



THE MATTE PAD

MARKETING KNOW-HOW FOR
THE LEGAL PROFESSION

What's all the talk about Google+ and should my law firm join?



While Google+ has some new and interesting features, and is poised to give Facebook some strong competition, it is currently only available for individuals and not companies or firms.

Unless you've been living under a rock you've probably heard about the newest entrant in the social media arena, Google+. Currently in its beta run, Google+ is positioning itself to be the challenger to Facebook. We already know the benefits for businesses and law firms when they invest time on Facebook, i.e. the ability to interact with clients, provide immediate client service, post pertinent information, to name just a few. But will Google+ provide the same sort of venue for businesses and firms? And if so, what makes it so different from Facebook?

Well, before we get ahead of ourselves, let me state up front that Google+ does not offer business pages. Yet. According to [a blog post on Forbes](#), Google+ is currently allowing only individuals to create profiles. However, Google does plan to have profile pages for businesses and brands in the future, but the timing is still to be determined. There will be a few businesses allowed on as tests, but those will eventually be closed down until the final decisions are made regarding business pages.

So for now, there is no immediate rush for law firms to secure another social media page. You will probably want to create one eventually though. Yes, this is yet another page, but as we all know, different people like to get their information in different ways. And with Google+ being the new kid on the block with a lot of buzz, and let's be honest, it's got the power and cache of Google behind it, it is wise to jump on the bandwagon and get your firm in front of this audience.

That being said, you may want to create your individual page now so you can "get to know" Google+, and when they do allow business pages, you'll be that far ahead of the crowd.

But is Google+ really that much different from Facebook? On its face, Google+ isn't drastically different. Users have "Friends," they can add photos, there is a news stream and they can add locations. Where it differs is the ability to organize this information. Users can categorize their Friends into segments, like actual friends, family, acquaintances, business colleagues, etc. From there, they can segment the information they share based on the groups they've created. This targeted sharing is going to be where firms can really connect with users once they have access. Messages can be tailored and targeted without having to do the typical "cast a wide net." And by being able to segment connections into targeted groups, there is the ability to restrict who sees what information, so that one can have all their connections, personal and professional, in one spot without the worry of saying the wrong thing in front of the wrong person.



There is also the ability to have “Hangouts,” which sound a lot like chat rooms, where people can drop in or out whenever and chat, except with real-time video. According to [Nancy Myrland](#), this is already starting to give [Skype](#) a run for its money. I definitely plan to keep an eye on this unique feature as it could have great potential for businesses, whether for customer service use or for roundtable discussions or focus groups. Google+ also offers “Huddle” which is group text chat. It is currently available only through the Android Google+ mobile app, though an iPhone app and those for other smart phones must be soon to follow. Huddle is yet another potential venue where businesses and brands can reach out and directly communicate with consumers.

Myrland points out some other great features on her [blog](#), and the ones that really stood out to me are:

- the ability to share messages and updates in a longer format
- that the name of the original poster of information remains intact as the post continues to be shared again and again
- the ability to “mute” a thread if it is taking up too much room in my stream
- through the Google+ mobile app, which is only available for Android right now, every picture I take on my phone is now instantly uploaded to a private folder on Google+, which I can then share however I'd like. This is a great backup for photos.

It looks like there is potential for businesses to create incredibly open and interactive communication channels with their consumers using Google+. And if the business profiles follow the same logic as the individual user profiles, law firms will really be able to hone and target their messages to their Google+ groups of users. My advice, when the Google+ gates open to businesses, go on in and set up shop.

I look forward to watching this new social media tool develop and grow.



Welcome to The Matte Pad! Here you'll find tips, trends and tools to help the busy legal marketing professional. I hope you'll find this content valuable and practical. Information on the latest social media trends, creative ideas and marketing strategies that you can use at your law firm or in your legal marketing department.