

Ocado whets customers' appetites through tasty content and innovative features on Google+



About Ocado

- Founded in 2000
- Headquartered in Hertfordshire, UK
- Internet retailer specialising in groceries
- Delivering on average over 120,000 orders per week
- Servicing over 70% of British households
- Selling around 27,000 lines

Background

Founded in 2000, Ocado is an internet pioneer created to overhaul grocery shopping for the better. The company's mission statement is "To revolutionise the way people shop forever, by giving them a uniquely innovative and greener alternative to traditional grocery shopping." With its inherently digital focus, Ocado has established itself as an early adopter of new technologies. For example, it became the first UK grocery retailer to release iPhone and iPad apps.

With this focus on internet innovation, Ocado uses both digital marketing and social media in its communications mix. "We don't do a lot of TV and outdoor or radio," the company's Head of Marketing Matt Knight explains. "We tend to concentrate on areas where we can measure and target, so we make use of the efficiency of direct response – direct marketing, lots of search, mobile and display."

Social media is carefully integrated to add another layer of engagement with the Ocado community. For Ocado, the channel is about developing and deepening relationships through discussions centring on food and popular culture. "It's important that our social communication channel is providing a conversation and narrative with our customers over and above just trying to sell. Just selling becomes repetitive; it isn't engaging," he explains. "We're trying to make the best use of the pull communication channel rather than push."

Social extensions: benefits to Ocado's brand

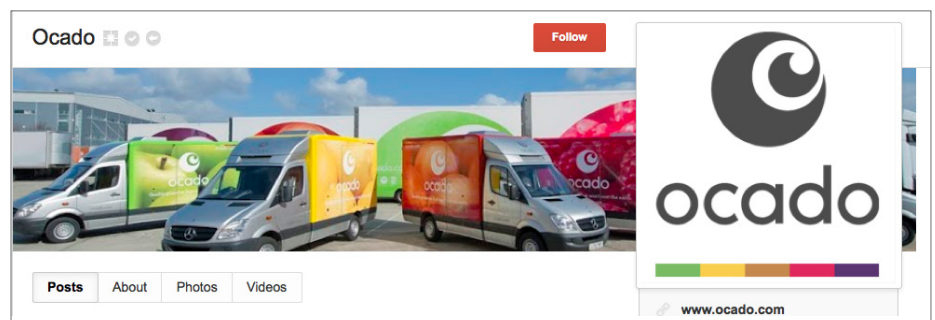
Ocado was eager to add Google+ to its social media portfolio. "We had a long and close relationship with Google and were aware of Google+ as it came out," says Matt. "We always like to stay up to date, so we were keen to get involved in having a company page as soon as we could." A presentation to Ocado suppliers illustrated how customers could +1 individual products, and this consolidated the desire to launch social extensions, with Ocado linking their search ads to their Google+ page and increasing click-through rates by 30% as a result.

The opportunity for Google+ to contribute to improved search rankings was a convincing reason to launch the brand's Google+ page. "The most interesting thing was the integration with search," Matt affirms. "We do a lot with search, so being able to improve the relevance and targeting of the ads is important, as is making them more effective through +1's. Hopefully this makes ads more compelling."

With Google+, people can click to +1 – or endorse – web content wherever they see a +1 button. If a person is signed in to Google+ when they click the +1 button, Google shows their endorsement to their other connections across the web as an annotation. For example, someone might see that several of their friends who use Google+ have also +1'd a product sold through Ocado. Google shows these **social annotations** to help make the content that web users see more relevant, whether they're looking at organic search results, website content or ads.

"We're actively looking to integrate social engagement with the experience of shopping on the site. Already you can +1 a product and a recipe. The more we can tie that together the better."

- Matt Knight, Head of Marketing, Insight and Communication, Ocado



With Google+ Ocado has achieved some pleasing outcomes:

- YouTube Channel views went from 50k to 230k in one week thanks to Ocado's hangouts
 - Social extensions enabled a 30% CTR increase on Ocado's search ads
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Hangouts, images, +1's: fostering conversations between Ocado and customers

Ocado recognised that an engaged foodie community existed around its brand, so the content strategy for their Google+ activity has been to deepen interaction through unique and useful features. **Hangouts** – the platform's high-quality multi-user video chat functionality – are one excellent way to bring food-centric content to life. "We've been working with Great British Chefs and wanted to do a live event with them where they cook for the customers. We realised a hangout would work because we could get multiple customers to take part and anyone who didn't take part could watch live. It was a perfect opportunity to promote the Google+ page, and to make the most of our chef relationships," Matt reveals. "Everyone who participated loved it."

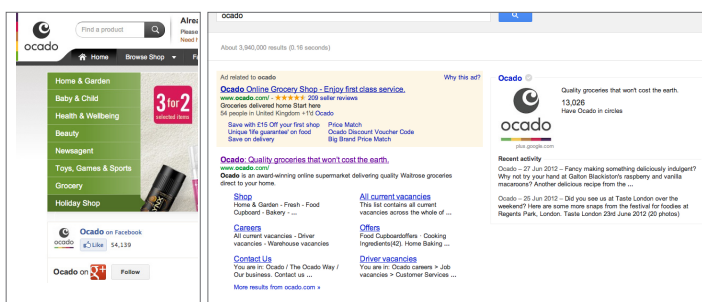
Ocado promoted the hangouts via True View ads on YouTube, which resulted in 167k engaged views. Their YouTube channel views went from 50k to 230k in the space of a week thanks to the hangout, without including the people livestreaming which was consistently about 60 people at any time. The comments received from users, were extremely positive: "Loved taking part, the result was excellent, the directions were easy to follow and the result a) perfect and b) delicious."



In future, Matt would like to host more hangouts on the Google+ page to increase audience numbers of the live streaming. The intention is to deliver the sights and sounds – if not the tastes and aromas – of experts' kitchens straight to users' screens.

The experience has led Matt to consider further possibilities for moving **images**. "We want to create more video content, recipe content in particular," he says. "We don't tend to do a lot of video sharing, but we do do a lot of picture sharing." Google+ has proved an ideal vehicle for this. "Google+ is very pictorial – this is great for our content and it's great for us, because we don't just want to use text-based feeds when what we really want is to get people excited about is food. Images are a great way of differentiating."

In addition to hangouts and images, Ocado has of course embraced the **Google+ badge**. Matt explains how the company is making this work. "The Google+ badge appears on the check-out page. We're actively looking to integrate social engagement with the experience of shopping on the site. Already you can +1 a product and a recipe. The more we can tie that together the better. Our aim is making the shopping experience social through gifting and sharing."



The Google+ badge appears on the Ocado homepage and elsewhere throughout the site; in turn, Ocado's social extensions and regular posts on Google+ are now appearing on Google searches.

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 that care about your brand. Linking your site to your page unifies your +1's across search, 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

Tallying up the benefits and looking to the future

So how has Matt found Google+ since launching the brand's Google+ page? "It's exciting to add another new and different social channel, especially one that works. We like the innovative ways to engage with customers and have seen some positive results from social extensions. Overall, it's been great so far." On the agenda moving forward is driving up Ocado's Google+ followers and developing more channel-specific content.

When it comes to helping other marketers get started with Google+ pages to experience the same success as Ocado, his advice is straightforward. "Find a company that you think is doing well and that you like the content of; benefit from their lessons. Work closely with the Google+ team, then start to experiment with types of content and posting strategy."

