

Have You Checked Out the Competition Recently?

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Have You Checked Out the Competition Recently?

By Susan Dunn

Have You Checked Out the Competition Recently? by Susan Dunn, MA, Marketing Coach

You may be the best, you may offer the best, but you aren't the only one doing it. If you want to get ahead and stay ahead, you must keep abreast of what's going on in your field. In order to compete within your market ares, you have to know what others are doing. This means taking a look from time-to-time at what the competition is doing.

The Internet makes this easy and accessible. In another business, for instance, you would have to take real effort to find out what the competition is doing. One of the jobs of the marketing department of a property management firm, for instance, is to call around and go visit other apartment complexes to see what they offer, for how much, what specials they're having, how their staff behaves, and what the amenities are. If suddenly everyone is offering ceiling fans and you're not, this is not good.

If you're an Internet business, it's fairly easy to check out another business' website to see what's going on. Google your product or field and find the names of others doing the same thing you do. If they rank high enough to place on the first couple of pages of a search engine, they're worth taking a look at.

Visit at least 10 websites. Here are some of things to look for:

- The website design itself. After looking at several, are you seeing a new trend? Maybe everyone's starting to put audio clips on their website, or the look is getting cleaner (or busier). You want to look current, if not on the leading-edge.
- What sort of specials are they offering?
- Are money-back guarantees prominently featured?
- Are there some new phrases you need to take note of, like catchy taglines or brilliant descriptions.
- Have some new "buzz" words appeared in your field? If so, you need to know them.
- How do they describe what they do or what they offer? Is there something you could learn from this?
- What about the use of photographs? Are you seeing them appear or disappear on websites?
- If they have a photograph of themselves on the website, note the style. Fads move in and out in photography just like everywhere else, and you want your photo to look current. It reflects on you and

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your ability to do your job.

·Has someone come up with a new line of products or new services?

What you're doing is taking a lot at things from your potential customers'/clients' viewpoint. Today's smart consumer shops around before they make a purchase or hire someone. They compare what's being offered and how, in order to make informed decisions.

So periodically take this trip your potential customers do. Visit the competition and see what it's like. You could be in for some surprises.

You may want to hire a marketing coach to do this for you. They're familiar with market research and know what to look for and how to tweak your present website to make it more competitive.

If you're doing this yourself, make it a habit to do your market research once every three months. Visit at least 10 of your competitors' websites to see what's going on. It will pay off for you.

Understand the Keywords that Your Target Market Uses

By Mike Sam

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Understanding for which keywords there is heavy competition can help you identify gaps where there is little or no competition. These gaps provide opportunities for marketing your site for substantially lower costs than would otherwise be achieved. For instance, it is often the most obvious terms that attract the most heated competition, while the less obvious terms have little, if any, competition. By matching these gaps with an understanding of which keywords customers actually use, it is possible to locate these significant opportunities.

Once you know the best keywords, the next step is to see what your competitors are currently doing with them. If your sites or your competitors rank higher than yours, or offer more enticement for the customer to visit, then it is more likely that they will be attracting the customers and not you.

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