

Why You Can Ignore Google+, For Now

As originally published in the National Law Journal September 19, 2011

By Adrian Dayton



A couple of weeks ago, I traveled to Memphis, Tenn., to participate in the International Legal Technology Association's national convention. During a discussion called, "What your lawyers need to know about social media," we panelists were asked what we thought of Google+.

There was some serious backlash when I suggested that Google+ might fizzle out, just like Google Buzz and Google Wave (Google's previous attempts to play in the social media sandbox) before it. The other panelists adamantly disagreed, and my poorly received comment was tweeted and re-tweeted across the Internet.

For those unfamiliar with Google+, it is kind of like Facebook but with more intuitive privacy settings. Each connection on Google+ is assigned to a circle — "friends" circle, "business people" circle, "strangers I haven't seen since grade school" circle, and so on. This is really a great feature, and it makes it so easy to keep your business life separate from your personal life. The only problem is, there is already a very easy way to keep those two separate. It is called Facebook and LinkedIn.

I know what you're thinking — wouldn't it be better to have it all in one site?

We have seen social media populations migrate before — from Geocities to Friendster, from Friendster to MySpace and from MySpace to Facebook. Of course, the people moving were mostly young and tech-savvy older people. As Facebook and LinkedIn have grown, they have attracted a group of people who are neither. This group is referred to as the "late majority."

Here is why this is so important. If you remember the innovation curve, the innovators and early adopters will always be willing to jump from platform to platform and try new things. The early majority will jump aboard once the time is right, and the late majority is the last big group to join before you get to the laggards. The late majority (think your managing partner or grandfather) have finally joined LinkedIn. They came kicking and screaming, and now you want to tell them they need to join a new network? It isn't going to happen. At least, not in the near future.

Google+ reached more 25 million members in a few months following its unveiling, making it the fastest growing new social network in history. Now its growth seems to have stalled out. The big question is, will it ever achieve critical mass? So while the Chris Brogans and Peter Cashmores of the world (these guys are a kind of deity of the social media world) are raving about the virtues of Google+ and its superior technology, my opinion is that you can safely wait and see.

This morning I asked this question to my [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) connections:



@adriandayton

Adrian T Dayton

Does it seem to anybody else like Google+ has stalled out? I'm not converted.

I got an interesting response from fellow legal marketer Michelle Golden on Facebook:



Michelle Rife Golden Yeah, I don't think Google will let it go the way of Wave. And too many influential tech types like it a LOT so I don't think it will die. Plus there's all that SEO potential. I really think it's a UI thing.

7 hours ago · Like

(Note: Google Wave was social network that Google tried to start but that failed. SEO stand for "search engine optimization" and UI stands for user interface.)

According to Jim Milles, law librarian at University at Buffalo Law:



Jim Milles I suppose Google+ has great features, but I'm not sure what they are. I tried it for a while out of obligation, but never found anything there to keep bringing me back. I still have all my best online conversations here and on Twitter.

7 hours ago · Like

(Note: Jim was on Twitter long before I knew it existed and he looks nothing like a polar bear.)

This is only a small sample of the dozens of responses I received, but you get the idea. These are active users of social media and none of them seems to be crazy about Google+.

While we wait for Google+ to reach critical mass, does it make sense for your lawyers and law firm to be using it? Probably not — unless you hope to connect with high-tech start-ups, marketing or advertising agencies or social media marketers. This is the new and shiny object in the online space, and if the populations you want to connect to are attracted by that sort of things, give it a try.

If you need an invitation send an e-mail to info@adriandayton.com and I will make sure to send you one.

Adrian Dayton is a speaker, facilitator and author of the book, *Social Media for Lawyers: Twitter Edition*. His latest book, co-authored by Amy Knapp, is *Social Media for Lawyers: LinkedIn & Blog Edition*, tentatively scheduled for release in September. To be the first to hear about the official release date, sign up at <http://adriandayton.com>.