

Land Grab

Why Every Door Dealer Needs to Stake a Claim on Google+

By Joe Dysart, Special to Door & Access Systems

While Google+'s 90 million members are still relatively few for a social network, some door and access systems businesses have wasted no time scrambling to set up their own pages there.

"This emerging social media from a name that we all know intrigued us," says Matthew Olson, director of sales and marketing at Action Door of Grand Rapids, Mich. "We liked how content on Google+ is ranked based on popularity and user opinions. It is shared by those who value the information – and shared, and shared again."

Adds James Darnell, director, Lakes Garage Doors of Wirral, England: "We were fairly late to have a good website made for our business. We're keen not to let that happen again," when it comes to Google+.

Big Plusses for Google+

Search engine optimization (SEO) experts say the land grab is a smart move, since garage door and other businesses with a presence on Google+ are expected to move up higher on Google search engine returns.

Web security experts are also urging companies to set up shop on Google+ to ensure that their company names are not snapped up by a competitor. This is the same advice they gave during the dawn of the Web, when squatters appropriated the brand names of global corporations.

And Internet marketing analysts say features like "Hangouts," which enables a group of people to video chat simultaneously, make Google+ too promising to ignore.

Google's Answer to Facebook

The social network, launched in the summer of 2011, is Google's answer to Facebook — which now has 800+ million members and represents an ominous threat to Google's advertising revenue base.

There are marked differences between the two animals. But both share a core mission: to provide a virtual meeting place where millions of people can socialize using chat, posts, photo and video exchange, and other Web communications tools.

Plusses for Businesses

Businesses, of course, continue to be rabidly interested in how activity on social networks can be parlayed into increased sales and brand recognition. And they're especially interested

Google's +1 recommendation button makes forging a business page on Google+ "absolutely essential."

Besides seeing marginally improved search engine rankings short term, Husayni indicates businesses that establish a presence on Google+ may very well see significant sales gains. This will occur, he says, as Google+ grows beyond its critical mass and more and more people begin using the +1 recommendation button to recommend goods and services to friends.



SEO Inc. offers a free white paper on maximizing Google+ for business.

in how they can get recommendations for their businesses from current and former customers.

On Facebook, for example, legions of members have been signaling their endorsement of a product or service by clicking a "Like" button, a nod that became immediately coveted by businesses.

Key: Get Recommendations

On Google+, members offer the same kudos by clicking a "+1" recommendation button. Ali Husayni, founder of MasterGoogle.com, a search engine marketing firm, says that

Improving Your Search Engine Ranking

In fact, Husayni says Google's increasing reliance on word-of-mouth recommendations when ranking search engine returns could dramatically alter the way company Web pages get found during the next few years.

Currently, companies spend a lot of time seeding company Web pages with carefully selected keywords and key-phrases to attract traffic. This is a key part of SEO. In the future, company marketing experts may instead need to find more ways to ensure their companies have as many recommendations from Facebook,

Google+, Twitter, and as many other social networks as possible.

Husayni thinks that Google may be shifting the power away from SEO companies and toward networks and circles. "It's kind of like the past, when word-of-mouth was more important than anything else," he says. "We're almost moving in that backward direction, but on the virtual world of the Internet."

Action Door's Olson agrees: "As more and more people join Google+, it will allow its users to see what services and products their friends, family, and others are using and what they recommend. Google+ will be a cyber form of word-of-mouth marketing, giving its users the information they want through the people they trust."

You Snooze, You Lose

Meanwhile, Web security experts say businesses that take a wait-and-see approach to establishing a presence on Google+ could

and links to the company's real website, as well as legitimate address and telephone info. One of the snarky posts made in the name of Bank of America hissed, "Big company party in foreclosed house #2340087 tonight!" And another dissed the Occupy Wall Street movement with: "You will sit down and shut up, or we will foreclose on you."

Granted, Google is enabling companies to formally verify their presences on the Google+ network. But like many things Web, it's still the Wild West on Google+.

Using Hangouts for Customer Service

For Web video marketers, being able to take advantage of Google+'s "Hangouts" feature — which enables a group of people to video chat simultaneously — is another key reason why door dealers and manufacturers should have a page on Google+.

Businesses can use Hangouts for video chat customer service, video chat focus

main video stream at will.

"For businesses and brands, Google+ pages help you connect with the customers and fans who love you," says Vic Gundotra, Google vice president of engineering. "Not only can they recommend you with a +1 or add you to a circle to listen long-term. They can actually spend time with your team, face-to-face-to-face."

Simple Setup

Fortunately, if you're looking to set up a Google+ page for your door and access systems business, the logistics are painless. Simply sign in to your free Google account, click to www.google.com/+business and follow the prompts.

And SEO Inc., a Web marketing firm, has put together a fairly thorough white paper on maximizing Google+ for business. Just do a Google search for "white paper" + seoinc.

Bottom line: there's really no downside to



Mark Zuckerberg's Facebook currently has 800+ million members.



Action Door's Matthew Olson believes that sharing on Google+ should translate into more sales.



Google's CEO Larry Page is betting big with Google+ — Google's answer to Facebook.

get burned. Currently, anyone can stake a claim to a business name on the Google+ social network, whether or not that person is associated with the company.

Bank of America is still smarting from that hard truth, after pranksters quickly put together a parody page of its brand in early November. The rogue Bank of America page, which looked very authentic, openly mocked homeowners facing foreclosures as well as those who would come to their aid.

The unauthorized Google+ presence went up complete with the Bank of America logo

groups, and traditional company-to-customer communications and company-to-company communications that can be greatly enhanced by real-time, interactive video.

With just a webcam and a typical computer, users can quickly join a Hangout chat with a group of customers, business partners, friends, or colleagues. In practice, the video chat appears on the user's PC screen as a giant image of a chosen participant, displayed front and center. Smaller thumbnail videos of others participating in the chat run along the bottom and can be swapped in and out of the

establishing a business presence on Google+ — only opportunity and potential.

"Many people use Google to find us," says Kriste LaMay, president of Broten Garage Door & Gate of Pompano Beach, Fla., another early adopter. "It's just a matter of time before everyone starts using information from Google+ and probably won't even realize it." ■

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