

Google adds button to endorse search results, ads (Update)

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Google Inc. likes the way Facebook gets people to share their recommendations so much that it's adding its own option for endorsing search results and online ads.

The "+1" button announced Wednesday represents the Internet search leader's latest attempt to make it easier for its users to share their insights with their online contacts, formed through other Google services such as Gmail.

Someone who wants to endorse a particular search term or an ad simply hits the +1 button. When people in that person's Internet circle uses the same search term or sees the same ad, they'll see the person's endorsement next to it.

In another Facebook imitation, Google also will allow other websites to place the +1 button next to their content. ,

Google hopes to benefit from its version of Facebook's "Like" button by making its search results more relevant and its ads more tempting to click.

If enough people use the recommendation button,

the number of endorsements for links eventually could influence the order of some search results, said Matt Cutts, a Google's principal search engineer.

The +1 button initially will begin appearing next to search results and ads for a relatively small number of Google users. Anyone who wants the +1 feature sooner can sign up at <http://www.google.com/experimental> .

Google, based in Mountain View, Calif., has been experimenting with different social tools since late 2009 with limited success.

In a major misstep, Google last year tried to attach a social network called "Buzz" to its popular Gmail service and wound up exposing email contacts that users didn't want to share. The company conceded the Buzz bungle violated its own privacy policies and agreed to submit to independent audits of its privacy controls every other year for the next two decades as part of a Federal Trade Commission settlement, which also was announced Wednesday.

To avoid any misunderstandings with the +1 button, Google will explicitly advise people they are publicly sharing their recommendations when they click on the new tool.

The online connections for the +1 tool will be drawn from users' Gmail and Buzz accounts, as well as other contact lists set up within Google's services. Later, Google hopes to tether the +1 connections to Twitter's short messaging services and other websites, too. The feature won't be able to hook up with the social networks within Facebook because that online hangout doesn't share the data with other websites.

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