



How to Build Authority through Content and Google Authorship

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Why Hunter S. Thompson Would've Loved Author Rank (And Why You Should, Too)

by [Demian Farnworth](#)

Are you one of them?

One of the thousands — maybe millions — of faceless web writers toiling away on content that immediately slips into obscurity?

Are you doing what you love for something you hate? Feeling used — even abused — because you are not getting credit for your work?

It's like a page out of a science fiction novel where people aren't known by a name, but merely a number.

But your situation is actually worse, because you don't even have a number. You're just given an order for 500 words, and enough money to buy a wind chime. Wind chimes are nice, but they don't put food on your table — let alone substitute for a mortgage payment. You have to write about twenty of those 500-word posts a day to earn an honest living.

You want more when it comes to [your writing career](#), right?

You want something to write home about. You want something significant to share on Twitter or [Google+](#). You want something that will rouse you out of bed for another meaningful day of work.

And you want a little bit of attention or encouragement ... because anonymity sucks.

Fear and loathing in SEO copywriting

And that's what the general context for [SEO copywriting](#) has been for a while. Companies who want to rank high and build links clamor for content, hiring web writers by the dozens to grind out keyword-rich posts.

Who cares who you are? It's all about production ...

"Can you knock out fifteen posts on birth defects by this afternoon for \$20 a pop? Do good work and I'll have fifteen more assignments for you."

Oh, stop it. I'm swooning.

If [writers are running the show](#), nobody told the vendors — or Google, for that matter. In fact, it felt like Google wasn't even listening.

But they were.

Google was always listening, because they knew great writers created great content.

So how to create an algorithm that would make the writer the central character of the show? Could it even be done? And how would this help search (Google's core business function)?

Google finally answered these questions with a complex strategy that's being called Author Rank.

I'll tell you more about these development (and how they can impact you as a writer) in a moment, but first I want to tell you a story.

A brief history of Dr. Hunter S. Thompson

Hunter S. Thompson had a pretty typical start as a writer.

A childhood rocked by his dad's death and mother's alcoholism ... a string of eliminations from jobs that didn't really matter ... a few jobs that did matter ... a stint in the air force that ended after it was recognized that "although talented, [this airman] will not be guided by policy."

As a young adult, Thompson drifted from coast to coast trying to be a writer. But it didn't seem like anybody was paying attention.

Perhaps his journalism was second-rate, and his short stories third. Possibly his former bosses were justified in canning him — maybe he simply didn't have the kind of talent that prima donnas need to possess in order to stay employed.

But Thompson never gave up. In 1959 he wrote:

“As things stand now, I am going to be a writer. I'm not sure that I'm going to be a good one or even a self-supporting one, but until the dark thumb of fate presses me to the dust and says, 'you are nothing,' I will be a writer.”

He went on to change the face of journalism.

Before Thompson, journalists sought to report on events with a cool and calculated attitude — like a paid assassin. Leave your emotions, personality, and opinion at the door.

“Just get me the story,” was the journalist's motto.

This is sheer speculation, but I imagine the rabble-rousing Thompson asking, “Why? Why do I have to be cool and calculated? Why do I have to park my personality at the door? Why can’t I be a central part of the story?”

Those questions could have been what led him to invent Gonzo Journalism.

How Gonzo Journalism and Author Rank are related

Thompson achieved national recognition with his book *Hell's Angels* (in which he embedded himself with the motorcycle gang for a year), but it was “The Kentucky Derby Is Decadent and Depraved,” an article published in a small-town journal, that gave birth to Gonzo.

The article was more about the corruption surrounding the race than the actual race, but it was the manic, first-person style that characterized Gonzo.

And it worked like a charm.

Bill Cardoso of the Boston Globe said about the article:

“This is it, this is pure Gonzo. If this is a start, keep rolling.”

Soon after that Thompson cemented his reputation with *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* — an exhausting tale of extensive drug abuse (particularly Thompson’s and his lawyer’s), but a top-notch example of gonzo journalism.

True, Thompson’s personality was all over the page of any story he wrote, and he often confused fact with fiction — but that’s what you get with a Thompson story. The writer was the central figure of the story.

And if Hunter S. Thompson were alive today, I would like to think he would applaud [Author Rank](#) because it makes the writer the central character of content ...

He would’ve loved it, because it means that the writer finally does run this show.

Kiss obscurity goodbye

Outside the base-level fears we have ([staring at the blank page](#) or sounding stupid, for starters), we writers also contend with a high-level set of fears like

dying in obscurity, never being validated, or someone else claiming credit for our work.

See, we writers really don't ask for much. We just want to be proud of what we created. And if it's awesome ... we want others to see it.

But that will never be the case if the [writer is anonymous](#). You could create 100 masterpieces on the topic of birth defects, but if nobody knows you wrote it, what's the point?

And this is why something like Author Rank should be applauded by all writers (not just Hunter S. Thompson). Google is trying to put the writer front and center by making the [historical quality of an author essential to ranking content](#).

To help you prepare for this brave new world of content marketing, check out the following chapters on PageRank, Author Rank, Google+, Search + Your World, and Authorship markup.

They will help you can make the best use each of these developments, maximize your work, build your authority, and improve your visibility online.

How Google's PageRank Algorithm Screwed the Online Writer (and What They Did to Fix It)

In many ways, this century has mostly been a dark time for online writers.

Huh? You mean the Internet — the most significant publishing revolution since Gutenberg — hasn't been good for writers?!

Yes. And no.

Here's the thing, [good content writers](#) got squeezed out during the early days of Google's PageRank algorithm. As I'll explain later, the importance was placed on the page, which created a nasty race to the bottom as far as writer's value was concerned.

Thankfully, Google has recently changed its tune, and the web writer is about to profit from that change like never before ...

(By the way, don't miss the 20-part checklist on how to succeed in today's Google rankings at the end of this chapter.)

Google's original scheme to evaluate content

Google's [PageRank](#) algorithm tries to judge the relevancy of a page by asking two questions:

- How many links point to a particular web page?
- How authoritative are those links?

In practice, the theory is this: when you have two identical pages on training for a marathon, the one with the most links pointing to that page should rank higher in the search engines. The quality of those links matters a lot.

If both pages have ten links pointing to them, but one of the pages has links coming from *Runner's World* and the *Ironman Triathlon*, that page is going to be deemed more authoritative than the other.

In addition, a page with ten high-quality links will often outrank a page with 100 low-quality links.

In other words, PageRank rewarded [keyword-rich content](#) that attracted high quality incoming links. But this occurred in an era when competition and content on the web was relatively low ... and social networking sites were but a twinkle in the eye of the Internet.

The rules changed in the early 2000's.

How to game PageRank (and the mutiny against the writer)

The problem with PageRank was that you could game it.

Bad marketers realized that all they had to do to [attract links](#) (and grow traffic) was create and publish horrible, keyword-rich content that was brief, unoriginal, and shallow ...

Then lazy marketers took it one step further — they created even more content on other sites (blogging networks, content farms, or a string of web properties) and linked that new content back to their main site and pages.

Sites like e-How, HubPages.com, and ChaCha.com — and a million service industry blogs like sites for doctors, lawyers, real estate and so on — blossomed.

Rankings soared. Traffic blew up. And in this era, demand for “content” (in the worst sense of that word) erupted.

Sadly, it was also a mutiny against the writer. In this scheme, the author didn't matter. Just the content.

The watchword was that content was king, but the throne was empty.

Publishers demanded volume over value, and so writers were in a pickle. Finding work was not hard, but finding meaningful work was. And finding work for more than fifteen dollars an hour was even harder.

Erin Griffith summarized the position writers found themselves in:

It's much easier to hire an anonymous consultant or copywriter to churn out content sans byline. No one cares who those writers are as long as the content they produce is viewed as legit to the almighty Google.

Google allowed thin content and spam to run riot. Content farms, blogging networks, and other unnatural linking schemes cropped up everywhere.

Link building became a hot business as SEO consultants demonstrated they could get a website ranked by simply creating a mountain of cheap content.

True, there were those who were creating high-quality content with credibility, identity, and authority — but there was so much noise it made it tricky to stand out. Google needed to do something about the hot mess it had helped create.

In February 2011, Google rolled out one of the most punishing algorithmic updates on the books — an update that affected the ranking of an entire *site*, rather than just a page or section of that site.

Within days, entire content empires were leveled.

Panda eats, shoots weak content, and leaves

The update I'm talking about is called Panda.

And while Google's Panda doesn't eat, and will likely never leave, it did shoot a lot of bad content dead. The story goes that the update was named after one of the core engineers behind Panda.

To say that Panda pummeled the cheap link-building, content-farm model is an understatement. Within hours of its release, entire large sites were virtually wiped out of search engine listing existence.

- AssociatedContent.com.
- Suite101.com
- Encyclopedia.com
- HowToDoThings.com
- Answers.com
- eHow.com

Keep in mind, these sites weren't [de-indexed](#) (removed from Google's database). Google just stopped artificially rewarding them — which plummeted their rankings to the point of near obscurity.

Talk about a buzz kill. And it's telling which large sites didn't get punished:

- WordPress.com
- Squidoo.com
- City-Data.com

Other sites that were not punished by Panda included Copyblogger, Mashable, and Search Engine Journal.

On these sites, content is original, useful, and ultra-specific. [Content is epic.](#)

Your 20-point checklist for creating high-quality content

Panda wasn't (by any means) a flawless update.

Some people felt they were unfairly punished. Others were just confused. In response, Google pointed webmasters and bloggers to their [web writing guidelines](#).

Those guidelines boiled down to these rules:

- Care — deeply — about the quality of your writing, and about your audience.
- Go deep with original research.
- Share a never-before-seen interview.
- Avoid redundant, duplicated, or stolen content.
- Build so much trust with your audience that people would be happy to hand over their credit card.

- Build your authority — and your site's authority.
- Spell correctly.
- Fix factual errors.
- [Repair bad grammar.](#)
- Write for humans — not machines.
- Create something nobody has ever seen before.
- Remain balanced and worthy of your audience's trust.
- Cover a topic comprehensively (don't aim for an arbitrary word count and stop once you reach it).
- Avoid the obvious. If thirty people have already reported on the Facebook Graph Search, then find something else to write about (unless you have information nobody else does).
- Create something strangers want to share and bookmark.
- Don't overuse promotions, calls-to-action, and ads.
- Write something a good magazine or journal would print.

- Steer clear of short and useless.
- Spend an insane amount of time on detail.
- Create something people want to talk about (preferably positively).

If you want to take your content creation to the next level, use the above points as a checklist before you publish your content. Run every single article through it. In fact, print this list out and tape it next to your desk.

Remember, the web needs content. Useful, original, and ultra-specific content.

Over to you ...

The good news is that if you're an [exceptional web writer](#), then February 24, 2011 was your day.

Panda was a significant step in bringing you (the writer) back to the central position of ruling the content roost once again — of [running the show](#).

Fortunately, there is even better news for good web writers, which I'll explain in the next chapter.

7 Ways Writers Can Build Online Authority with Google+

Google was founded on a simple principle — some web pages are more important than others.

How is that importance quantified? Ideally, it's based on the fact that people think that page satisfies their questions about the topic better than other pages.

Google changed the face of search technology by evaluating a web page's importance by the links that pointed at it, both in sheer number and by how much Google trusted the sites those links came from.

But the web has changed radically since 1998. While plenty of people can start a website or blog and link to things they like, the majority of people vote for things they like via social media sharing.

That makes social sharing a great signal for a search engine to use ... but Twitter and Facebook are not exactly cooperating with Google. And until recently, the web page itself — and not the writer — was still the central part of the story.

The beginnings of Author Rank

Google has always acknowledged that great writers create great content — and better content would result in better search results for end users (an important business objective for Google). One of the natural ways to encourage the creation of more great content is to reward the writer.

With that in mind, they filed a [patent called Agent Rank back in 2005](#).

Agent Rank is supposed to create digital signatures for “agents” (think writers and other content creators), who would then accumulate reputation scores based upon public reaction to their content (comments, social shares, links).

The important distinction here is that this score was portable. It wasn’t tied to a specific site (which doesn’t move across the web), but a person (who does). That’s impossible to do, however, unless you establish a platform to identify these “agents.”

In other words, the cart was still before the horse.

Why web writers should care about Google+

Google+ is less social media platform and more [backplane social layer](#) that transformed all Google products into features of Google+.

As head of Google+ Vic Gundotra said:

“We already have users. We are just upgrading them to Google 2.0.”

Furthermore, Google+ is the identity platform they so needed to pull off Agent Rank — which is another signal that we were another step closer to an actual Author Rank algorithm.

So, what’s the moral of the story for you — the writer? Why should you care? Well, if you are a content creator who cares about:

- Your reputation
- Your work
- Establishing online authority
- Building an audience (which tends to happen faster on G+ than other social sites)
- Driving more traffic to your website or blog
- Growing your email newsletter subscriber list
- And boosting sales and opportunities

Then you need a Google+ account.

But nabbing that account is not enough. It's also smart to build a credible and authoritative profile on Google+ to enhance the sharing signals for you content in a way that Google can see clearly (unlike Twitter and Facebook).

Here are seven ways to do that:

1. Beef up your Google+ audience (faster than Twitter)

In the scheme of Author Rank, your Google+ profile is going to be your verifiable identity, and there are several factors that influence your reputation:

- The number of followers you have.
- The number of re-shares your content gets.
- The number of +1's you get. (By the way, when someone +1's your content, its not just your content getting a vote — it's you. Your reputation grows in the process.)
- Activity. Are you posting regularly? Commenting? Resharing and plus 1-ing?

The cool thing about a Google+ profile is that it seems to grow faster than what you can do on Twitter or Facebook (another reason to get over yourself and jump on Google+ if you haven't).

So, how do you beef up your Google+ audience? For starters, remember that in the end it's a social networking platform — and so you need to treat it that way.

- **Create a solid bio** — Great G+ bios start with a summary of who you are, what you do, why you are on G+, and the kind of content you'll share. Be sure to artfully mention keywords in the Introduction, Employment, Education, and Places section of your bio.
- **Build relationships** — Start by following people you know, and then branch off into following people you want to know. Interact liberally.
- **Share content** — Create original posts (whether text, photo, or video), share links, and re-share content by other G+ users. When you share a link to an article, create a headline, add a brief description of your thoughts, and end with a question to promote discussion in the comments.
- **Join Communities** — I'll talk more about Communities in a moment, but let me just say these are potent places to network.

- **Leave comments** — Leave comment on posts, photos, and photos people are tagged in. Ask thought-provoking questions. Refer to other Google+ users (type “+” and the person’s name and Google+ will display options to choose from).

You can accomplish a steady diet of Google+ without sacrificing your life and still get great results.

Remember, professionals need a network. If you weren’t mingling on the Internet, you’d do it in person at a Chamber of Commerce event or something — which can be time consuming, expensive, and boring, with a high probability of extremely bad coffee.

Your choice.

2. Target traffic to your blog with Circles

Let’s not forget a cardinal rule of social media: social media is a channel, not a campaign. In fact, you can view social media audiences as one step towards boosting your blog readership.

Unlike Twitter and Facebook, where everything you share is typically visible to your entire audience, the benefit that Google+ provides is that it can help you segment your audiences and deliver appropriate content.

Google+ Circles will allow you to do that.

Circles allow you to segment your audience into topic-specific groups. For example, you could create a Circle for copywriters, fiction writers, politics, dark humor, and family. Then you share content relevant to each one of those Circles.

The beauty of this strategy is that you will see higher rates of interaction with your content. Just ask [Martin Shervington](#) who builds some highly-interactive circles (and then interacts liberally on Hangouts).

Let's say you absolutely must rant on a political situation — sharing that with your general audience might not be helpful. In fact, that's typically how you lose followers in Twitter or Facebook.

But if you have a circle dedicated to political rants, you will probably get a higher rate of activity relative to the audience size. The same goes for every other topic-specific Circle.

By the way, avoid creating too many Circles, or you'll eventually suffer from Circle fatigue. And devote one Circle to your core group of readers, since it's difficult to grow a large audience in more than one Circle.

3. Hustle Hangouts

One of the standout features in Google+ is their video chat feature — [Hangouts](#).

On the initial rollout you could host a hangout with up to ten people where everyone sees everyone else during the conversation.

This worked out great for casual wine chats, a loose brainstorming session with peers around the world, or small company meetings.

Then Google released [Hangouts On Air](#), a feature that allows you to broadcast a live video session to the public. [Tommy Walker](#) has created a handful of compelling On Air shows, including one on [Storytelling, Marketing and Modern Media](#) featuring Brian Clark, Doug Pray, and John Jacobsen ...

You could also use Hangouts to build a following by hosting a weekly or monthly interview series. Then promote the event regularly and you'll start to build a solid audience.

4. Maximize the life of your content

I've written a few articles on Google+ and then expanded on them on my blog.

This has worked out well because I capture the traffic on Google+, and then capture the traffic through my subscribers and search traffic. You can also post it on your blog first, then Google+ second.

Either way, this lengthens the life of your content.

After I post on my blog, I then edit the original Google+ post with the link to the blog post — and I also include a link on the blog post pointing back to the original Google+ post.

By the way, don't be worried about duplicate content issues. According to John Mueller (Google's Manager of Webmaster Tools), Google is pretty good about [recognizing that your content originates from your own site](#).

5. Attack a narrow topic

In many ways, Google+ is just another publishing platform like WordPress, since you don't have a character limit, you can edit every post, publish images and videos, and even use simple markup to format your posts:

- **Bold** — Add an asterisk (*) around the word or words you want to bold like this: *These words will be bold* in your post. This is also how you create a headline.

- Italics — Put underscores (_) around text you want to italicize like this: I _love_ Google+.
- Strikeout — Put hyphens (-) around the word or words you want to strikeout. Like this: I -dislike- hate Facebook.

Once you publish the formatting will appear.

Being such a near-perfect blogging platform (but please read more on why it's actually not in no. 7) can allow you to treat it as such. In fact, you could use your Google+ account to drill down into a particular topic your main blog may not support.

For instance, my personal blog's main focus is on web writing, but there was a time (before Google+) where I shared a lot of content on working as a freelancer.

This didn't always jibe with my audience, so with the launch of Google+ I've focused more of my work and inspirational posts there.

This is important on both the human and machine level.

Your readers subscribed to your blog because of your cornerstone content. Deviate from that mission too much and you may alienate them. Search bots

are crawling your site and evaluating the words to determine the topic of your blog.

Introduce widely unrelated topics and you tend to dilute the focus of your blog, thus confusing the bots.

In the end, Google+ is a great outlet for content not suited for your blog.

6. Create a community

Recently Google+ released their Communities platform. This is basically a group of people centered around a common interest. Popular Communities include:

- Doctor Who
- Cult of Mac
- Freelance Writers
- Google Authorship and Author Rank

When you join a Community, you'll start to get the posts shared in that community (as if it were a Circle) showing up in your Google+ stream. It's a

great way to network with like-minded people and get in front of an extended audience, especially if you post, share, and comment within that community.

If you are gutsy enough, you can even become a Community founder and moderator. If your Community grows in popularity you'll naturally attract the attention and influence that involves.

7. Park all your content on Google+ (don't do this one)

This is tempting, but it's a mistake that sensible people will not make.

Building your content solely on Google+ would be nothing but digital sharecropping.

And as we've said many times, you don't truly own your content if you park it on a social network or "free" platform.

If you don't think this matters, let me just remind you that when Posterous closed on April 30, it took 15 million blogs and 63 million pages of content down with it.

So why mention this idea at all? Because it's tempting.

Here's why.

For one, at the roll out of Google+ many notable people bailed on their external web properties — Kevin Rose being the most infamous.

Next in line was technology writer [Mike Elgan](#). Here's his Google+ profile:

“After 10 years of blogging with conventional blogging sites and services, I abandoned that approach a year ago and started blogging on Google+. Why? Because Google+ is by far the best blogging platform.”

With more than 2 million followers, and a consistently rated top-ten Google+ user, Mike is successful on Google+. It helps that he's been in the tech writing game for years.

Of course it's debatable if it's the “best blogging platform” out there, but even if it was, it's still a risky bet.

For one, Google+ doesn't allow you to [harvest email addresses](#) from Google+ (a crime for anyone wanting to run a business online).

And while you can download your content, that's an insane hassle. Also, having an external blog may actually help your search rankings on ... Google.

Maintaining an external blog/website is actually [what Google wants you to do](#).

In other words, it's part of their over-arching scheme to implement Author Rank. Your work, on your site, and wherever else you choose to publish, with Google+ as a channel to reach it rather than the primary home for your content. And the most convincing argument, as we see it?

Your content and reputation should belong to you.

Not Facebook. Not Google. Not Tumblr.

You.

Here's the deal ...

When it comes to improved search rankings, building an audience on Google+ might just be the smartest thing you can do as a content creator.

Why? Google is fine-tuning their search algorithm to accommodate an accurate Author Rank score — which is a radically different way to identify great content out of the clutter.

Think of Author Rank as a penalty against anonymous authors, as well as a reward to people who care about their reputation and their content (which I have a hunch is you).

Stay tuned because in the next chapter we'll explore Google's Search Plus Your World ... and why it makes Google+ the content creator's most important social network.

Why Google+ Is the Best Social Platform for Content Marketers

Play along with me here for a minute.

Imagine some drunk wandering down the sidewalk at 3 in the morning. He's got a cigarette dangling from his lip and a half-empty beer bottle he's sloshing around in his hand. He's alternately singing "Paradise by the Dashboard Light," kicking the rearview mirrors of parked cars, and sobbing.

He's a sad sight — until he slips on the ice in front of your house.

You run out and help him to his feet. He thanks you, pinches your cheek, and says, "I love you man." You hand him his now-empty bottle, shove him off, and think that's the end of it.

A few days later, however, you get a letter in the mail. It's from a lawyer, the lawyer of the chap who slipped on the ice in front of your house. Turns out that fall broke his jaw and sprained his shoulder — and now he wants to sue you for medical expenses.

You'll have to put aside your feelings about personal responsibility, laziness, greed, and the declining condition of the human race for the moment.

You need a lawyer.

And the last place you're going to look is in the phone book. Instead, you'll ask your friends. Who do they recommend? Google is in your world now

Whether we are looking for a lawyer, mechanic, or a great restaurant, we look to our friends for recommendations. In other words, we look to people we trust.

The same principle applies online.

We look to social signals when evaluating any piece of content. A blog post with 1,000 Twitter shares is an indication that we probably won't be disappointed by reading it. The same with a photograph shared more than 600 times on Google+ or a YouTube video with 5 million views.

In other words, social proof is the new marketing. Well, Google took this idea to another level with Search Plus Your World (S+YW), a search feature that enhances your results with posts, photos, and more from your friends. It's yet another intriguing wrinkle in the ever-unfolding story of authorship and how it may affect search rankings.

While S+YW has been around for awhile, let's review what it looks like in practice for those people who may be new to the concept.

Try this little experiment

Head over to Google and type in “hide personal results.”

Depending on who’s in your Google+ circles and contacts, you’re going to receive both personal and private results — relevant tips, photos and articles from your friends — right beside other relevant content from the web.

1,700 personal results. 723,000,000 other results.

[How to Turn Off Google's Annoying New Personal Search Results](#)

[lifehacker.com/.../how-to-turn-off-googles-annoying...](#)



by Melanie Pinola - in 15,703 Google+ circles - More by Melanie Pinola
Jan 11, 2012 – Even if you choose to **hide personal results**, they’re turned back on by default with each fresh search. It’s annoying, user unfriendly, and you ...



[How to Disable Google Personal Search Results](#)

[www.briangardner.com/disable-google-personal-sear...](#)



by Brian Gardner - in 10,893 Google+ circles - More by Brian Gardner
Mar 1, 2012 – Notice there are two icons – the person represents the option to show **personal results**, and the globe represents the option to **hide personal**

...

The number one listing is from a gal who has [implemented Google’s authorship markup](#).

It helps that she posted on a site with high authority — Liferhacker is a blog brand just about everyone recognizes.

The second result is from a guy I kind of know. In fact, the grey head-and-shoulders icon says this guy is in my Google+ network (he obviously has authorship markup implemented, too).

So, whose article do you think I clicked on? That's right, Brian Gardner's. And this, my friends, is how social recommendation in search is now working, thanks to S+YW.

S+YW drastically changed the SEO game

Here's the deal: because of S+YW you and I will not receive the same results in Google for a given phrase — even if we're connected on Google+.

We simply don't have the same search history profile.

What that means is when it comes to measuring our success with the classic SEO metric — page ranking — you need to rethink your strategy, because the game has changed.

It's changed so much that Danny Sullivan said that S+YW was the most radical transformation of Google search results ever.

What this means in the long run is that ranking has become an even more complex equation. Who you know has become an incredibly important factor for most searches. (As always, it's debatable whether this is a good thing or not.)

Another reason to grow your Google+ network

For example, if you want to land in your network's search results for the phrase "hide personal results," you would need to do at least four things:

- Create an epic post on "how to hide personal search results on Google."
- Publish that post on an authoritative site.
- Get people to link to and share that post.
- Grow your Google+ network.

While you have control over the four above steps in varying degrees, it's that last point that you probably have the most control over.

Here's why ...

Let's say you are in more than 1,000 Circles, but you have another 1,000 Gmail contacts. (People who have Gmail accounts have Google+ accounts — even if they don't know it.)

That means your total net reach in search is more than 2,000 people. Not too bad, since you can extend that reach simply by growing your presence and audience on Google+ (I'll show you how below — don't worry, it's pretty easy).

But things get even better.

Why Google+ is the better social network

See, your network impact on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, or Pinterest doesn't extend beyond those social media domains.

Your content is sheltered (which is another reason not to be a [digital sharecropper](#)).

On Google+ your network impact extends beyond the social media domain. It follows you across all of Google's products: Reviews, Maps, Chrome, Ads, Hangouts, YouTube, Drive, Calendar, Wallet.

It follows you across every Google product.

This is what people mean when they say that [Google+ is a social layer](#). And this is why head of Google+, Vic Gundotra, called Google+ “Google 2.0.”

Search has been upgraded by social.

In addition, where a tweet or a Facebook post has a shelf life of 30 minutes at the most, a Google+ post can be found during a search by someone in your network ... no matter how old it is.

How to build your personal impact in S+YW

Fortunately, the process for increasing your S+YW influence is pretty straightforward:

- **Continue to create more content** — The classic SEO advice to [stretch your reach in search results through content marketing](#) is still true in an S+YW world. However ...
- **Continue to grow your Google+ profile** — You’ll want to follow like-minded people, interact with thought leaders, and publish interesting articles, photos, and images on Google+. In other words, use these seven suggestions for building online authority with Google+.

And keep in mind that the growth of your Google+ network is actually exponential. Google+ expert Mark Traphagen explains what this means in his article [Your Google Plus Network Is More Powerful Than You Know:](#)

... if one person who has 10,000 Google+ followers (and/or other Google contacts, such as people in her Gmail contacts) follows you, you've gained the ability to potentially influence the search of not just one, but 10,000 other people, most of whom don't even know you exist!

Over to you ...

Listen. You simply don't get this kind of reach on Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, Tumblr, or LinkedIn.

This kind of reach is only available through S+YW, which is just one more reason why you should make Google+ an essential component of your content marketing strategy.

Of course, we all need a new social media platform to manage like we need a

hole in the head. But here's the deal ... if you value your reputation and your work ... if you want to establish online authority and build an audience ... if you want to drive more traffic to your website and boost sales and opportunities ...

Then get over yourself and get on Google+.

[We'd love it if you joined us.](#)

There's a whole new world of content marketing waiting for you. Besides, you'll need a Google+ account to implement authorship markup — the topic of conversation in our next chapter.

10 Reasons Writers Should Claim Their Google Authorship Markup

To say Stephen King is prolific is a gross understatement. Since he published his first novel (*Carrie*) back in 1973, he's written over 70 more.

Early in King's career, he wanted to write and publish constantly — which was against the prevailing wisdom of the time — and eventually convinced Signet to let him release a few books under the pen name "Richard Bachmann."

King also wanted to answer the question of whether success was related to luck or talent. He went as far as purposefully suppressing the marketing of his Bachmann books.

His little experiment ended prematurely when someone outed Bachmann as King ... but the results were clear. The Bachmann book *Thinner* sold 28,000 copies during its initial run. When it was identified as a book by King, it sold ten times as many.


When it comes to [creating great content](#) ... it really does matter who you are. And this is equally true online. Introducing authorship markup

Authorship markup might prove to one of the most confusing conversations in our Author Rank discussion ...

For one, many people think authorship is the same thing as Author Rank. Repeat after me:

“Authorship markup is not the same thing as Author Rank.”

Authorship markup is the method to display authorship information in search results for the content you create. For example, this shows up on page one of the SERPs for the phrase “content marketing”:



The screenshot shows a search result for the article "Content Marketing: How to Build an Audience that Builds Your ...". The title is in purple, and the URL is www.copyblogger.com/content-marketing/. Below the URL is a small profile picture of Brian Clark, followed by the text "by Brian Clark - in 41,911 Google+ circles - More by Brian Clark". The main text of the snippet reads: "Do smarter **content marketing** with our free ebook series, helpful tutorials, and ongoing **content marketing** articles." At the bottom of the snippet, it says "You've visited this page many times. Last visit: 1/13/13".

Authorship is how Google knows that an individual human being named Brian Clark published that article.

Author Rank, on the other hand, is an aspect of the search algorithm that Google appears to be implementing. There isn't enough data yet to identify precisely how it works, but advances like authorship markup, Google+, Search Plus Your World, Agent Rank, and so on certainly look like they'll play an increasingly major role.

Authorship markup is also confusing because it's difficult to implement (or used to be).


But I'm getting ahead of myself ...

Authorship helps you stand out in search

Authorship markup made a big splash toward the end of 2011 — about two months after Google+ launched.


Many people praised the move because of the impact it had on search results.

While by itself it wouldn't help you rank higher (you still have to [create great content](#)), it would help you stand out. Here's an example. Do a search for "intellectual snob" and this probably what you'll see:

intellectual snob 

Web Images Maps Shopping More ▾ Search tools

About 566,000 results (0.21 seconds)

[101 Reasons to Be Pretty Darn Euphoric You're an Intellectual Snob ...](#)
thecopybot.com/2011/08/intellectual-snob/
 by Demian Farnworth - in 1,447 Google+ circles - More by Demian Farnworth
Aug 24, 2011 – You're a hardcore reader who curls her lip at Harry Potter books. American Idol makes your stomach churn. And you tend to spend your time on ...

[Are you an intellectual snob? - Times Of India](#)
articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com > Collections
Dec 15, 2012 – While it's nice to be knowledgeable, rubbing it off on others can spell trouble, finds Lisa Antao Show-offs can be of various kinds. Some like to ...

[Snob - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snob
However, a form of **snobbery** can be adopted by someone not a part of that group; a pseudo-**intellectual**, a celebrity worshipper, and a poor person idolizing ...

Any doubt on which link you will click on?

The headline alone is pretty tantalizing, but my mug shot beside the results ... it makes that listing stand out from the rest.

(And yes, I'm quite pleased with those results. I even beat Wikipedia! Does that surprise you?)

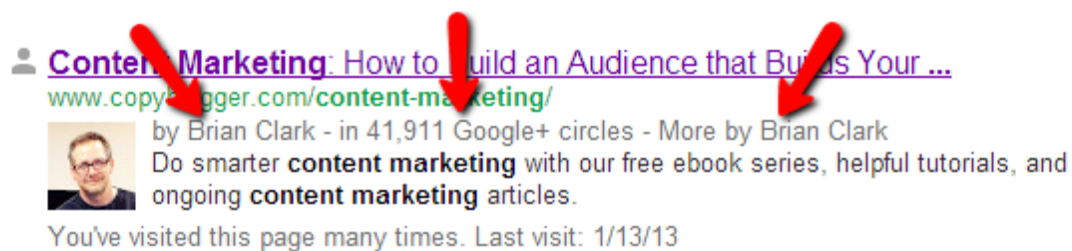
And, as you might have guessed, implementing authorship markup typically increases click through rates to your site.

With that in mind, let's take a look at the top ten reasons you should claim your Google Authorship markup ...

Authorship benefit #1: Higher click through rates

Shortly after its implementation, sites ran tests to see how much it increased markup. In some cases the increase in click through was as high as 150%.

This is exactly [what happened to Catalyst](#). Cyrus Shepherd further increased free traffic with authorship markup by doing nothing more than [plugging in a better headshot](#). With authorship markup implemented, you also get this sweet byline in your search rankings:



Here's what those links do:

- Click on "by Brian Clark" and you will land on his Google+ page.
- Click on "More by Brian Clark" and you'll land on a page that serves as a mini search engine that serves all the examples in which "content marketing" and "Brian Clark" are mentioned.

Those links are potential clickthroughs, too.

Authorship benefit #2: Higher visibility

Look back at that image for the search phrase "intellectual snobbery." I might as well have the number one spot because my listing stands out from the others.

That visibility is a huge advantage.

In fact, [eye tracking studies](#) are showing us that the eye is first drawn to the image, then to the headline (which is why writing seductive headlines is so important). Furthermore, studies have shown that by placing a photo so

that you're looking to the right (toward your listing) [encourages people to actually look at your listing](#). (If you want more hints and tips on creating an image that stands out, take a look at the Google Authorship and Author Rank community's [Authorship 101: Basics](#) page.) Let's look at another interesting perk of authorship markup. Authorship benefit #3: Higher page views

Imagine someone clicks your listing, wanders down your page for about two minutes, and then, satisfied, hits the back button.

The search results page they land on will be slightly different. See if you can spot what's new:

[Raising the Stakes - Fiction Fix - The Nuts and Bolts of Crafting Fiction](#)

www.coffeehouseforwriters.com/fictionfix/0905%20Grossack...

Raising the Stakes Victoria Grossack. Most of us want to write gripping fiction. We want our readers to forego food and drink, to fight off sleep, even to resist calls ...

[Charissa Weaks: Raising The Stakes In Fiction](#)

www.charissaweaks.com/.../raising-stakes-in-fiction.h...



by Charissa Weaks - More by Charissa Weaks

Jul 5, 2011 – **Raising The Stakes In Fiction**. My brain is in OVERDRIVE again. Last night, as my husband and I sat watching the first fireworks of the night, ...

More by Charissa Weaks

[Charissa Weaks: July 2011](#)

www.charissaweaks.com - Jul 1, 2011

[Charissa Weaks: Alpha vs. Beta: The Great Man Debate](#)

www.charissaweaks.com - Jun 23, 2011

[Charissa Weaks: The Truth About Passive Protagonists](#)

www.charissaweaks.com - Jun 28, 2011

[Learn more about how authors appear in search](#)

It's the additional links beneath Charissa's listing. Those weren't there before, and they actually equal more opportunities to get people to look at your content.

Google is probably thinking this: if someone clicks through to your page, but bounces out immediately, then your content is weak, and the user is not interested in seeing more.

If they stayed on your page for at least two minutes, however, that demonstrates to Google that your page has value, and perhaps other pages will provide additional information useful to the user.

In other words, SEO and user experience are blood brothers. This is yet another signal in the Google machine that suggests useful, unique, and authoritative content is valued and rewarded ... but it also reinforces another idea very important to us: the writer runs this show. Why Google implemented authorship markup

Authorship markup and Google+ are two sides of the same coin.

Google+ is the identity platform (which is why your Google+ ID is a long string of numbers, not unlike your Social Security or driver's license number) ... and now authorship markup is the digital signature.

Exactly what they need to pull off something like Author Rank.

In essence, Google is saying ... we want to make sure that you are a real human being ... we want to stamp out anonymity and spam ... we want to regard you as someone who is willing to put your name on the line for the content you create and share.

So ... are you willing to put your name on the line?

Seven more benefits claiming authorship markup ...

Together, authorship markup and Google+ work hand in hand to deliver some pretty slick benefits to the writer ... to signal that the writer truly does run the show.

I've already mentioned the big three above. But for those who need further proof that authorship is worth claiming, here are seven more:

- **Beat plagiarism** — With authorship markup, the original author will be pushed to the top of the search results over content scrapers.
- **Elevate the role of the writer** — As you build your reputation in two or three specific categories, and your content follows you around, businesses will start to recognize the value of a good writer — and stop paying malt liquor prices for exquisite craft beer product.
- **Verify guest posts and comments** — Your Google profile also follows you across the web into comments and articles published on other blogs.
- **Rank for different topics** — Author Rank isn't a wholesale score, but is broken down into categories. Which means you can be an expert in content marketing and skydiving without either of those categories watering down your score for the other. But this doesn't mean you should try to be an expert in a dozen topics. Limit it to two or three.
- **Build trust** — The recognition that you have a Google+ account and a headshot beside your search listing is going to separate you from the faceless content creators. [David Gould said](#) it best:

“For users, this reinforces the idea that the result is reputable: this link isn’t just the result of robotic SEO manipulation, but rather it’s from a human being who we can learn more about. Knowing that at least some minimal verification has gone on creates a trust factor with the user.”

- **Establish authority** — An author with a Google+ follower count of 32,299 is going to be recognized as a higher authority than an author with an account of 3,299. Why? Because of a number of factors we discussed in the Google+ article. It’s not perfect, but it’s something. It’s social proof.
- **Keep people from hijacking your name** — Finally, authorship markup will overcome the challenge that might occur when you share a common name like John Smith. Or Brian Clark. If two articles appear in the search engines by people with the same name, the verified account will be deemed more credible.

What you need to do next ...

I need you to do three things. First, claim your content with authorship markup.

You can head over to Google authorship markup support and [follow the directions](#) (you have two options). Or, if you have a WordPress site and are using the Genesis framework, then you can [claim your content in three easy steps](#).

Next, I need you to [join us on Google+](#). We've got a growing, lively community where we share smart online marketing content and groovy 80s music videos. Keep reading ... because in the next chapter I'm going to bring all of this home in a neat summary. Cool with you?

The Writer's Author Rank Cheat Sheet

If you've read this far, you probably realize that the developments behind Author Rank (Google+, Search + Your World, and authorship markup) will help you drive more traffic to your website, increase your online visibility, and establish your online authority.

In other words, there are likely to be rock-solid benefits to this thing called Author Rank. But taking advantage of those benefits can be confusing at first. Maybe you're asking questions like ...

- Where do I start?
- Do I have the technical skills?
- Will it work for me?
- How do I know when it is working?
- What am I trying to accomplish?
- Do I have time for this?

Compound these worries with the notion that you could be leaving attention, authority, and leads on the table because you can't (or don't) have the resources necessary ... and the tension builds.

A brief summary of Author Rank

Let's start from the beginning.

Author Rank was born out of a patent that Google filed back in 2005 called AgentRank. As I wrote in the chapter "Seven Ways Writers Can Build Authority Online with Google+":

- AgentRank is supposed to create digital signatures for "agents" (think writers and other content creators), which would then accumulate reputation scores based upon public reaction to their content (comments, social shares, links).
- The important distinction here is that this score was "portable." It wasn't tied to a site (which doesn't move across the web), but a person (who does). That's impossible to do, however, unless you establish a platform to identify "agents."

- The one problem with the above patent was that the identity was not portable. It wasn't mobile. So Google updated their patent to Author Rank, making the identity of the author capable of being traced across the web — as long as that author has a Google+ account and has implemented authorship markup.

Google was closing in on the PageRank loophole that allowed spammers to game search rankings. Content was definitely king, but the throne was empty.

So the goal behind updating the Google algorithm with something like Author Rank is to penalize anonymous players, while rewarding verified authors with higher visibility and clickthroughs.

As AJ Kohn said on his [Author Rank post](#):

... you put together the launch of Google+ (an identity platform) with rel=author (a digital signature) and add in the acquisition of two companies (PostRank and SocialGrapple) who mine activity and engagement and it is clear that Google is anxious to use Author Rank to help it deal with the digital content avalanche.

Finally ... the horse is in front of the cart.

What an Author Rank score might look like

While Author Rank remains a theory (with strong evidence in its support) I think it is safe to say that content creators will probably have a score much like [pages have scores in PageRank](#).

What might your Author Rank (let's call it "AR" from now on) score be based upon?

It's all about the value an author brings to the table. And that value is based on who you are, who you hang out with, and what you create. Let's start with your Google+ account:

- **Participation** — More participation on Google+ could mean a higher AR score. Google might even evaluate the content you share in detail: Are you posting text, videos, or images? Are you creating original work or just re-sharing others? Are you liking and commenting? Are you replying to the comments you get? Are you doing hangouts? Joining communities? What does your participation look like in those channels? Have you fleshed out your profile and created Circles?

- **Audience size** — How many connections do you have on Google+? How many people are connected to you? What's the quality of those connections? Do you have thought leaders connecting to you?
- **Your interactions with content** — Google is probably also looking at how you interact with other content. Are you leaving quality comments? Are people responding to your comments and reviews? Are thought leaders responding to those comments? Are your comments getting +1s?

Of course, your score wouldn't be tied just to your Google+ account. Google would use factors for content external to their social network.

For instance, Google looks at:

- **Average PageRank of your published content** — If you are new to the concept of PageRank, check out Danny Sullivan's article "What Is Page Rank? A Guide for Searchers & Webmasters."
- **Authority across other social media platforms** — Google will try to factor in your profiles on other social sites based on the limited data they receive from those sites.

- **Top-level authority indicators** — Mentions in authoritative websites like Wikipedia, The New York Times, universities, or government sites will suggest to Google that you're a notable expert in your field.

But don't forget that Google still looks at the content on your own website:

- **Content Quality** — Is your content useful, original, and ultra-specific? When readers find you, do they stick around? Who's sharing your content? And how often? Are authoritative sites linking to it?
- **Content Quantity** — How often do you publish on your site? What about other sites? And what's the quality of that content? Are you getting the same quality signals when you publish on other sites?

So now it comes down to brass tacks.

Your Author Rank cheat sheet

In the following bullet list you'll discover how to leverage the pieces behind Author Rank.

- **Create a Google+ account** — This is the easy part. Make sure you create a solid bio. Use keywords that identify your area of expertise. And don't forget to follow us on Google+.

- **Implement the authorship markup** — When Google first rolled out authorship markup, it was intimidating. I wrote a couple of guides for clients trying to explain the process and it wasn't easy. Google simplified the process with their [authorship sign-up tool](#). However, you can pull it off in about a minute if you are using the Genesis Framework for WordPress. Make sure you associate it with your Google+ profile, use a good headshot, and check your status with the [rich snippet tool](#).
- **Boost activity on social sites** — Put some quality time into interacting on social media sites, especially Google+. Focus on your top three. For example, for me that would be my blog, Twitter, and Google+. For you that might mean Google+, Pinterest, and LinkedIn.
- **Connect with influencers** — Get in a habit of re-sharing content from your friends and thought leaders. "+1" their posts and make intelligent comments. Write interesting posts on Google+ and quote these influencers by name. Build upon the content they've already created — add to or challenge their work in a re-share.
- **Continue to create and publish great content** — This is what you will ultimately be judged upon, and is the core driver of the qualitative history of a writer that's behind Author Rank. Keep writing and publishing those thoughtful, useful blog posts and building your authoritative bank of content.

Currently the rate of adoption to implement authorship markup has been slow, so there is a distinct advantage in having claimed your content. So don't hesitate to benefit from higher clickthroughs.

The rest is up to you

Nobody is going to hold you underwater until you open a Google+ account. They're not going to smack your knuckles with a ruler until you claim your articles with authorship markup. They won't deprive you of sleep until you create great content.

Becoming a remarkable writer and getting credit for that writing is up to you.

So, do me a favor. If you're a writer with just a smidgen of desire to be great, then pull a Cortez and sink the boats behind you, so there's no going back.

Declare that this year is going to be the year you become the central character of the story ... that this is the year you'll run the show.

It's up to you.

What if Author Rank Never Happens?

by [Brian Clark](#)

Let's be clear – as best as anyone can tell, Author Rank has not yet been implemented. And that means there's some chance it may never become an algorithmic aspect of the way Google ranks web pages.

One more recap to make sure you understand the main pieces:

- **Authorship** is the way Google knows who the creator of a piece of content is, no matter which site that content resides on.
- **Author Rank** is the idea – supported by patents filed by Google – that who creates a page of content (and links out from that page), based on their historical reputation for creating content people actually like, would become one of the signals Google relies on when ranking relevant results of a particular topic.
- **Google+** is a massive topical network (as opposed to a traditional social network) that provides Google with direct data about what people like and share when it comes to content on the web.

Authorship and Google+ are the real deal, right now. And they both have demonstrated value to content creators and site owners.

Author Rank is still in the speculation phase. So what happens if it never happens?

It absolutely doesn't matter.

Everything you need to succeed is already here

During the last 7 years or so, there have been two different approaches to SEO.

One approach was to game the algorithm, get slapped, get back up, and game again.

The other approach was to create great content, attract natural links and social sharing, and focus primarily on pleasing people while also artfully spoon-feeding Google.

Guess which approach won?

You already have the ability to own the search rankings as a savvy content creator. Let's look at what would matter if Author Rank were actually implemented.

- Find out what topics people want
- Create great content that people want
- Gently tweak that content so Google knows what to do with it
- Have a strong distribution network (Facebook, Twitter, Google+)
- Have real-world relationships with influential people in your field
- Build an authoritative website
- Write at other authoritative websites

Do all that right now, and you don't need Author Rank. Because, as [AJ Kohn recently pointed out](#), you'll have authority.

And *authority* is all you need.

All you need is Authority

Since 2006, we've been telling you how it is. And we told you [2013 is a tipping point for online writers](#).

It's all about authority.

Authority is what people respond to.

Authority is what Google wants.

And we'd love to help you get more of it ...

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What if you could directly benefit from those years of experience – and avoid those mistakes?

What if you could easily keep up with the state-of-the-art marketing tools and trends?

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