](#) on April 30, it will take 15 million blogs and 63 million pages of content down with it.

So why mention this idea at all? Because it's tempting. Here's why.

For one, at the roll out of Google+ many notable people bailed on their external web properties — Kevin Rose being the most infamous.

Next in line was technology writer [Mike Elgan](#). Here's his Google+ profile:

After 10 years of blogging with conventional blogging sites and services, I abandoned that approach a year ago and started blogging on Google+. Why? Because Google+ is by far the best blogging platform.

With more than 2 million followers and as a consistently rated top-ten Google+ user, Mike is successful on Google+. It helps that he's been in the tech writing game for years.

Of course it's debatable if it's the "best blogging platform" out there, but even if it was, it's still a risky bet.

For one, Google+ doesn't allow you to [harvest email addresses from Google+](#) (a crime for anyone wanting to run a business online). And while you can download your content, that's an insane hassle. Also, having an external blog may actually help your search rankings on ... Google.

Maintaining an external blog/website is actually [what Google wants you to do](#).

In other words, it's part of their over-arching scheme to implement Author Rank. Your work, on your site, and wherever else you choose to publish, with Google+ as a channel to reach it rather than the primary home for your content.

And the most convincing argument, as we see it? Your content and reputation should belong to you. Not Facebook. Not Google. Not Tumblr. You.

### **Here's the deal ...**

When it comes to improved search rankings, building an audience on Google+ might just be the smartest thing you can do as a content creator.

Why? Google is fine-tuning their search algorithm to [accommodate an accurate Author Rank score](#) — which is a radically different way to identify great content out of the clutter.

Think of Author Rank as a penalty against anonymous authors, as well as a reward to people who care about their reputation and their content (which I have a hunch is you).

Stay tuned because in the next installment we'll explore Google's *Search Plus Your World* ... and why it makes Google+ the content creator's most important social network.

By the way, how have *you* been building authority on Google+? Share your thoughts in the comments below ...



About the author

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