How To Avoid "Broad Match" Disaster

by

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Introduction

In Defence Of Google Adwords Broad Match

There's a joke I often use as an analogy in business. I'm sure you've heard it, it goes like this:

> Two guys are on safari in Africa, far from their vehicle. All of a sudden they realise that a lion has crept up behind them unexpectedly and that they are in grave danger of being attacked.
>
> One of them bends down, whips off his safari boots and starts putting on a pair of running shoes.
>
> The other says to him "Are you crazy? That's just a waste of time - you'll never outrun a lion."
>
> His friend replies "I don't have to outrun the lion, I only have to outrun you...."

I'm telling this joke for a reason:

Google Adwords isn't a perfect advertising medium – it may well be best form of paid advertising in the world – but it's not perfect.

However, the thing to remember is this: it's not perfect for anyone. All advertisers have to deal with the same flaws in the system and, because it's an auction system, **all you have to do is out-run your competitors**.

This report is designed to help you out-run your competitors in broad match. I'll tell you what the problem is with broad match – and, if you're not an expert in Adwords, this may scare the bejeezus out of you – and seven ways to minimise the problem to get an edge over your competition.

I hope you find it useful,

Best wishes,

Steve Gibson

Adwords Broad Match – a hidden tax on the "stupid"?

Perry Marshall has often said that Google levy a "Stupid tax" on Adwords advertisers who don't know the best ways to create and manage campaigns.

(by making them pay more per click)

Now, clearly, the victims of this "tax" aren't "stupid". They're just people who are too busy running their businesses to have time to become PPC experts.

They're sold a story by Google that Adwords is straightforward and transparent. And, unfortunately, that story isn't true.

And, that's particularly the case when it comes to "broad match" keywords.

The popular belief is that there's 3 types of positive match type: Broad Match, Phrase Match and Exact Match and they work like this:

Broad Match: Blue Shoes – shows for any search that includes these two words or their singular/plural versions (e.g. "blue suede shoes", "size 6 blue shoes", "blue shoes", "soft shoe blues")

Phrase Match: "Blue Shoes" – shows when someone searches for these two exact words in that order. There can be words before or after the phrase (e.g. "size 10 blue shoes" or "blue shoes repair")

Exact Match: [Blue Shoes] – shows when someone searches for these two words, only these two words and only in that order.

Well, this is wrong. Dead wrong!

Google defines broad match as:

"With broad match, the Google Adwords system automatically runs your ads on relevant variations of your keywords, even if these terms aren't included in your keyword lists. Keyword variations can include synonyms, singular/plural forms, relevant variants of your keywords and phrases containing your keywords."

But, even that isn't really true.

What they call "relevant variants" can be (and is) pretty much anything they want.

A couple of examples I've seen:

Keyword: Swing Music
Appeared for: Swinger Clubs

Keyword: Dog Walking Problem
Appeared for: Sample Wills

(this one was caused by the ad text "Your Dog Will Do Anything You Ask. Watch 5 Sample Videos Right Now!" - see how Google has taken a couple of words out of the copy and used them to match a search)

From my own work for clients, I've found that, in some campaigns, the majority of the broad match impressions can come from these sorts of unwanted ad displays.

Why this is a problem

There are two reasons:

Problem #1: the clicks you'll get from these unwanted impressions are usually of a far lower quality than your targeted traffic.

(as they're not directly searching for what you're selling)

And, that means they'll usually convert at a far lower rate. (often below breakeven)

Problem #2: Google isn't a straight "whoever pays the most gets top position" auction. Instead, it ranks ads according to the formula:

$$maximum\ bid \times quality\ score$$

(If you want to know the details of how this works, check out this youtube video from Google: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7l0a2PVhPQ)

Approximately 60% of Quality Score is based on clickthrough rate. And, because these untargeted impressions will usually have a low clickthrough rate, they'll usually lower your overall quality score for broad match searches.

Which means you'll either (A) get lower ad positions (and less traffic) or (B) have to bid more per click.

Either way, your profits are going to take a hammering.

So, what's the solution?

You've got two basic choices:

Option #   1: turn your back on broad match altogether.

Option #2: use some of the following techniques to find negative keywords that'll massively reduce these unwanted impressions.

Many people recommend option #1. And, if you're just starting out with Adwords, that may be the better option.

However, the downside is that you'll be missing out on a huge number of real prospects (sometimes the majority of them). So, if you want to get serious about Adwords – and

maximise your profit, option #2 is the only real choice.

So, now we move onto the meat of this report: 7 ways to find negative keywords:

Method #1: Google Adwords Keyword Tool

You can find this under "tools" in your Adwords account, or you can use the external version at:

https://adwords.google.co.uk/select/KeywordToolExternal

Here's how I would use this for the search phrase "mp3 player".

First, I'd look at the broad match results.

Keywords	Advertiser Competition	Local Search Volume: July
mp3 players		5,000,000
mp3 player		2,740,000
mp3 player accessories		550,000
2gb mp3 player		165,000
4gb mp3 player		135,000
cd mp3 player		135,000
mp3 player radio		135,000
car mp3 player		110,000
car mp3 players		110,000
creative mp3 player		110,000
mp3 player video		110,000
mp3 player with radio		90,500

There are a few interesting results here:

mp3 player accessories – if you're not selling accessories - or more likely, if you can't make a profit bidding on accessories - you might want to have "accessories" and "accessory" as negative keywords. (you need to have both singular & plural)

"CD mp3 player" - do you stock CD/Mp3 players? If not, "CD" should probably be a negative.

"car mp3 player"/"car mp3 players" - is this a niche you serve? If not, the negative words "car" and "cars" should be added.

Now, scroll down the page to the section titled "Additional keywords to be considered".

Here you'll find keywords Google thinks are related to your search term. And, if Google thinks they're related, there's a chance you could show for them with broad match.

Here are the most popular terms:

Additional keywords to be considered - sort by relevance ⑦		
mp3 accessories		673,000
digital player		246,000
2gb mp3		201,000
4gb mp3		201,000
mp3 creative		201,000
music player		201,000
mp3 fm		165,000
mp3 samsung		165,000
portable mp3		165,000
zen mp3		165,000
mp3 usb		135,000
mp3 wma		135,000
player usb		135,000
mp3 headphones		110,000
sandisk mp3		110,000
sandisk player		110,000
creative zen player		90,500
1gb mp3		74,000
mp3 recorder		49,500
mp3 armband		18,100
wma player		18,100
mp3 review		14,800
mp3 reviews		14,800

You see "digital player" (246,000 UK searches per month) and "music player" (201,000) . If you want to block these, you should block the exact matches – i.e.

-[digital player]
-[music player]

(these are negative exact matches because you still want to show for "mp3 music player" and "mp3 digital player")

Next, you want to change the match type to "phrase" and look at the results:

Go to the dropdown menu at the top right end of the table and change from "broad" to "phrase":


Now we're getting more precise results. You'll see things like "video mp3 players", "mp3 player with radio". In the "additional keywords" section, there are searches like "mp3 recorder" and "mp3 headphones".

So, you might end up with negatives:

-recorder
-[mp3 headphones]
 -radio
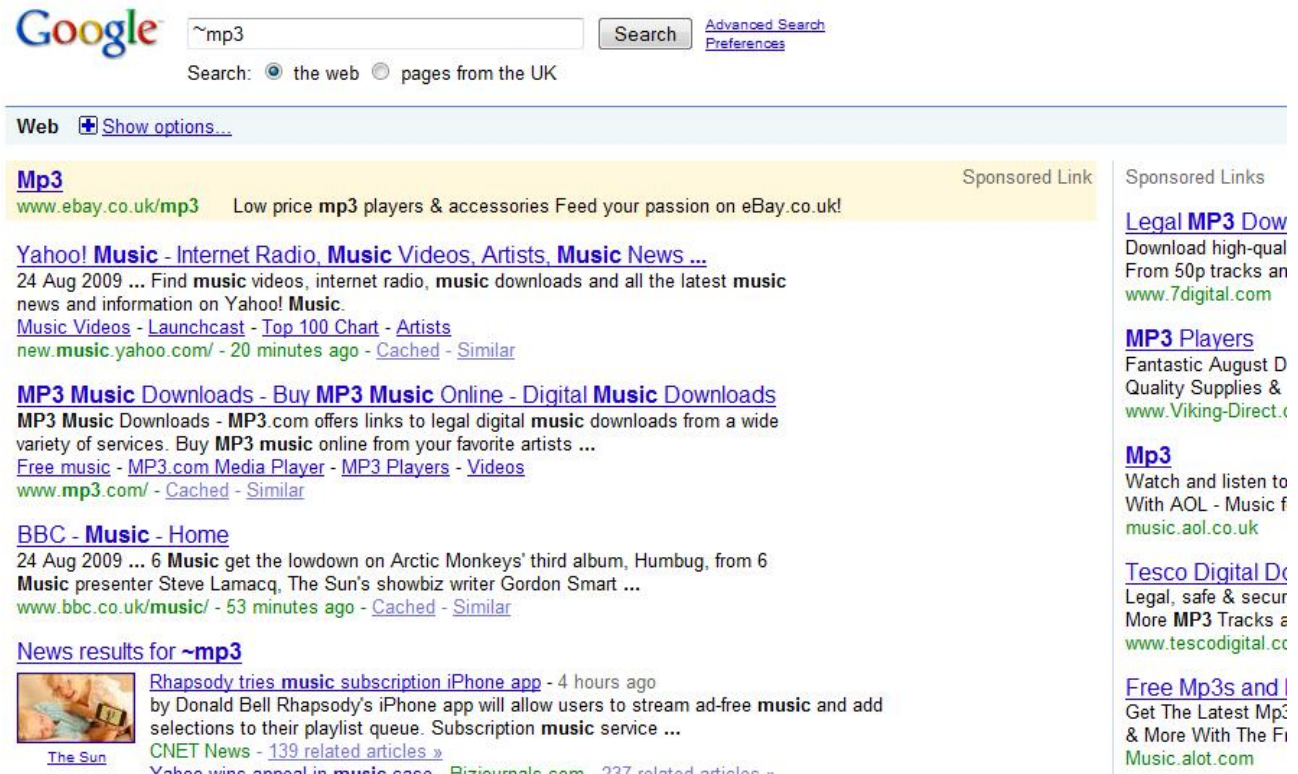-radios
-video

Then do the same thing for exact match.

Then, finally, negative match:

Keywords	Advertiser Competition ⓘ	▼ Local Search Volume: Ju
Keywords related to term(s) entered - sort by relevance ⓘ		
-players		5,000,000
-accessories		550,000
-2gb		165,000
-4gb		135,000
-cd		135,000
-radio		135,000
-car		110,000
-car players		110,000
-creative		110,000
-video		110,000
-with radio		90,500
-samsung		90,500

You should find you've already got most of the high volume irrelevant negatives on your list already, but go through the results to make sure you've got them all

Method #2: Google Synonyms

Sticking with our "mp3 player" example, go to Google and type ~mp3. You should get something like this:

You can see Google has bolded the word "music". That's because Google believes "music" is a synonym of "mp3".

If you click through to page 2, you might see other words bolded: "songs", "CD", "audio".

If you're only selling mp3 players, you might want to have the following negatives:

-song
-songs
-CD
-CDs
-[audio player]
-[audio players]

Next, do Google searches for ~player and ~players.

You'll find the following words among those bolded: software, play, audio, viewer, format, files, jukebox, music.

You may want to have the following negatives:

-software
-viewer
-viewers
-jukebox
-jukeboxes

and, possibly also

-format
-formats
-file
-files

Method #3: Search Query Report

In the "reports" section of your Adwords account, there is an option called "search query report".

This report shows you the exact search terms that produced clicks for your campaigns – i.e. exactly what the visitor typed into Google to see your ad.

Unfortunately, it won't show impressions for search terms that received no clicks.

However, it will flag us a lot of searches that either:

- You don't want to show for

or

- Are showing the wrong ad (i.e. they're being wrongly matched to a different ad group)

By running this report regularly, you should manage to cut a large percentage of the rogue impressions.

Methods #4-6: IMDB, Amazon & Wikipedia

These sites are a good way to find other meanings of words you're bidding on.

Say, for example, you're bidding on the word "candles",go to www.imdb.com and type "candles" into the search box:

That gives you a number of negatives. For example:

-"sixteen candles"
-"16 candles"
-"bay street"
-mistletoe

Clicking on the listing for "Sixteen Candles", you can start adding negatives for actors, director etc.:

-hughes
-ringwald

Then repeat the search for "candle".

Next, go to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page and search for "candles". Here are

some of the pages it suggests:

So, you can add the keywords:

-"heatwave"
-records
-barnes
-"skinny puppy"

Repeat the search for "candle" and you'll get "Candle in the Wind 1997", which leads to keywords like

-wind
-elton
-diana
-princess
-marilyn

Next up is www.amazon.co.uk. You want to search for books, CDs, DVDs etc.

Some of the results are:

"Making Candles and Soaps for Dummies"
"When the Devil Holds the Candle"

So, add:

-dummies
-making
-devil

Method #7: Spyfu

I'm going to share with you something I've never heard any of the "gurus" talking about.

www.Spyfu.com is a service for spying on your competitors' Adwords campaigns to see what keywords they are using.

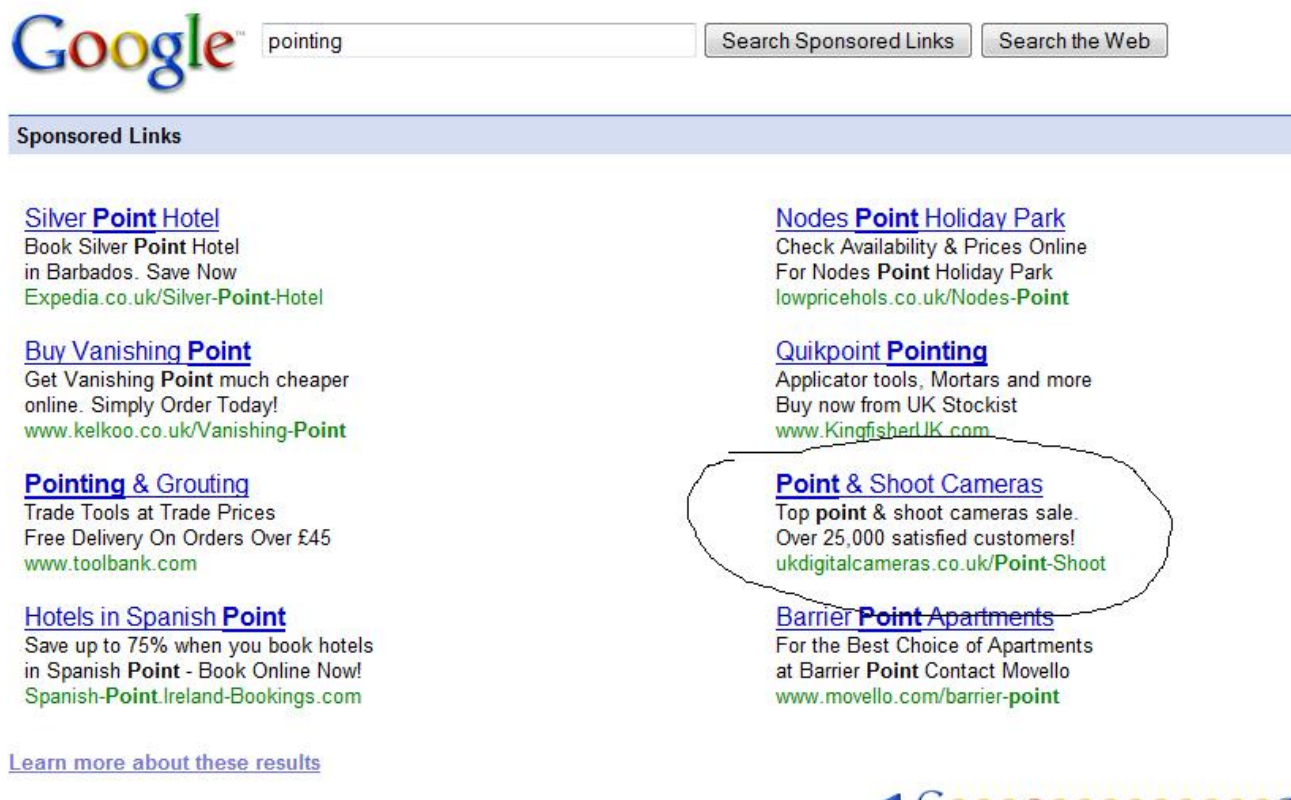However – and here's the secret – you can also spy on your own campaign.

What Spyfu does is routinely check around 7,000,000 search terms and notes which sites are seen advertising for these phrases.

And, you can type in a domain to see which of these keywords they are appearing for - including many of their unwanted impressions!

Let me show you an example: if you search on "digital cameras", one of the advertisers is www.ukdigitalcameras.co.uk.

Spyfu has 3,566 paid keywords tracked for that site.

Among those are: "navigation" and "pointing".

They also have single word matches on brands that sell a lot more than just digital cameras – e.g. "panasonic".

They're not showing for these terms all the time, but when they're showing, they're wasting

impressions and hurting the clickthrough rate.

I've found that Spyfu can cut the number of impressions by up to 20%, with little or no loss in sales.

It's Not Just About Negative Keywords

The real proof of the pudding with Broad Match is whether it makes you money.

So, I'm going to give you some advice about how to set up your ad groups using broad match, phrase match and exact match.

And, to make it easier to understand, I'm going to go back to the example "mp3 players" and "mp3 player".

In my opinion, here's a good way to arrange your keywords:

Step 1: Create two ad groups: one ad group for the phrase and exact matches, the other ad group for the broad matches.

Step 2: In the phrase/exact group, have the keywords

"mp3 player"
"mp3 players"
[mp3 player]
[mp3 players]

Step 3: In the broad group, have the phrase matches as negatives. So, it would look something like

mp3 player
mp3 players
-"mp3 player"
-"mp3 players"

This will prevent this ad group from being shown for phrase and exact matches. You don't need to negative the exact matches as the negative phrase keywords will exclude those.

(you should have other, longer-tail keywords in the ad group – get these from the Adwords keyword tool – but the principle of broad+negative and phrase+exact still holds)

Step 4: add your list of other negative keywords to both ad groups.

Step 5: set up Adwords conversion tracking. This will tell you how many sales/enquiries you're getting from each ad group (and, from that, you can work out if they're profitable)

Step 6: run the "search query" report regularly to (a) find more negatives and (b) find longer tail keywords you want to add to your ad groups.

Step 7: when you add the longer tail keywords, stick to the broad+negative and phrase+exact system. There should only ever be phrase, exact and negative keywords in the first ad group and broad and negative keywords in the second.

Step 8: keep an eye on your cost per conversion for each group and keyword. Consider

deleting those that are losing money.

This is a very simplified description of how to set up and manage your ad groups.

But what you end up with is an answer to the question "is broad match making me money?"

And, if you have an answer to that question, you can't go far wrong.

Summary

I hope this report has shown you that there's no need to fear Google broad match... as long as you have the strategies to eliminate most of the unwanted impressions it serves up.

Finally, if you'd like help with your Adwords campaign, please check out my services at:

www.bothsidesoftheclick.co.uk

Best wishes,

Steve Gibson