

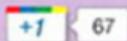


# Google+

## for Nonprofits

A Quick Start Guide to Unleashing the Power of  
Google+ to Promote and Fund Your Nonprofit

Marc Pitman



que



# **Google+ for Nonprofits:**

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Google+ to Promote and Fund Your Nonprofit

MARC A. PITMAN

**que**<sup>®</sup>

800 East 96th Street,  
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# Google+ for Nonprofits: A Quick Start Guide to Unleashing the Power of Google+ to Promote and Fund Your Nonprofit

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## About the Author

An international nonprofit organizational development consultant and fundraising trainer, **Marc A. Pitman** is the author of *Ask Without Fear!* and founder of FundraisingCoach.com, a website dedicated to practical ideas for fundraising more effectively.

Because of his dynamic trainings, Marc is invited to speak to organizations such as Blackbaud's Conferences for Nonprofits, Habitat for Humanity International, the New England Association for Healthcare Philanthropy, the Association of Fundraising Professionals, and even the International Bowling Expo. His experience in nonprofit fundraising in many sectors (colleges, prep schools, and health-care), in executive coaching, and in leadership training has caused him to be featured in books and articles around the world and be sought out as a guest on TV and radio shows including those on NBC, CBS, Fox News, and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Committed to making it ridiculously easy for volunteers and nonprofit staff to get fundraising training, Marc continues to write books and has even created a fundraising training DVD set complete with forms nonprofits can print out. That has also been expanded to be an entire board retreat-in-a-box so nonprofit boards will feel confident asking for money.

Marc's experience also includes planting and pastoring a Vineyard church, managing a gubernatorial campaign and teaching. Internet marketing at Thomas College. He was also chosen as one of Maine's first "40 Under Forty," honoring Maine's emerging generation of leaders.

He is the husband of his best friend and the father of three amazing kids. And if you see him drive by, he'll probably be singing '80s tunes loud enough to embarrass his family.

## Dedication

*This book is dedicated to all the nonprofit volunteers and employees who are using every means possible to make this world a better place.*

## Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Katherine Bull from Que Publishing for her ability to make the process of writing the book enjoyable. And Ginny Munroe for making suggestions and asking questions that made this text much easier to read. And thanks to Leslie Hernandez and Jason Karsh at Google for helping highlight creative uses of Google+.

## We Want to Hear from You!

As the reader of this book, *you* are our most important critic and commentator. We value your opinion and want to know what we're doing right, what we could do better, what areas you'd like to see us publish in, and any other words of wisdom you're willing to pass our way.

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# Introduction

*Google+ is the most exciting new tool for nonprofits. If you don't believe me now, by the end of this book you will. Google+ is the fastest-growing social media platform yet and arguably the most stable social media provider. Google already has a profitable business structure, so it isn't trying to figure out how to stay around or at risk of being changed as a result of an IPO.*

*Google+ enables you to interact much more flexibly with your board, your staff, and your donors than ever before. With this single platform, you can post updates like Facebook, send private messages like Twitter, connect with similarly minded professionals like LinkedIn, and videoconference with your team like Skype!*

*As you read in this book, you discover that the most exciting thing about Google+ for nonprofits is the powerful opportunity for you and your supporters to influence normal Google searches.*

## What to Expect While Reading This Book

The first half of this book is written to get you acclimated to Google+. I give you tips and tricks to get you and your nonprofit up and running quickly and effectively. You learn how big your images should be on your profile, a quick trick to start following a lot of people you find interesting, and ideas for getting your boss or board to support your time on Google+.

The second half of the book shows you how to incorporate Google+ in all of your nonprofit marketing and fundraising. I follow the cycle of donor relations—research, engage, ask, and love—to show you how Google+ can help your public relations and fundraising. You learn how you can use Google+ to see what people are saying about your cause, how to respectfully engage them rather than disrespectfully spam them, and how to involve them in supporting your nonprofit, both as advocates and as donors. You also learn how to say “thanks” in a way that helps donors want to give again.

To make this book more helpful for you, there are two sections called “Putting It Into Practice.” These are interviews with two people responsible for getting their nonprofits, a children’s hospital and an aquarium, on Google+. Their reasoning and strategies will help give you ideas you can use right away.

## A Word of Caution

Google+ is a rapidly evolving social media tool. By the time you read this, the screenshots in the book might look a little different from what you’re seeing on the screen. (Google completely changed its entire format while I was writing this book.) But the principles are solid and will help your nonprofit get the most benefit from Google+.

## Let’s Get Started

I can’t wait to dive in. If you’re already on Google+, circle me and let me know you’re there. You can find me on Google+ at <http://bit.ly/MarconGoogleplus>.

# Why Google+ Is *the* Most Important Tool for Your Nonprofit

*Google+ is the fastest-growing social media platform in history. Every day, more than 600,000 people sign up. It is designed to help you make connections and to share information. With Google+, you can meet people with common personal or professional interests, learn about everything from photography to computer programming, and expand your nonprofit's marketing and donor relations. You can post pictures, links to your website, and announcements from your organization. You can use the mobile app to keep up with Google+ communications while away from your computer. You can set up a personal profile and a page for your charity.*

*Google+ is a lot like Facebook. It is also a lot like Twitter. On Facebook, you need to get the others' permission before you connect to them. Google+ is more like Twitter in that you can follow anyone you please. This means your donors can share your posts with many more people on Google+ than on Facebook. And Google+ has a much cleaner interface than Facebook. (That is one reason people are dumping Facebook in favor of Google+.)*

Google+ also has a lot of its own features. Instead of being limited to 140 characters like Twitter or 400ish like Facebook, you can make posts as long as you want in Google+. Using simple symbols such as asterisks (\*) and underscores (\_), you can make your posts easier to read, and you can add formatting, such as bold and italic. It also has some of the best videoconferencing software in existence in its tool called Hangouts.

In this chapter, you'll learn why Google+ is the most important online tool next to your website *and* how to convince your boss or board.

## Why Should I Care?

When you first heard about Google's latest attempt at a social network, you probably thought one of two things: "What, again?" (Remember its previous attempts with Wave and Buzz?) or "Really?! How in the world am I going to fit anything else into my schedule?"

Chances are good you thought both of these.

Let's face the facts: You already have a full-time job without social media. You have staff who need supervision and a board that supervises you. You have the mission of your nonprofit to carry out. And you have donors you're supposed to be meeting with. Who has time for yet another social media platform?

Normally, I would agree with you. Social media platforms come and go at a dizzying pace. One of the nice things about being in a nonprofit is that we do not have to be *bleeding edge* to be *cutting edge*. We do not have to be up to date with the latest fad. We can let businesses and other people test them out before actually engaging in them ourselves.

But this is Google, and Google seems to have learned from its mistakes.

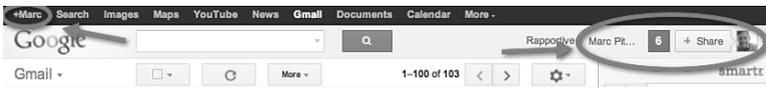
Look at it this way: If a donor were giving 50% of your annual fundraising, you would probably be more inclined to listen to any suggestions from that donor. If you check your Analytics, you likely would find that Google sends at least 50% of your web traffic to your site. So, isn't it in your best interest to at least look into what it is doing?

## Google+ Is All About Driving Traffic to Your Website

I remember when a college student back in 2005 asked me what my Facebook page was. I didn't have one. After all, Facebook was just for kids, right? Why would I want one? Now, almost a decade later, I wouldn't be caught dead without a Facebook page.

Google+ is in an early stage that has people questioning it in a similar way. Talk about Google+ to people and you often hear, “Isn’t that just for geeks?” It isn’t. I’m convinced that in years to come it will be as important to your nonprofit as Facebook is now.

One of the most powerful things about Google+ is the way it is being incorporated throughout Google’s other offerings, especially search. If you use Gmail, you’ve probably noticed the now-ubiquitous black bar at the top. As shown in Figure 1.1, it not only shares your link to Google+, it even lets you interact with others on Google+ right from Gmail.



**Figure 1.1** *Google+ permeates Google products, making it easier to use than other sites. In this screenshot of a Gmail account, there are two different ways to get Google+: with the '+Marc' or the red box with the number 6. The number 6 is how many new notifications I had when I took this screenshot.*

But pushing that black bar across its products—like Gmail, Google Calendar, Google Docs, and even incorporating Google+ Hangouts into YouTube—is not the only reason Google+ will be important for your nonprofit. Google is the *largest* search engine on the planet. And Google is baking Google+ into its search results.

Facebook still has many more active users than Google+. But *Google search* has far more users than Facebook. *Google* is even now a verb synonymous with *search*. Ask someone a question he can’t answer and you’re likely to hear, “Hold on. Let me google that for you.”

And Google is now using Google+ information to influence search.

## Align with the Biggest Search Engine

You *want* people visiting your website. Convio’s 2012 Nonprofit Benchmark Index shows that fundraising online is the fastest area of nonprofit fundraising growth. Last year, online fundraising jumped more than 15%, and it was even better for small nonprofits. Small nonprofits saw online fundraising grow at more than 26%. In addition, people’s online contributions tend to be larger when made through a nonprofit’s website than when given through Facebook. So, you want people to find your site.

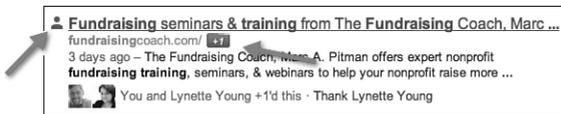
When you had your nonprofit’s website built, you or the designer did some initial work on something called *search engine optimization* (SEO). Your site uses the specific keywords and phrases you think people will use to find you. Those terms help Google help people find you. You also hope these key words get your site to show up on the first page of results.

Over the years, Google has been refining search. One thing it has discovered is that people are not necessarily looking for the same thing even if they type the same a word or phrase into a search box. Someone searching on “axe” may want any number of things:

- Information about splitting wood
- Directions to a restaurant in Venice Beach
- Details on men’s deodorant
- Advice about buying a new guitar

To help deliver the correct results, Google infers intention from a searcher’s past search history and social profile (the profile of interactions, posts, and comments between a person and that person’s friends). Google calls this *search plus your world*. It periodically works out deals with sites like Twitter to use public tweets. It also uses Quora, a Twitter-like question-and-answer platform. However, sometimes these companies stop Google from using their data.

Google also uses Google+. The difference is it *owns* Google+. So, it has much more complete and reliable access to Google+ than to any other site. So now, if a person you know posts something in Google+ or +1s an article, you might see it right on the first page of results, as shown in Figure 1.2. You can even thank those people for helping you find the website.



**Figure 1.2** That blue profile shows you that this result is based on your social profile. It even shows who shared it and enables you to thank them for helping you find the information.

## Social Proof for Your Nonprofit

Can you see the power in this? Psychological research in human interactions, including that done by Robert Cialdini, shows that when we’re trying to make a decision we intuitively look for *social proof*. Whether we admit it or not, we tend to assume that the actions of others, especially of people like us, indicate correct behavior. Robert Cialdini even did an experiment with door-to-door fundraising. People were more likely to make a donation when shown a longer donor list. And they were even more likely to give if the list included people they knew.

It stands to reason. Each of us wants to see that other people like us are already doing whatever we are thinking about doing. Google+ gives you tools to super-

charge social proof for your nonprofit! With the search results like those in Figure 1.2 showing people the searcher knows, clicking on your website is a no brainer!

In later chapters, you learn how to set up your organization's Google+ page in a way to "train" Google to show your site in results. But for now, just think about what landing on the first page of search results could do for your nonprofit. Could you use more support for your cause? Would you be open to new donations? Will your email list grow?

## Convincing the Powers That Be

Even though at this point you might already be convinced of the efficacy of Google+, you may be asking, "How do I convince my boss (executive director, board, you get the point) to let me get on one more social media platform?"

I remember the first time I heard, "It's better to ask for forgiveness than to ask for permission." I hated it. It sounded like a lame cop out. It is the response of slackers.

How wrong I was. That phrase has allowed me to take a number of risks. But as nonprofit coach Gary Broussard said in a recent conversation, "A quality well-received program is rarely rolled back."

Here are some tips to consider:

- **Start personal:** Your employer cannot stop what you do personally. You might not be able to start out at a work computer or on work time, but it is worth it to start out. Take the time to learn the norms of Google+ for yourself before you go gangbusters on creating a page. Be interested and be interesting. Circle people who sound interesting to you, for any reason (personal, professional, anything) and develop your own following by being interesting (comment, +1, interact, and post interesting updates).
- **Follow interesting people:** Social media is pretty boring if you follow boring people or if you follow too few people. So get your circles going. Make some work related, but be sure to include other groups as well. Like Bourbon? Search for other bourbon lovers. Like bocce ball? Create a bocce ball circle.
- **Measure results:** Executive directors and boards love results. So track them. See if you can get a look at your nonprofit's web analytics. Look for things like overall visits and top referring sites. Watch to see whether a post from you helps drive traffic to your site. Or if a post from you helps bring more people to an event. *These* are the things that help people overcome inertia.

- **Look for allies:** Every organization seems to have a few people who are open to trying new tools. Make it your mission to find them. Unfortunately, they are not always on the marketing or fundraising teams. Sometimes the best ones are found outside your organization. One great way to connect with like-minded people is by attending a *Social Media Breakfast* (SMB). At these monthly gatherings, you will hear case studies of local businesses and nonprofits using social media to expand their business or impact. And you will hear an expert talk about an aspect of social media you might not have considered. To see if there's an SMB near you, go to: <http://www.socialmediabreakfast.com/about>.

Your boss or your board wants to make sure the nonprofit benefits from your interest in Google+. Being involved yourself first will both get you acquainted with the tools and give you a sense of what Google+ can do well. It will also give you a sense for what things to measure. When you can show your boss or board that “X# of new hits on the site are from Google+” or “Y# of new donors came from Google+,” you will have a much easier time convincing them. Finding and talking to other people doing this in other organizations will help you consider other ways to convince skeptical bosses or boards.

## Tying It All Together

Social media is an important opportunity for your nonprofit. This chapter explained why you need to include Google+ as a part of your social media mix. You also learned some ways to convince the people you report to that it is important. In the next chapter, you learn how you get started on Google+ as an individual. As with most social media, the tools are for *people* to connect with each other. You will not be ready to do work on your nonprofit's Google+ profile until you have your own set up.