

# Five Reasons Why Google+ is Already Giving Google Better Social Ranking Signals Than the Twitter Firehose

There's no secret in the SEO world that many of us suspect that the reason Google have been pushing Google+ so aggressively isn't just to build their own successful social network but to gain access to their own data on what content and websites are being shared socially as this could be a great addition to their search algorithm.

It will have been hard to miss out on various correlation studies published over the past year which have suggested that the volume of shares on Facebook and Twitter have a reasonable correlation with high rankings. There might not be causation there yet, but that certainly seems the direction we're heading in, as social signals become a ranking factor.

Without their own source of this data, Google would have to take data from other providers. It can't be particularly comfortable for Google to consider integrating this type of data into their algorithm particularly when strategically these are the companies which Google is most threatened by.

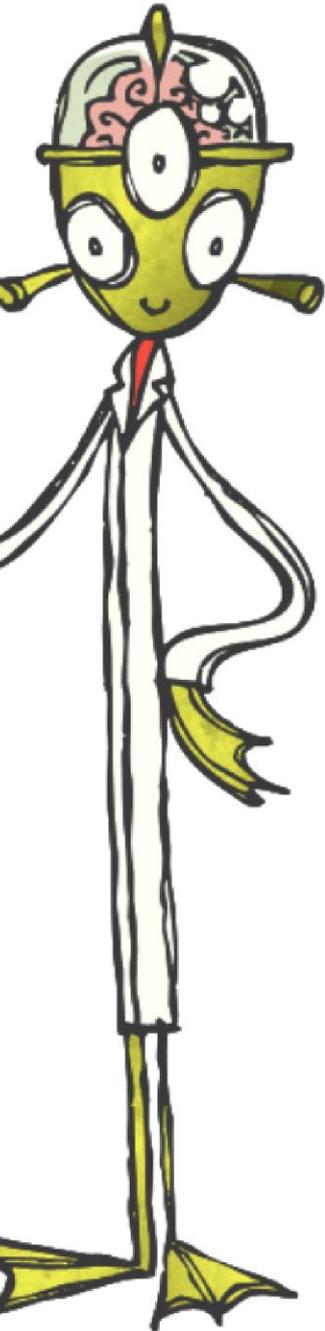
So the motive is clear: Google want Google+ to provide them with signals of quality and importance and so far I think they must be pretty chuffed, as I'm pretty confident the data they have is already more useful than what they were receiving from the Twitter Firehose.

## 1. 20 Million Users is Statistically Significant

With any of these kinds of tools, you're taking a sample and extrapolating from there. With Google Plus expected [to hit 20 million mark](#) any time now, I'm not a statistics expert but I think we can be fairly confident that that is a big enough sample size to be statistically significant!

I've also done some very simplistic studies in correlation. I took 15 recent articles from [SearchEngineLand](#). For each of these articles I took the number of Tweets, Google+1, LinkedIn Shares and Facebook Likes.

I looked whether there was a linear correlation between the number of Google+1 votes and the other social votes. What I found was that there was a correlation: a really, really strong one. This is an absolutely tiny sample of just fifteen articles, on just one website, which I imagine is far more likely to have Google + users than most. But the correlation was there.



Between G+ and FB 0.97

Between G+ and Tweets 0.94

Between G+ and LinkedIn Shares 0.95

1.0 is a perfect correlation, and this kind of correlation is pretty much unprecedented. With more data I'm pretty sure the relationship would become weaker, but based on this miniscule sample, Google can already know a lot about how socially popular a piece of content is based on Google+ shares.

## 2. Overlap between Early Adopters and Linkerati

There's a group of people who Rand Fishkin affectionately calls the *Linkerati*. These are the people who own and maintain websites and who have the ability to link to sites. These people are also very often the early adopters of technology and social networks.

In the past Google were able to rely on this group to act as arbitrators of quality content online. If they linked to it the search engines could be confident of something's quality. The problem is less and less of these people are actively maintaining websites as their attention is drawn towards social network sites – social network sites that Google can't really glean insight from.

There's a cookie cutter criticism of Google+ which says "it's alright for you geeks, but my mum will never use it". If Google's main aim of Google+ is to pick up the social signals from the Linkerati that may not concern them – they've already got the people they need.

## 3. Next to No Spammers

I very much doubt that the invite only approach was intended to keep out spammers. It's far more likely that it was done in order to create false sense of scarcity. This approach increased the value everyone placed on having access to the service. It may be unintended but the 'by invitation only' policy has limited the number of spam accounts.

This will certainly change over time – the spammers go where the people are – but I have a lot more confidence in Google keeping a tighter selection process than Twitter. The lack of people trying to manipulate the system currently gives them a lot more signal and a lot less noise.

#### 4. No Autoposts

I autopost my blog posts to Twitter, I don't know many people who don't. But the stories I've made the effort to share by hand indicate I feel much more strongly about sharing than something I've set up to run automatically without my intervention.

At the moment I'm not aware of there being any automatic Google+ sharing tools. This is a great thing if I wanted to use the signals of someone sharing content. By making the process a tiny bit more difficult they are able to be a lot more confident that the social signal is well intentioned.

#### 5. Circles give a good indication of spheres of influence

Whenever I try to explain the idea of contextual relevance in link building I fall back on a classic metaphor.

"If I ask all my friends what second hand car to buy I trust the recommendation of my friend who is a car mechanic much more than a hairdresser."

Certain people's opinions on certain topics are more relevant than other people's opinion on the same topic, even if on first impressions they are equally influential. Google have been working for years refining this concept of topical authority but even with their experience they'll find Circles really helpful.

To continue the analogy, someone who shares an article about second hand cars who is in lots of circles labelled "Mechanic" with lots of other people in lots of circles of mechanics can give a stronger signal of quality than an article about second hand cars than someone in lots of circles about hairdressing with other hairdressers, even if every other signal of influence and authority was exactly the same.

#### About the Author:

Kelvin Newman is the Creative Director at SiteVisibility and is heavily involved with SiteVisibility's innovative search marketing campaigns for clients. He has delivered presentations across UK & Europe at events like A4U, SMX London and SASCON. He also regularly contributes to State of Search & Econsultancy. He runs the hugely oversubscribed BrightonSEO conference which sold out in 26 minutes and has written a free book on link building called "Becoming a Clockwork Pirate."