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Strategic Search Engine & Internet Marketing Solutions

SEO NEWSLETTER

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INDEX

01 DEEP INSIGHTS INTO THE PENGUIN 2.0 UPDATE LAUNCHED BY GOOGLE

02 WHAT TO EXPECT IN SEO IN THE COMING MONTHS

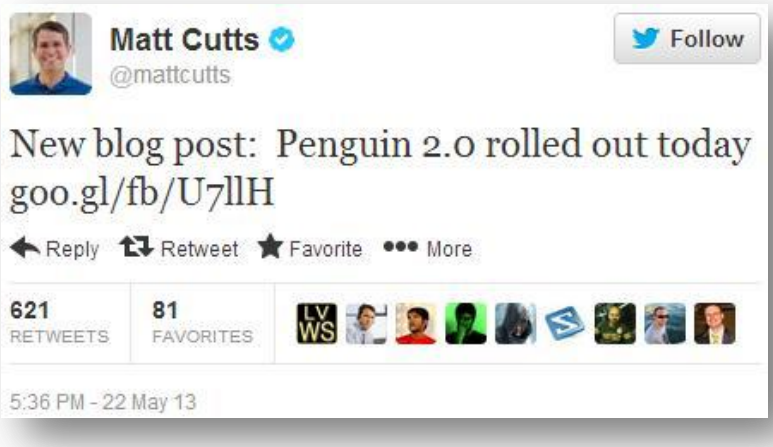
03 HOW YOU CAN TARGET SPECIFIC CITY CENTERS FOR YOUR LOCAL BUSINESS

04 FACEBOOK ROLLS OUT VERIFIED ACCOUNTS & FANPAGES

05 BULK UPLOAD YOUR ADS & AD GROUPS TO GOOGLE ADWORDS

1 DEEP INSIGHTS INTO THE PENGUIN 2.0 UPDATE LAUNCHED BY GOOGLE

Webmasters have been expecting a major Penguin update from Google for quite some time. Finally, on May 22, Google's Matt Cutts announced that Google had not only started the roll-out, but completed it. Here's the tweet:



Below is the link to the official post on Matt Cutts' blog –
http://www.mattcutts.com/blog/penguin-2-0-rolled-out-today/

Since we have a database of 55,000 keywords, it was helpful for us to slice and dice the results pre and post Penguin 2.0. We did an in-depth analysis of top 10 results for approximately 21,000 local keywords.

Below is the analysis of domains (across all verticals targeting GEOs) which have replaced the sites which were previously ranking in the top 10 Google results –

1. In the SERP analysis, we found that 29.5 % of the domains are either **Partial Match Domains** (29.12%) or **Exact Match Domains** (0.37%). A lot of other experts are **not talking** about the return of Partial Match and Exact Match Domains in SERPs.
2. Sites like YellowPages, Yelp, FindLaw, AngiesList, SuperPages have **increased** their presence even more. These sites are now dominating top 10 results. Below is the list of top 20 domains which account for **23.36%** of top 10 results.

Top 20 websites	Total %	Increase in %
www.yellowpages.com	4.10%	0.45%
plus.google.com	3.66%	0.12%
www.yelp.com	2.51%	0.36%
lawyers.findlaw.com	1.57%	0.15%
www.angieslist.com	1.19%	0.15%
www.superpages.com	1.18%	0.16%
www.youtube.com	1.10%	0.20%
www.bbb.org	1.09%	0.12%
Google Images / News	1.06%	0.15%
www.lawyers.com	1.04%	0.16%
www.homeadvisor.com	1.02%	0.13%
local.yahoo.com	0.93%	0.10%
www.avvo.com	0.50%	0.10%
www.facebook.com	0.45%	0.07%
yellowpages.aol.com	0.35%	0.04%
www.indeed.com	0.32%	0.05%
www.dexknows.com	0.30%	-0.02%
www.yellowbook.com	0.27%	0.04%
www.healthgrades.com	0.26%	0.03%
www.manta.com	0.24%	0.24%
agents.allstate.com	0.22%	-0.01%

3. As can be seen from above nearly 53% (52.85%) of first page real estate is dominated by EMD + PMD + Top 20 authority domains (which include local as well as industry specific directories).

4. A further analysis of the backlinks of sites ranking in top 10 results reveals that the backlinks are built from either free sites, paid sites or networks owned by SEO agencies. We are also seeing websites which have built spammy links from blog comments, international language pages, etc. and are ranking #1.

5. One unique observation we have seen is that the backlinks do not have keyword targeted anchor texts, but instead naked URLs or business name in it.

6. Another observation we have seen is that YouTube video links of clients have displaced the client's website from first page.

7. Some of the common things we noticed are that, the sites have Google+ Local verified for the GEOs which are part of the keyword, have Google Authorship (very visible for lawyer sites) setup and have Google Plus page. Since Google wants to focus on Domain Authority, Google+ Local verification and Authorship setup has become important than ever as these two are very significant Domain Authority signals.

Below is the plan of action we have created to future proof our SEO Work -

1. Modify the existing keyword anchor texts and change it to Naked URLs, Brand Name, Business Name and variations. 80% anchor texts will be naked URLs, 10% will be exact anchor texts and remaining 10% will be variations of the anchor texts (even long tail keywords).

2. Since Google+ Local verification and Authorship is imperative, we expect co-operation from your end to get this done.

3. Since location specific links are given importance, we will implement NAP (Name, Address and Phone Number) details on some Article Syndication sites.

4. For Guest blogs, we will include keyword density on guest blog content and also include the keywords in title. This will help Google see relevance of the blog post to the website and give it higher contextual weightage.

5. Our analysis shows that we should reduce social bookmarking and limit it to few sites.

As always, we will be continuously tracking & observing the effects of these changes to our strategy as well as upcoming algorithmic changes by Google so that we can stay updated with the latest SEO strategies.

2 WHAT TO EXPECT IN SEO IN THE COMING MONTHS

On May 13, Google's Matt Cutts published a video titled "What should we expect in the next few months in terms of SEO for Google?". Here's the link to it.

http://www.mattcutts.com/blog/what-to-expect-in-seo-in-the-coming-months/

The video covers ten topics about Google changes and the impact these changes will have on the future of SEO.

Launch of Penguin 2.0 –

Google will continue to roll out penguin updates, starting with what has been described as the biggest penguin changes ever made, going live in the next few weeks. As expected this update had a significant effect. We have covered an in-depth analysis on the Penguin 2.0 above.

Paid Links via "Advertorials" –

Google will get more aggressive looking for signals that indicate an article containing a link may be an "advertorial", which is really just a paid link wrapped up to look like it's unpaid editorial. Matt Cutts has released another detailed video on paid links / advertorials and how they should be presented. Here is the link to the YouTube video - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SmlsfSqmOw

<u>According to Matt Cutts:</u>

1. Links that pass PageRank i.e. “dofollow” links should not be based on money.
2. For the readers, paid endorsement should be disclosed with clear message mentioning “Advertisement” or “Sponsored”
3. For the search engines, paid links should not flow PageRank i.e. these links should have rel=“nofollow” added to the link.

In our opinion, this move by Google is rather unwise. No one would want to add a nofollow to a link and discount its value for which they have paid some bucks. In addition, there is a subtle difference between such advertorial posts and guest blog posts (which are posted for free and genuine) and we feel there will be a lot of collateral damage when this update rolls out.

Spam Queries –

Some industries attract black hat techniques more than others. Cutts mentioned that this is a problematic search, and there are others like it, so they are tackling it a couple of different ways. Terms like porn, online pharmacy, payday loans, are classic examples. If you play in this space, you might be out of luck since Cutts isn't revealing exactly how they are dealing with it, just that it will be happening.

Upstream Link Targets –

According to Cutts, Google will be using new techniques to identify the originating sources of unnatural link networks and making link buying less effective.

We agree with Google on this and have always recommended our clients stay away from such practices. We always make sure to follow industry recommended activities to achieve best possible results for our clients.

Sophisticated Link Analysis –

Google can now create a much more sophisticated backlink profile for your site. Google Webmaster Tools already provides a comprehensive backlink profile of the website. In our opinion, a more sophisticated analysis will definitely be of much help for webmasters.

Hacked Sites –

Google will launch improvements/warnings of potentially hacked sites and notify webmasters which is a good move in our opinion.

Authority Sites –

Matt took the time to state that authority sites will give greater ranking boosts. We strongly feel that brand websites would be given even more importance after this change.

Panda Update –

Google will soften the impact this update had on sites that should not have been hit. According to Cutts, Google will be looking for other signals that suggest the site truly is high quality. In our opinion, Google Authorship will play a vital role here. Eric Schmidt has already given a signal that Authorship will be one of the ranking factors. Hence, it is of utmost importance that Google Authorship is set up for your site now.

Multiple Domains in SERPs –

If you're doing deep searches in Google, and going back 5, 6 or more results pages deep, you can see the same site popping up with a cluster of results on those deep pages. According to Cutts, Google will reduce the number of pages from the same domain that are displayed in the search results. This is a good move by Google and will give a chance for genuine sites to replace those results and rank higher.

Webmaster Communication –

Cutts also said they want to be able to keep giving webmasters more specific and detailed information via Webmaster Tools.

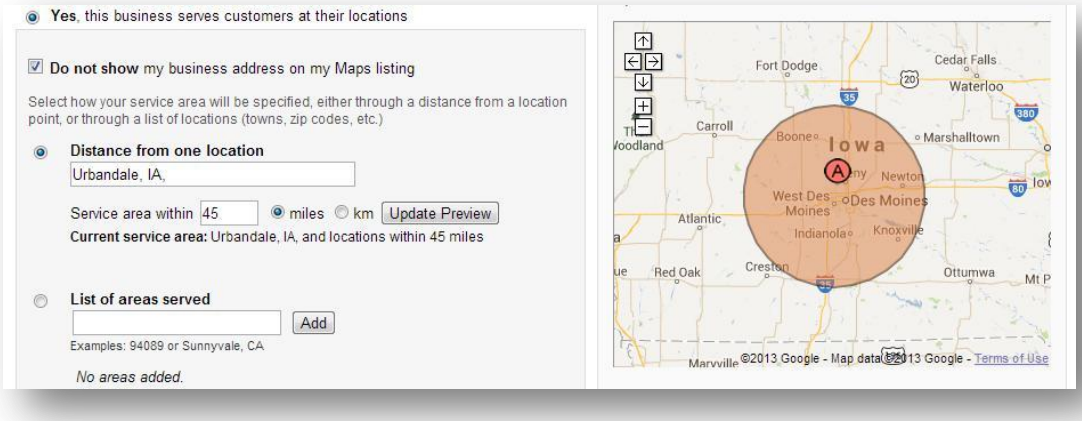
Overall, it seems Google seems pretty serious in continuing their fight against SPAM. We just hope there is not too much collateral damage – which has happened with each of their updates.

3 HOW YOU CAN TARGET SPECIFIC CITY CENTERS FOR YOUR LOCAL BUSINESS

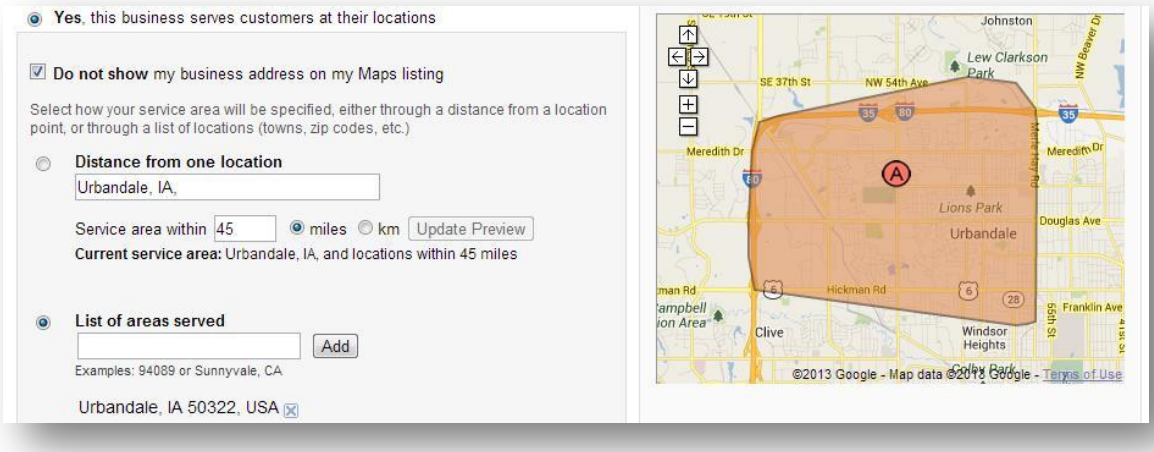
As a Service Area Business, you want to be sure that you're doing your best to target potential customers at their location. Unfortunately, businesses are served up based on location and if you're hiding your address then it's ALL about the areas you service. So, let's be sure you've got everything dialed in the best possible way.

One of the first things we do when auditing a new local customer is to review the basic information within their listing. Is the phone number a land line? Is the email address accurate? Are the NAP details uniform? etc.

One thing we find far too often is that service area businesses tend to set themselves up as servicing customers within a specific distance of their hidden address. Most of the time it's a pretty large distance, which makes their service area very large.



Unfortunately, one of the drawbacks to this strategy is that by targeting a larger area you're failing to target those smaller specific areas that have more customers looking for you. The solution is simple. When you go into your listing choose the 'list the areas served' and add in the area codes to laser target those high traffic city centers.



In addition, we are listing down 9 important Local Search Optimization tips:

1. **Having a Land Line Number helps with trust.**
   Even though you are probably using cell phone or VoIP exclusively, the phone companies are still considered trusted data providers — especially regarding phone numbers. So it's recommended that businesses maintain a traditional phone number listing to elevate Google's trust-level

2. **The Quantity of reviews you have matter.**
   Although Google has the review/reviewer algorithm in place to combat fake-review spam, the number of reviews you have on Google+ and other trusted places on the Web still matters.

3. **Make sure to optimize Yelp reviews.**
   Yelp reviews affect Apple Maps results and rankings. Even Bing shows Yelp results. And post the Penguin 2.0 roll-out we have noticed a fair increase in the number of Yelp listings. It appears to continually tie up with partners that increase its impact on consumers. Focus on optimizing your Yelp listing and the customers will follow.

4. **Use your business name in local listings the same as your postal mail does.**
   Your brand really matters more than ever before; so don't pollute your data stream by keyword stuffing and or using alternate names which will hurt you rather than help you — and will make a mess that will eventually has to be cleaned up.

5. **Use the USPS approved version of your address.**
   The United States Postal Service version of your address is the official one. This is the database nearly every data provider checks against. Check how your address appears here http://webapps.usps.com/zip4/welcome.jsp. Again, keep that data clean and consistent and use that as your address everywhere online and offline.

6. **Check for an existing listing prior to creating a new one.**
   It can be time consuming and frustrating to check and correct, especially if logins aren't available, so many people tend to skip this part. But this step can really make or break your local rankings on Google. Hence it’s important to

clean old or incorrect data out of the ecosystem as it can continue to reappear and cause problems for your business.

7. **Submit to the data providers first, then create your Google listing.**
   This is most applicable to a new business and serves to seed the Local ecosystem with your name, address and phone number. Google will then have more trust in the information you give it when you do create and claim a listing in Google Places.

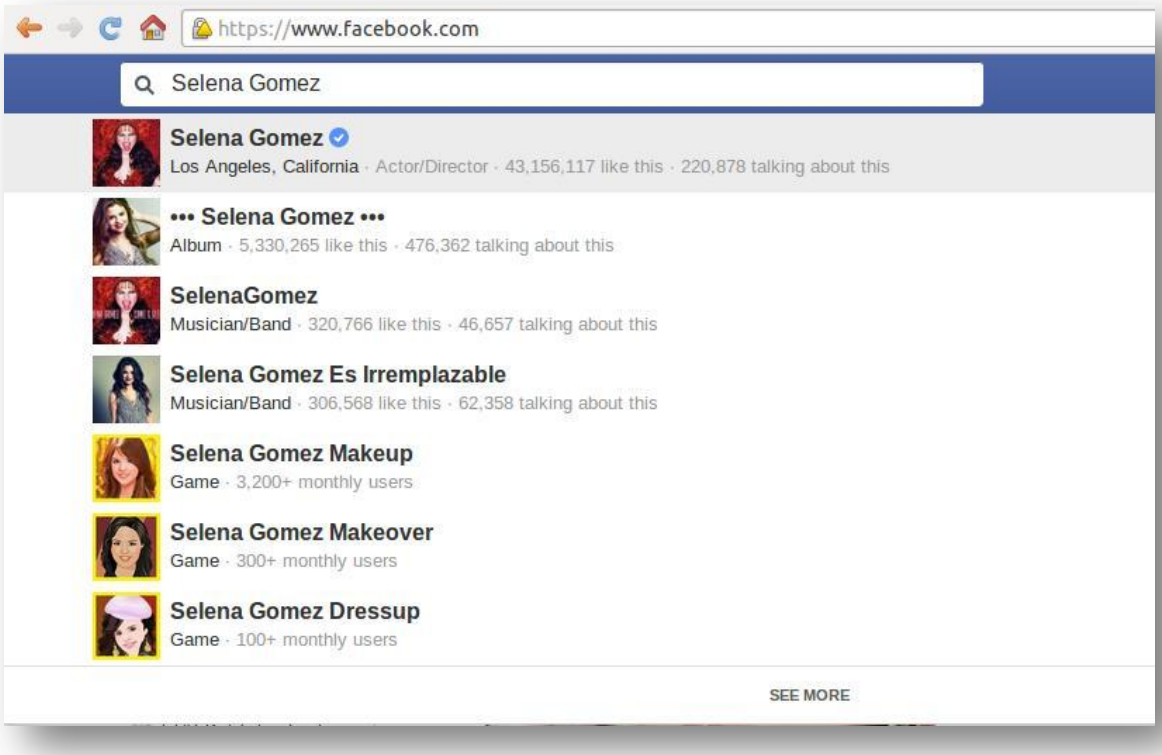
8. **The number of citations you should strive for depends on your competition.**
   While a popular Cafe in a big town can easily rack up 100's of reviews, it's certainly not as easy for a Dentist in a rural town to do so. Aim to get more legitimate reviews than your competitors, but don't overdo it or it'll look suspicious to Google.

9. **Local numbers always convert better than toll free for conversions.**
   Users looking for nearby goods and services are more likely to call local phone numbers than toll free numbers because toll free numbers often connect to a call center rather than to someone who is actually "local" to their area. You can display your toll free number but make sure your local number appears as well.

4 FACEBOOK ROLLS OUT VERIFIED ACCOUNTS & FANPAGES

Facebook on May 29, 2013 announced the release of new feature called **Facebook Verified Accounts & Fanpages**. For many, this is absolute copying from Twitter for some it is (Y) (Y) feature. It is launched worldwide with most of the Famous Personalities and Brands getting their Fanpage verified.

Verified Facebook Accounts & Fanpages have Blue check mark right next to their Name which resembles to Twitter Verified Profiles check mark. This check mark appears in the Timeline, Search Results, Newsfeed and other sections on Facebook. If you hover over the badge you will find the text "Verified Page".



The objective behind this feature is to make sure that the authentic user profiles come up in Search Results everywhere on and off Facebook. Impersonators BEWARE! You are going to be extinct on Facebook soon.

As of now, verified Fanpages belong to small group of popular and prominent public figures from the fields of Cinema, Journalism, Government officials, Popular brands and Businesses with large audience. This update will be soon rolling out to Personal profiles as well.

As of now, Facebook is proactively verifying the authenticity of Fanpages and accounts from the above mentioned domains. Also, keep in mind that not all authentic Profiles and Pages are verified and that one cannot request to have your profile or Page verified. Facebook has clearly stated out that this feature will be available only to Popular Brands and Businesses with large audience.

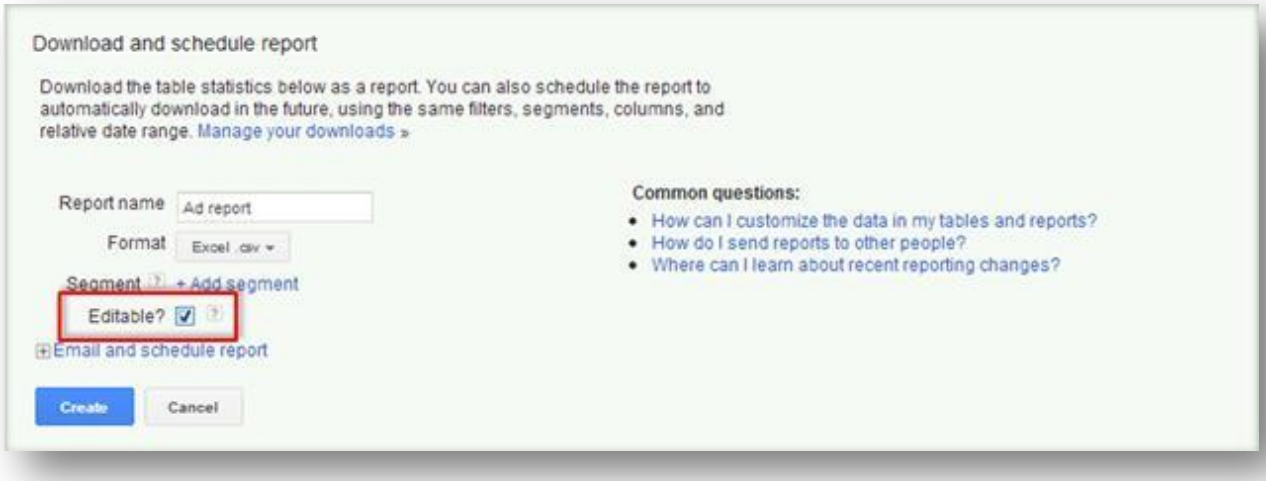
We will have to wait and find out what does this feature have for less popular Brands and Fanpages with less audience.

5 BULK UPLOAD YOUR ADS & AD GROUPS TO GOOGLE ADWORDS

Google is following up last month's launch of keyword bulk upload from the Net UI with bulk uploads for advertisements and ad groups.

This will allow advertisers to download data, make changes in the spreadsheets and then upload those changes directly into Google.

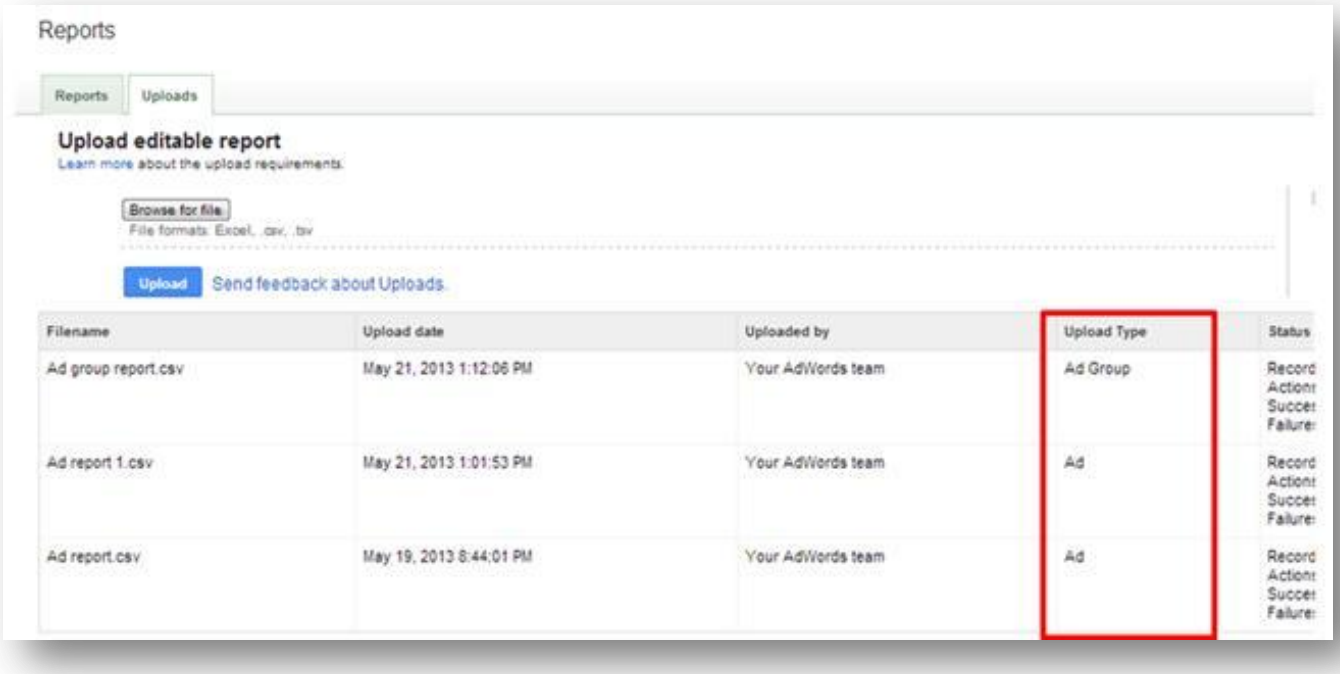
By clicking the "**Editable**" box before downloading a report from AdWords, you'll be able to make adjustments to ad creatives, pause ad groups or change budgets inside the report. A superb piece of advice from Google would be to save your original report as there is certainly no strategy to revert back right after uploading changes.



When you download the report, make sure to check off the "**editable**" option:

Within the Excel spreadsheet, you will see "**Action**" in the very first column. This can be where you signal changes to AdWords; in the event you leave this blank, the program will ignore the row. The three options are: Add, Get rid of, Set. "Set" might be employed when altering an ad or ad group from "enabled" to "paused". You'll then also require to produce the alter within the Ad Status column. "Set" also can be used to alter an ad group's maximum CPC or location URL.

Then make your changes and save your changes in the format of CSV, TSV or Excel. Then you can upload these changes by clicking on "Reports and uploads" on the left navigation panel, and then select the "**Uploads**" tab.



You will see a new column here titled "**Upload type**," shown above.

Find more details on using the bulk uploads feature here.