

CYBERBULLETIN

The bulletin that powers up your online presence



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Webmaster for Hire, LLC

March 17, 2006

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Your Secret Marketing Resource

There is a great resource on the Internet that will enhance your web site and your business. Everyone on the World Wide Web knows of its existence, but the secret is this — they don't realize how or why they should use it! What is this secret resource? Your competitors' web sites!

It's obvious that you cannot steal their web site design, their copyrighted material, or their domain name. You can, however, get a lot of information from their web sites on how to do your business better!

The first step is to get your keywords and phrases from your meta tags. If you have not had them professionally created from actual search engine usage, contact Webmaster for Hire to discuss. You need to get this resolved. (Just to note, it's illegal to use the meta tag keywords and phrases from your competitors' web pages. That's okay, they are not always prepared correctly anyway.) List your keywords and phrases on a sheet of paper.

Step Two — Identify who your competitors are by using your keywords and phrases (one at a time, using quotes around the phrases). Type them into Yahoo!® or Google™. Print out the results from the first two pages of each search for your notes, below the sponsored web sites.

Step Three — Open a second browser window and go to <http://www.alexa.com>. The page ranks the traffic for each site you put into the search field and tells you if it is in the top 100 or top 1000 ranking. Copy the first link from the first browser search page (highlight, depress the "control" key and hold, and then depress the "C" key), paste it into the search field (Control >V keys), and click go.

Your major competitors will show ranking information, how long they have been on the Internet, and other data. (Even if no ranking information appears, scroll down for other information for the business.) You will use this information to determine who your competitors truly are. Just because they do great search engine optimization or pay to be at the top, doesn't mean they really get the traffic and sales. This information is based upon actual web site traffic, though not up-to-minute data. Make notes on your printed pages.

Using this data, as well as the competitors' ranking order on the search engine, you will know who your major Internet competitors are. Do this for each web site that appears in the search pages for each keyword and phrase.

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Your Secret Marketing Resource Cont'd

Step Four — Choose your top 10 to 20 competitors. Now, go to each of their web sites and answer the following questions on separate sheets of paper for each competitor:

1. What products/services do they offer that are different from yours?
2. What features do they offer that are different from yours?
3. What customer benefits are stressed?
4. Are they providing all the products/services within their (and your) area of expertise? Is there a gap or an area not being addressed? Can you supply that area?
5. What special offers do they have?
6. Do they have any innovative approaches to marketing their products/services?
7. What do you believe is their business strategy?
8. What is their marketing strategy?
9. What type of advertising campaigns are they using?
10. Overall, what are their strengths? What are their weaknesses?
11. How does their web site look and feel? Compare it to your web site.
12. How functional is their web site? Is it easy to navigate? Do they provide things in an intuitive manner? How does this compare to your web site?
13. What type of content and articles do they have? Do they have newsletters? What does your web site offer in web content?
14. In their "About Us" section, note if they are a corporation or LLC and their state location.

Step Five — If your competitors are a public corporation, then they have their articles of incorporation on file within that state. The data contained within the Articles is considered public information. Most is now online for your review. To locate, go to Yahoo! and search for the following:

[name of the state, without brackets] "secretary of state"

Locate the web site for the Secretary of State for the state the competitor listed as their location state. Once on the web site, look for a link, such as "search database". You want to search for the articles of incorporation for the competitor.

Once you locate the record for the corporation, look for the name of the officers. Write these down on your printed sheets.

This may tell you more about the people who operate the business and their business strategy. Make notes and add them to the competitor's note sheet.

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Your Secret Marketing Resource Cont'd

Next, search the web for interviews, articles or speeches done by the officers. Type in (substituting the proper information):

[state] "person's name"

This may tell you more about the people who operate the business and their business strategy. Make notes and add them to the competitor's note sheet.

Step Six — Now, analyze the information on each competitor. Highlight items that you believe are important for you, your business, and your web site — items you can use to improve your business.

Step Seven — Next, answer the following questions for yourself, using the competitors' information:

1. What changes can you make to your business strategy? How can you improve it?
2. What changes can you make to your marketing plan? What can you do different? What can you add?
3. How can you counter your competitors' offerings? Can you offer "more bang for the buck"?
4. Can you offer something the competitors are not?
5. Using your analysis, how can you enhance your web site? What can you do to make it more appealing to visitors?

You now have a method to identify your major Internet competitors, evaluate their business, and use your newly found knowledge to enhance your own business. The next major step (and most important) is to put your ideas into action. **If Webmaster for Hire can assist you, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are here to help you succeed.**

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