

What the Plus!

Guy Kawasaki Shares Why He Fell in Love with Google Plus and You Will Too

Interview By: Rose de Fremery



Guy Kawasaki

Known to many as the original Mac evangelist, bestselling author and Silicon Valley venture capitalist Guy Kawasaki has just published his first product guide since 1987: a comprehensive introduction to Google Plus titled *What the Plus!*. Our Managing Editor Rose de Fremery caught up with him to learn more about his passion for Google+ and why he believes it will be the social network of choice in the not so distant future.

Rose: Google+ launched in June of 2011. At what point did you begin thinking that it was an exceptional tool?

Guy: I posted a message, followed about fifty people, got a few responses, and then thought, “This really is a ghost town.” Then I realized I was posting to a private circle of only those people, so I wrote a public post and it exploded. I saw the light. Posting just to my circles had been like us-

ing a Mac without a mouse, so I initially thought, “What’s the big deal?” I’d say it took me about three or four days.

TSM: Why do you think people didn’t get Google+ right away? What was at the core of its image problem, with people calling it a “ghost town”?

Guy: The most logical moment for people to get what Google+ is all about is to ask, “What’s my passion?”, type in that word, and see how much intelligent, thoughtful action there is about that subject. You should figure out who to follow and engage their passion.

I think a large degree of why Google+ got labeled as a ghost town is that bad news and negative news always gets more press than positive news. Google is a big target to pick on. Facebook had a six-year head start. I think it can be chalked up to human nature or the nature of the press.

Google+ is focused on passions as opposed to perspectives. When it launched last year, experts looked for their friends, found none of their friends or relatives, and said, “It’s a ghost town.” That’s like going to a party and saying, “Nobody’s here. The party’s lousy.” Whose fault is that? If you’re tired of the same old party with the same old people who don’t share your interests, you can find almost anything on Google+.

TSM: I’ve seen some very involved, thoughtful conversations on Google+. Why do you think people comment at length there as opposed to elsewhere?

Guy: For many people, Google+ is their second or third social network, and now they’ve figured out how to use the tool better. There’s been a maturation of use.

TSM: What inspired you to write *What the Plus!*?

Guy: At the time I worked at Apple I believed that the Mac was better, but the experts said it would fail. Fast forward to Google+. Experts said it would fail too. I wanted to help people understand Google+ because I believe it's the best tool. There are a bunch of different reasons why including the aesthetics, the ability to place a large number of pictures in line, and an overall look that is Apple-esque. The quality of comments is better. Comments are faster, better and in larger volume on Google+ as opposed to any other social network. It's logical. If you post about a subject, your friends will see it and you can establish yourself as an expert niche.

TSM: What the Plus! also reads like a primer for people interested in learning how best to participate in online communities. You mention the importance of sharing what you call "good shiitake." Was it intentional on your part to emphasize the importance of being a good participant in online communities in general?

Guy: Good sharing and good commenting is true for all social media sites. I want people to be successful, in this case with Google+.

TSM: What prompted you to include Lynette Young's chapter, "How to Thrive in the All-Boys' Club," specifically focused on the challenges women face in online communities and how best to go about addressing them?

Guy: Many women told me that they felt like Google+ was a nerd boy's club and that they were uncomfortable there. Lynette is a great evangelist of Google+ and has championed the cause of helping women embrace Google+, so it was natural as, say, asking Michael Phelps to write about swimming.

TSM: In What the Plus!, you say that Google is "dead serious" about having Google+ make it. Why do you think Google will succeed?

Guy: There's no doubt in my mind that Google can make it successful. Google owns a river of search and they can push that river in any direction they want at any time they want. I would rather be Google trying to answer social media than Facebook trying to answer search. If I want to make blueberry muffins, I type it into Google and find it. It's easier for searching to become social than for social to become like search.



TSM: Google has encountered criticism, as has Facebook, for insisting that its users log into the service using their real names and official identities rather than pseudonyms and handles. Privacy advocates have raised concerns about the ability of political dissidents to safely engage in dialogue, for example, while others have argued that such pseudonyms provide a cover for online harassment. And, of course, real names are more valuable to advertisers. This is a major, and some would say, inevitable change from the early days of the Internet in which users freely and frequently created pseudonyms with entire online personas to match. What do you think about Google's decision to bar users with pseudonyms from Google+?

Guy: There's a tradeoff here: anonymity encourages people who have good reasons to hide their identity to engage in social media. On the other hand, anonymity also encourages people to act like orifices. I agree with Google's decision to bar pseudonyms, though I do appreciate the issue of protecting the identity of people who wish they could speak out.

What the Plus! is available as an e-book in the Kindle, Nook, iBook, and Google Play formats. You can also find it in print at Amazon and Barnes & Noble.

Rose de Fremery writes on a variety of topics related to social media including sports, music, politics, travel, and startup culture. You can find her on Twitter @Rosedefremery.