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Hugh Duffy • Feb. 10, 2014

“Being found” by potential clients can be a challenge. How do potential clients find you? The best way is always word of mouth from your colleagues and clients who know the work you do and your areas of expertise. But, word of mouth alone does not get the job done. People need a way to validate your skills and experience and learn a little bit more about you before they pick up the phone.

Today, a website, alone, doesn't cut it. You need to proactively seek recognition for your expertise within your own circle through social networking. This concept is not new, but Google now provides tools that increase your ability to reach potential clients beyond Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. Google Authorship is helping small- to mid-size business owners improve SEO, develop a personal brand tied to their business, improve click-throughs and increase lead generation from the Internet.

What is Google Authorship?

Google Authorship allows writers to claim their content and enables search engines to find more content written by the same author.

It is directly tied to your **Google+ account**. You may have been getting invitations from friends and family to join Google+. Do it. Essentially, Google+ is another social networking tool, part LinkedIn, part Facebook and part Twitter. Even though you might think you do not need another social media application to keep up with, Google+ has unique advantages. The more people you tie to your Google+ account, the stronger your brand reach will be.

A Google+ account is based on your [Google](#) profile. According to Google, the purpose

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You may ask: Why not put my logo in? My answer: People trust people – especially in the accounting industry. Accountants are trusted advisors, not a faceless logo.

As an accountant, the value you provide comes from your knowledge and experience, as well as the services you offer. People want to know and trust their accountant. Your picture tied to the content on the web begins to facilitate that trust.

Google Authorship provides communications “person to person” via Google+. Search engine results frequently arise with a company rather than an individual. Using Google+ to tie your content to your identity – or your personal brand – puts a name and a face on your firm.

Benefits of Google Authorship

- 1. Search Engine Prominence:** Google Authorship is particularly powerful when people are doing non-branded searching. For example, a prospective client needs help with their QuickBooks accounting and searches for a local CPA. Google Authorship helps your entry stand out from the rest. This makes it easy for potential clients to get a sense of the firm and the accountant before they even arrive at your website. Essentially, you are increasing the power of the search engine results.
- 2. Higher click through:** Google Authorship isn't designed to increase your search engine ranking; it's designed to increase traffic to your website by increasing click thru rates and making them stand out from other search engine results. Again, having your face tied to the search engine results really creates a sense of trust with the viewer, making them want to read your content.
- 3. Brand credibility.** Demian Farnworth, in his [Copyblogger post](#) on Google Authorship, claims that “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.” By taking advantage of the Google Authorship and your profile,

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2. Set up your profile. Make sure you have a profile photo with a recognizable headshot.
3. Make sure a byline, containing your name, appears on each page of your content (for example, “By Hugh Duffy”).
4. Make sure your byline name matches the name on your Google+ profile.
5. Verify you have an email address on the same domain as your content. This is fairly simple if you are publishing on your own site. If you are publishing on a third-party site, go to the Google link above for more information.

Content is Key

Google Authorship can only do only so much. Your search engine results and click-throughs don't guarantee credibility. You must have good content that reflects what your audience needs.

With Authorship, Google can judge who that content is coming from when deciding how valuable it is. **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.”

Running an accounting business is an effort unto itself and marketing your practice for growth adds another level of complexity. Google Authorship, Google+, LinkedIn, blogging and SEO – you may feel like calling it a day and relying entirely on personal referrals.

Yet, referrals *are* possible through social media and the Internet. The beauty of these efforts, especially Google Authorship, is credibility. Tying your profile to your website makes a difference in search engine ranking, click throughs and growing your reputation as an expert in the field.

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- [Why Google+ Is the Best Social Platform for Content Marketers](#)

About the Author

Hugh Duffy is co-founder and chief marketing officer of Build Your Firm, an [accounting website design and accounting practice development firm](#). Hugh teaches a series of [Accounting Marketing Workshops](#); provides [Accounting Marketing Webinars](#) and manages [outsourced marketing for accountants](#). He can be reached at [888-999-9800 x151](#), or at hugh@buildyourfirm.com.

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