

Cars.com steers toward 2 million followers with Google+



About Cars.com

Launched in 1998, Cars.com is the leading destination for online car shoppers. It provides information from consumers and experts to help shoppers decide what to buy, where to buy, and how much to pay for a car. Over 11 million people visit Cars.com every month.

To learn more, visit www.cars.com

At a Glance

Google+ Results

- Nearly 2 million followers
- 25% increase in CTR for desktop, 8% for mobile
- Higher site traffic, with no increase in CPA

Starting by experiments

Chicago-based Cars.com provides car shoppers with photos, videos, pricing, dealer reviews, comparison tools, and a large selection of new and used inventory. This extensive online content helps buyers be confident in their purchasing decisions.

"Cars.com started with Google+ by experimenting when it launched," says Managing Editor David Thomas. "Over time, we determined best practices for us, and gained quite a bit of following. At a certain point, our followers started really shooting up—into the six-digit range—and just kept climbing." The company's +Page was approaching 2 million followers by August 2013.

Collaborating between teams

Cars.com's Google+ strategy is thoughtful and collaborative. The editorial and marketing teams work together in choosing from a wide array of content and images for items to post on the company's +Page. "Our news blog puts out over 2,000 posts a year," Thomas says. "So it's a matter of finding the story that's best for Google+ and highlighting it there."

The Cars.com team found that followers of its +Page are particularly interested in seeing reviews, photos, and videos of cars rather than learning about how and where to buy them, which might be related to its large international fan base. "That's great, because we focus on that content, too," Thomas says. "We always pick something specifically for Google+, and it might not be what we would use on other social media."

Identifying with Google Authorship

Cars.com often uses Google Authorship to identify the editors who post on its +Page, tying their posts directly to their Google+ profiles. The feature elevates



The Cars.com +Page cover photo.

About Google+

Google+ brings the benefits of personal recommendations to Google Search and ads, delivering recommendations when people need them most and making it easy to start conversations with those who care about your brand. Linking your site to your page unifies your +1s across search, ads, your Google+ page, and your homepage. Google+ pages let you share your content with new audiences and connect with them in more engaging ways.

To learn more about Google +Pages, visit: www.google.com/+business

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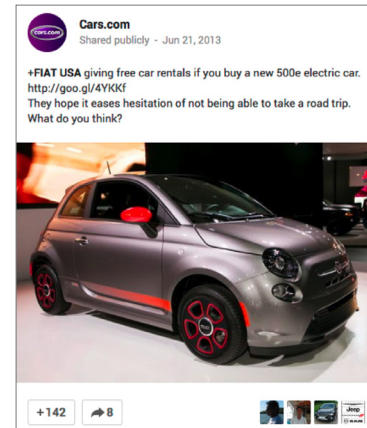
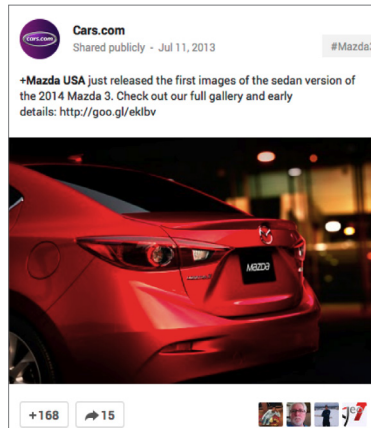
—David Thomas, managing editor, Cars.com

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an author's profile, plus the content feels more personal and can appear in Google search results. "This gives a little personality to the posts, and it's totally unique to what we're doing on social networks," Thomas says. "Everyone likes to have a byline, but there's also a benefit to getting their '+' in it."

The company posts about once a day on the +Page. "The cool part about the concept of Google +1s is that it's just so easy to see what's working," Thomas says. Ripples is another useful tool for tracking activity, especially among Cars.com's international followers.



Cars.com posts a photo, review, or video about once a day, and sees high engagement through +1s and reshares

Extending to YouTube and Search

The company also has a very robust YouTube channel, where it posts over 100 videos a year. "We make sure to embed the YouTube videos on our Google +Page, to maintain that whole Google infrastructure," Thomas explains. "We're very proud of our YouTube channel, and it's been very successful." YouTube videos appear on Google+ and vice versa, reinforcing both.

Cars.com also saw dramatic results when showing social annotations in Search for its AdWords campaigns. The clickthrough rate (CTR) rose 25 percent for desktop campaigns and 8 percent for mobile, says Min Cho, director of search engine marketing (SEM). The company has also seen a significant increase in traffic, with no rise in the cost-per-acquisition (CPA)—"and that to me is a win in itself," he adds.

Cars.com™ Official Site - Find Car Prices, Photos & Reviews

www.cars.com/

Get Listings. It's Easy, Let's Go!

Cars.com has 1,652,524 followers on Google+

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Cars.com best practices

- Get to know your followers, and track their responses to your posts, to determine what content will have the greatest appeal on your +Page
- Couple a powerful photo with short text or a question—"the engagement is very high," Thomas says.
- Use Google Authorship to highlight posters' names and their own Google+ profiles

