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Strategic Search Engine & Internet Marketing Solutions

SEO NEWSLETTER

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1 GOOGLE'S LATEST "PENGUIN UPDATE" TARGETS SPAMMY AND OVER-OPTIMIZED SITES

In a conference held last week, Google's Matt Cutts announced the new "Penguin" update. Here's an exact quote from the blog post, which Google published on April 24th, last month –

"In the next few days, we're launching an important algorithm change targeted at webspam. The change will decrease rankings for sites that we believe are violating Google's existing quality guidelines."

The official goal of the update was to target websites violating its quality guidelines. In short, target websites having too many unnatural links, crappy content, keyword stuffing, etc. which is traditionally referred as "Black Hat" SEO.

"This Google update will affect 3.1% of the search results", said Matt Cutts. This is much less than the Panda update, which affected almost 12% of the search queries. However, if you can recollect, Google eagerly told that Panda would only affect around 3% results when rolled out, initially. And look how that turned out.

Like Panda, this was primarily an update to improve its search quality. According to our research, sites that were largely affected by this update were indulged in unfair practices. In fact, we had predicted about this change in our last month's Newsletter as well.

Resembling Panda, Penguin is also an Algorithmic Update. We believe reconsideration requests might not work. If you are involved in unfair techniques, you must remove the SPAM, clean-up your site and then wait for a "data refresh" and Googlebot to crawl the site which may take more than a week.

However, Google has also provided a form you can fill-out if your site's rankings have been affected (which has been the case with some sites which were not guilty). It's also a good option to keep checking your Google Webmaster Tools account (for any warnings).

So far, none of our sites have been completely penalized by this major update. Yes, some "innocent" sites have taken a hit, which pushed the rankings down. But we are making sure that we are on top of this and are quite hopeful that we should be able to restore their rankings. Apart from this, we have done consultation on many sites which have been affected.

Best Practises on how to recover from this Penalty -

After doing in-depth research, we found that most of the sites had low quality content and were getting links from spammy blog comments, forum comments and blog networks. So, our advice is to stay away from these type of links. They will definitely be hit by Google in its upcoming updates.

So, how are we making sure that your site is not affected by all these major changes?

Below are the best practices, which we always follow (and which Google also recommends) to protect your site's rankings against such updates:

1. We don't use spun content – either on the website or for article syndication. We make sure that the content is 100% unique. For article syndication, each article is submitted only to one site to avoid duplication.

2. We always stay away from creating spammy content and avoid stuffing keywords. We make sure to limit the "keyword density" to 3% to 5%, which is widely recommended.

3. We never recommend Non-Search Engine friendly redirects and cloaking.

4. We do not involve your site in questionable linking schemes including cross-domain linking, links from low quality sites, links from spun articles, etc.

5. Excessive on-page optimization is something that we have always stayed away from. We make sure to optimize page titles, meta tags and content in a search engine friendly way.

6. We are already integrating social sharing elements such as Google+, Twitter & Facebook on all websites. So With social signals such as 1+'s and shares from Google+, Google can easily keep a check on the spammy websites, as the possibility of one sharing them (spammy site) socially is low.

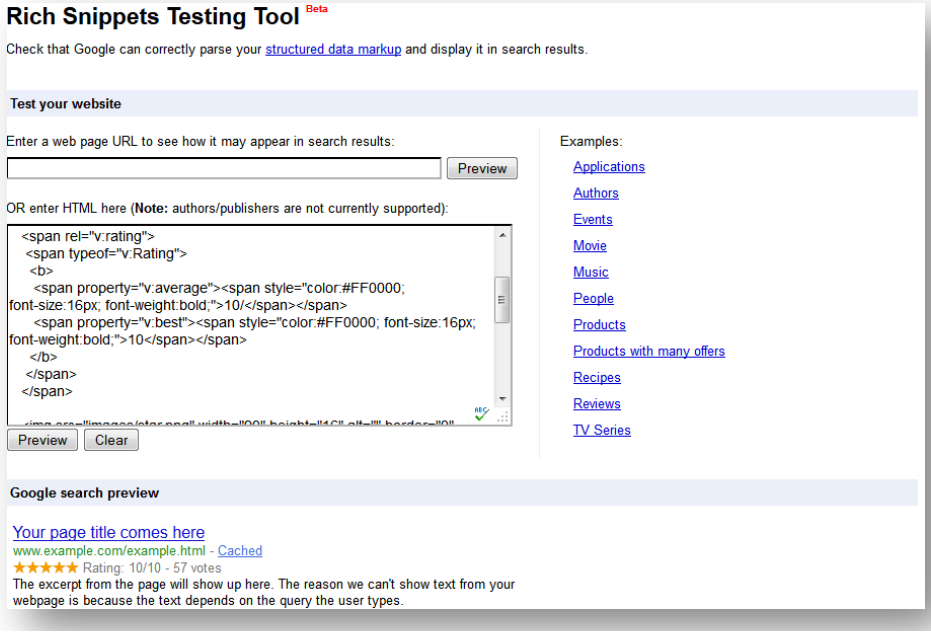
We are continuously tracking & observing algorithmic changes done by Google, so that we can stay updated with the latest SEO strategies.

2 GOOGLE'S RICH SNIPPET TESTING TOOL UPDATED – PRODUCT SNIPPETS PUSHED GLOBALLY

Google has lately added couple of minor updates to its rich snippets.

1. Rich snippets for Products go global. Now, anyone seeing your site's results can see those product's rich snippets. Take a look at the product snippets returned for "gps mini 330 moto":

2. HTML input support is now added to their rich snippets testing tool. This, in fact is a great feature which will now allow users to test their HTML source without having to actually publish it to a web page!!



3 GOOGLE ANALYTICS NOW SHOWS SOCIAL NETWORKING DATA

Google Analytics now includes social networking information as well. Social networking obviously as you know is a huge market and a great resource for getting money.

Google has realized that it can be too difficult to track and understand how your social media actions affect the traffic and conversions for your site. Their goal is to make you more informed by providing some very vital data about social networking which will in-turn help you make proper decisions.

Below are the metrics which Google hopes to help you with:

1. Identify the full value of traffic coming from social sites and measure how they lead to direct conversions or assist in future conversions.

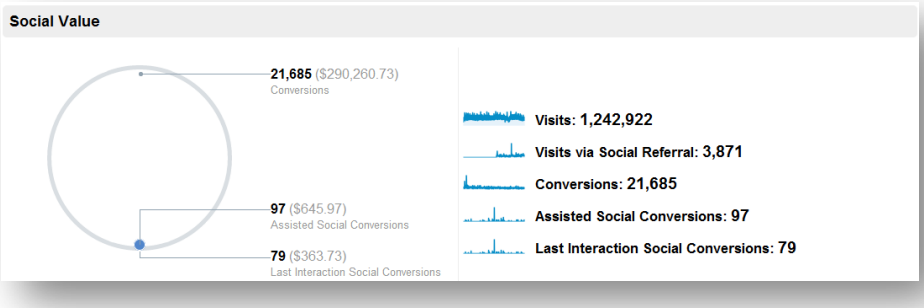
2. Understand social activities happening both on and off your site to help you optimize user engagement and increase social key performance indicators (KPIs).

3. Make better, more efficient data-driven decisions in your social media marketing programs.

Google has included some new charts and graphs to present you the data coming from social networking activity.

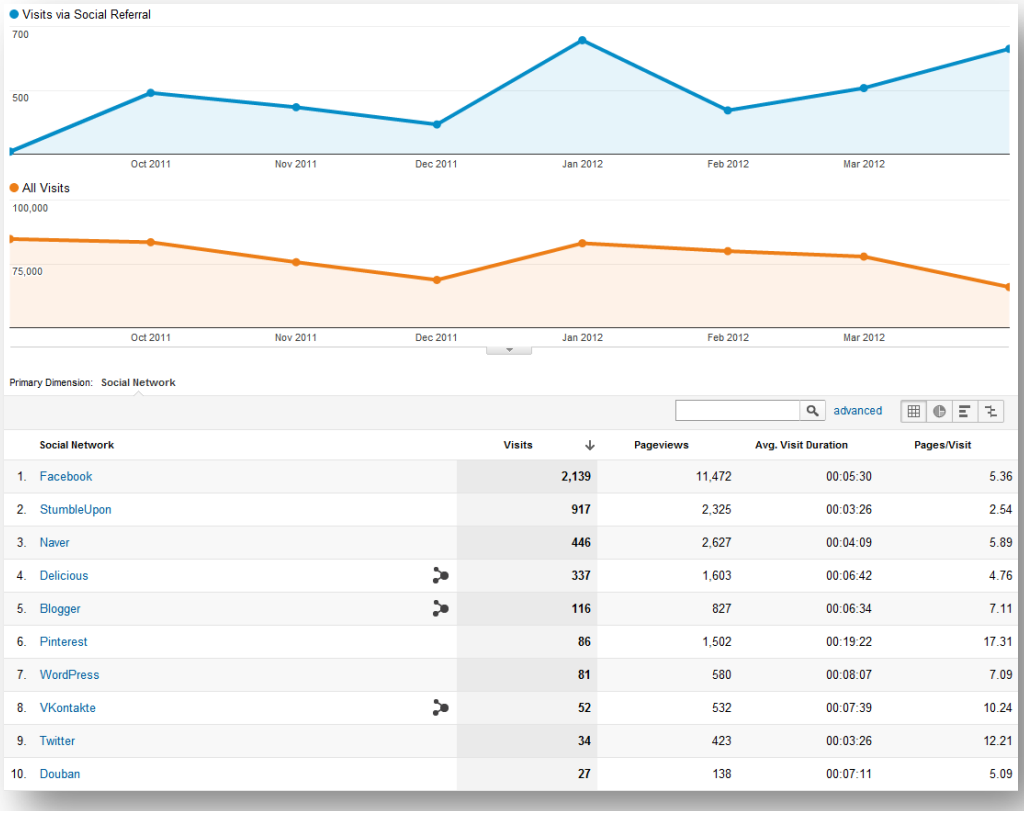
The Overview Report:

This report allows you to see the approximate value generated through conversions from your social networking channels. Assisted Social Conversions are conversions from a previous social referral where the user returns later and converts; whereas Last Interaction Social Conversions are when the social referral generates an immediate conversion.



The Social Sources Report:

This report displays visits via Social Referrals against All Visits plus the number of visits each social network has generated.



	Social Network	Visits	Pageviews	Avg. Visit Duration	Pages/Visit
1.	Facebook	2,139	11,472	00:05:30	5.36
2.	StumbleUpon	917	2,325	00:03:26	2.54
3.	Naver	446	2,627	00:04:09	5.89
4.	Delicious	337	1,603	00:06:42	4.76
5.	Blogger	116	827	00:06:34	7.11
6.	Pinterest	86	1,502	00:19:22	17.31
7.	WordPress	81	580	00:08:07	7.09
8.	VKontakte	52	532	00:07:39	10.24
9.	Twitter	34	423	00:03:26	12.21
10.	Douban	27	138	00:07:11	5.09

The Social Pages Report:

This report displays which pages on the website are being shared socially.

	Shared URL	Visits	Pageviews	Avg. Visit Duration	Data Hub Activities	Pages/Visit
1.	/	1,591	9,809	00:05:55	102	6.16
2.	/logos	602	3,240	00:04:55	7	5.38
3.	/logos/logo-templates	280	458	00:02:51	0	1.64
4.	/logos/logo-templates/3d-logo-templates/3D-487	188	210	00:00:14	0	1.12
5.	/Catalog.aspx?catkey=logos&nextpage=5&pagesize=48&subcatkey=logos	74	337	00:05:26	0	4.53
6.	/business-cards	61	535	00:11:42	4	8.64
7.	/alphabet/e	42	101	00:06:59	0	2.41
8.	CartList.aspx	34	37	00:01:22	0	1.07
9.	/logos-cards	34	126	00:07:25	0	3.64
10.	/logos/logo-templates/3d-logo-templates/3D-242	24	101	00:07:23	0	4.10

The Social Conversions Report:

This report displays the value each social network is generating, be it conversion rates or conversion values.

Conversions	Conversion Value
97	$645.97
% of Total: 0.45% (21,685)	% of Total: 0.22% ($290,260.73)

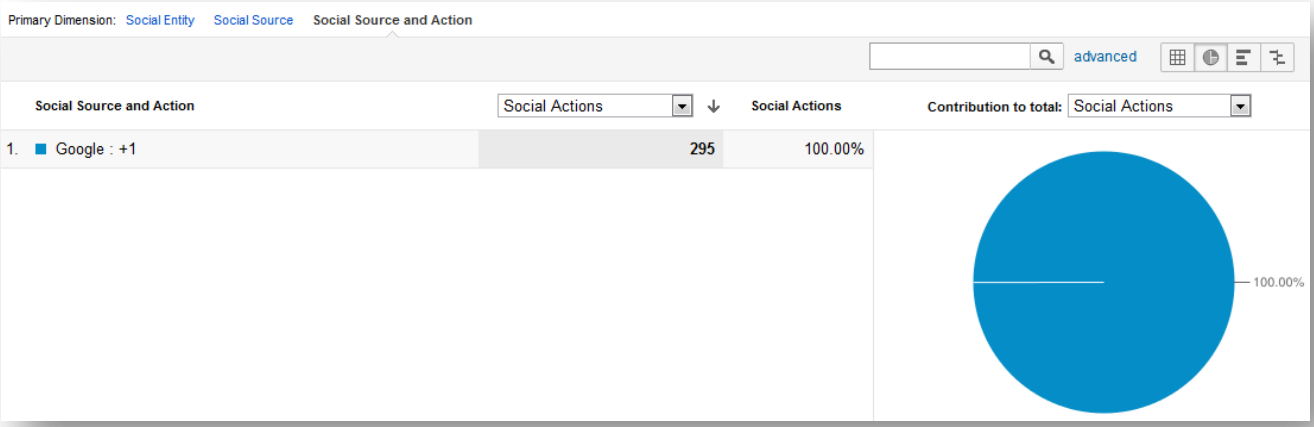
Primary Dimension: Social Network

Secondary dimension advanced

	Social Network	Conversions	Conversion Value
1.	Facebook	64	$515.67
2.	Twitter	17	$0.00
3.	Delicious	7	$12.32
4.	StumbleUpon	4	$106.99
5.	Google+	2	$1.00
6.	Pinboard	2	$9.99
7.	YouTube	1	$0.00

The Social Plugins Report:

This report displays which pages on your site are most commonly shared and which social buttons are being clicked to share them (for example, Google "+1" or Facebook "Like").



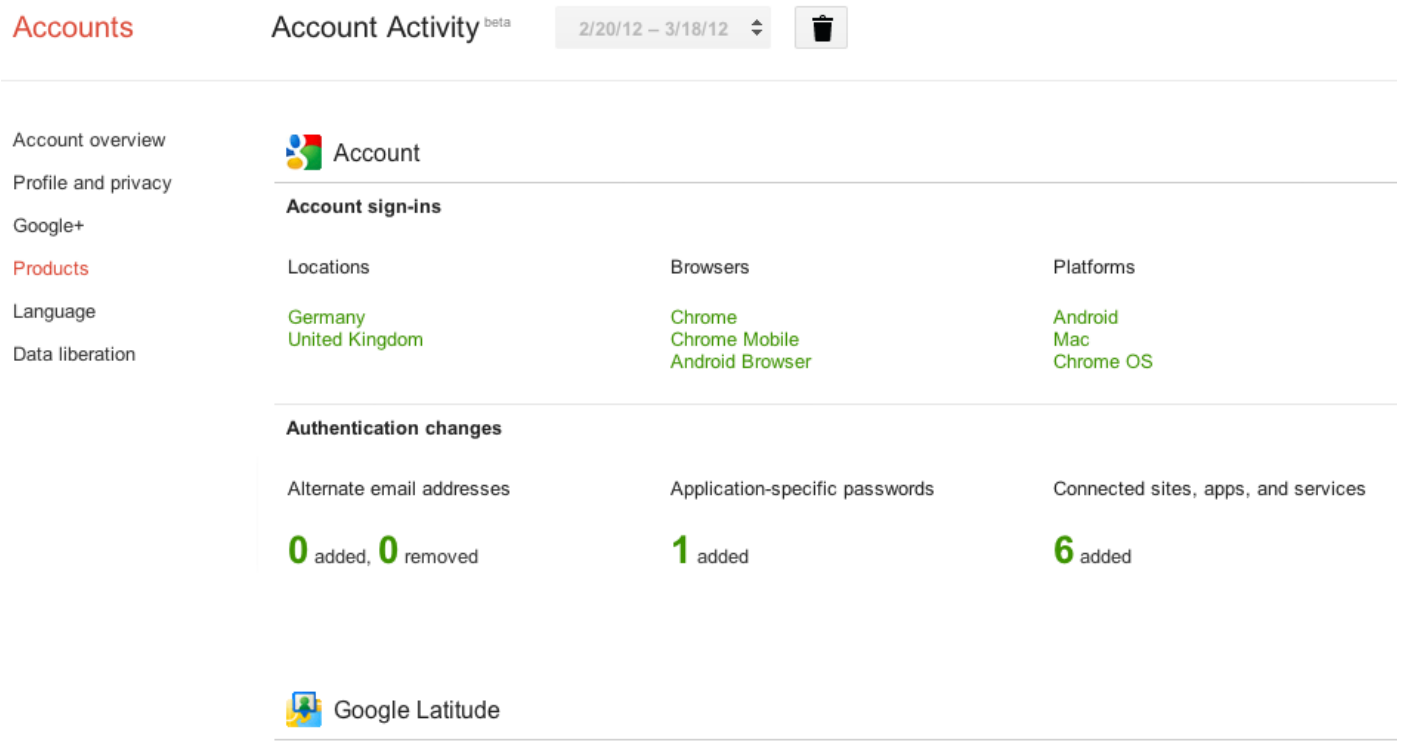
4 GOOGLE INTRODUCING "ACCOUNT ACTIVITY" TO YOUR GOOGLE ACCOUNT

One of the blogs posted by Google on March 28th last month said, "Today we're introducing Account Activity, a new feature in your Google Account. If you sign up, each month we'll send you a link to a password-protected report with insights into your signed-in use of Google services."

This is, basically a way for you to look at every single way you've used Google Services on a month-to-month basis.

Every month, this new feature will pull together all information from your Google account and summarize it in a password protected report allowing you to see things like how many emails have been sent or received, frequency of Google searches, total views of your YouTube videos, and even from which countries you have logged in.

They're pushing it out as a security service that allows you to monitor your Google profile to be sure you are the only one to access it. Below is a visual representation of this feature:



5 VIDEO SEARCH RESULTS UPDATED BY BING

On March 29th, Bing released a series of changes to their Video Search results that were aimed generally at how video results are presented in regular Web search. The new updates include:

1. 16:9 ratio images.

2. Mouse-over video previews (for some videos). According to our research, most of the YouTube videos show the preview. However, the not so recognized video sites just show "Click to Video", instead of the preview.

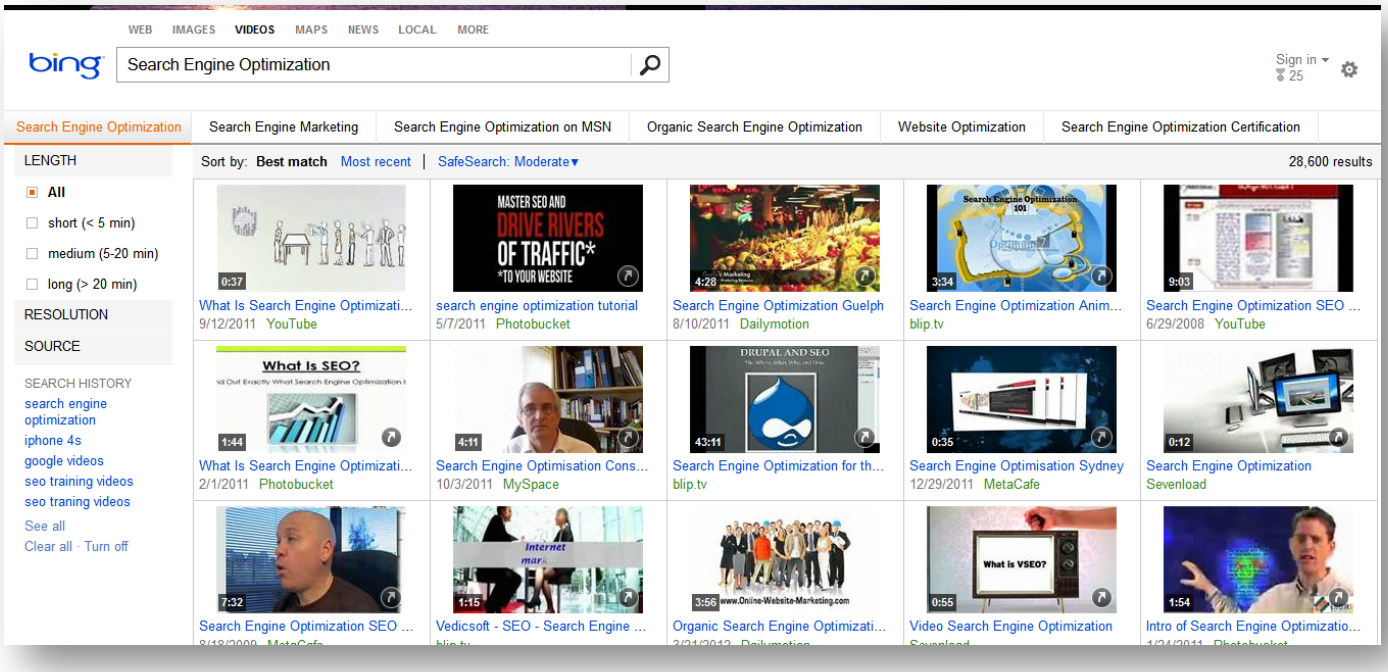
3. Video length stamps on the video preview images.

4. Infinite scrolling. However, the results get irrelevant as you keep scrolling down.

5. Added common related search queries to the top of the results. This will indicate what your users are searching for.

6. Below is the screenshot for "Search Engine Optimization"

Below is the screenshot for “Search Engine Optimization”



6 PAGINATION META TAGS NOW RECOMMENDED BY BING AS WELL

Bing had recently announced that it will soon start using the rel="next" and rel="prev" link attributes. These tags are used when you want to establish a relationship between a number of documents in a series, especially forum posts and ecommerce product listing pages.

A few important points that Bing mentioned:

a) These Link Elements belong in the <head> section of the page. If used with anchor links, they will be ignored.

b) The first page in a series should only have the next attribute, and the last page in the series should only have the prev attribute.

c) Don't use more than one "next" or "prev" attribute per page.

d) The rel="canonical" tag may be used in conjunction with the "prev" and "next" link attributes.

BTW, here's a great video from Google itself on Pagination to help you better understand these attributes.

[[EMBED VIDEO HERE - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=njn8uXTWiGg]]

7 GOOGLE PLUS UPDATES ITS LAYOUT PLUS ADDS NEW FEATURES

You must have by now realized that Google Plus had undergone a major update back in April which changed its layout as well as added some cool new features. Here's a video from Google to start with:

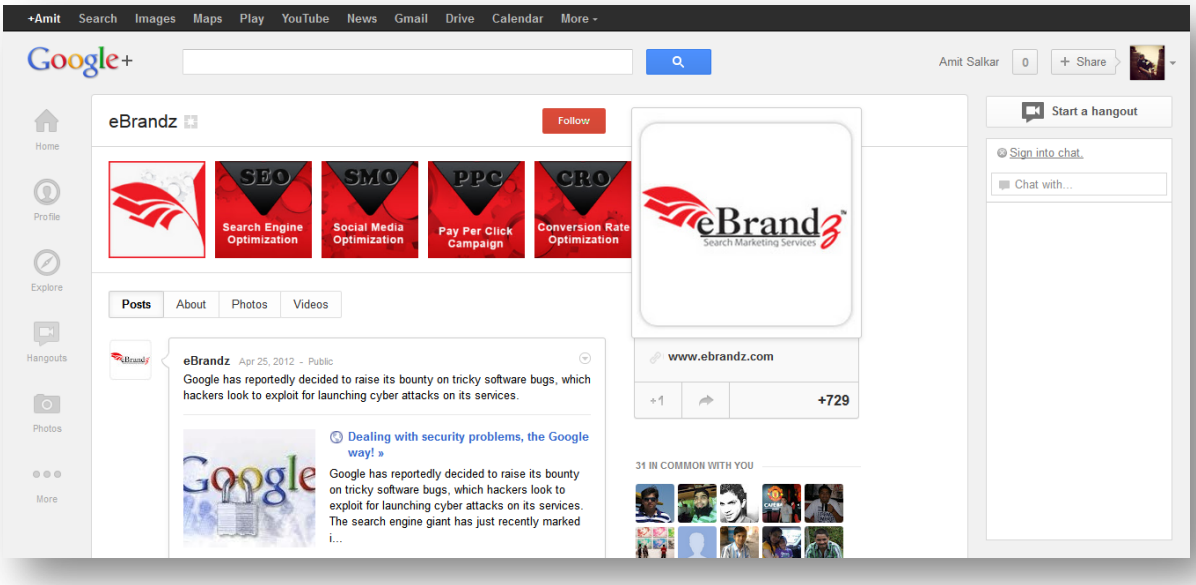
[[EMBED VIDEO HERE - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3Atj57r15U]]

Here's what has changed:

Navigation Pane Moved - The navigation bars from the top and left side have been switched. The icons that represent pages like Profile, Explore, and Circles are on the left side. You can drag and drop them into whatever order you wish. Hovering over an app will pop up a quick actions menu. Apart from this, a new Hangouts page has also been added. Here's a video to better understand the new Google+ navigation menu:

[[EMBED VIDEO HERE - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zxbs5uqEjc0]]

Larger Header/Profile Pages - Google is putting a greater emphasis on pictures in the new Google+ and they've made it possible to have a pretty large photo for your profile and header image. You can of-course stick to the original five picture header, if you'd like to, as we have done for our profile page.



Circles Moved - The list of Circles is now a set of tabs at the top. It can be customized by going to the Circles page (on the left) and dragging the four blue Circles in the order you want them to appear at the top.

New Contacts Bar - The right side of your screen is now taken up by your list of contacts much like in Gmail or in Google Talk. This bar lets you start chatting or even start a hangout.

Trending Topics – Google has managed some space for list of trending topics on Google+, people you may know, and interesting personalities / brands you may wish to follow by narrowing the update stream.

More appealing photos and videos - All images and videos have no borders, which will make them feel larger and more noticeable.

8 FACEBOOK ROLLS OUT "FACEBOOK OFFERS"

We are all very aware how fast this online coupon/daily offers craze is sweeping the Internet. Facebook has decided that they now want a piece of that market and hence have launched Facebook Offers

Facebook has made it extremely easy to utilize this option. Just clicking the Offer or Event+ button in the sharing tool on your page will get you started. Then, you fill in all the information needed (and be sure to add a picture). You, then post into your feed like you would post anything else. Once posted, your fans can claim the offer from your page and either print it out or show their mobile device to an employee in your business to redeem the offer.

Creating an offer is completely FREE and takes very less time. We feel this has the potential to be a very powerful tool, especially since it is utilizing the Facebook network. Your fans or people who have 'liked' you will see your offer in their stream automatically, and a post will be created on their stream if they claim the offer, this will let their friends know about it making the offer go viral. If you'd like to take a more direct approach, you can broadcast your offer by paying for an ad on Facebook Marketplace.

You can learn more at facebook.com/help/offers as well as contact the Facebook's page team for any help. Meanwhile, here is a video on Facebook Offers.

[[EMBED VIDEO HERE - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B60eo6HcFJg]]

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