BJSPYASSOCIATES.COM

Your Mission, Should You Choose to Accept it: Know Thy Competitor

As a website owner, you wear many hats: webmaster, content writer, e-mail manager, and marketing guru, to name a few. Keeping up with all the demands of managing a website can be daunting and keeping up with competitors is nearly impossible.

How do you manage your time and resources as well as keep your site equal or above your competitors? This month I'll address how to "spy" on your competitors, as well as highlight some competitive tools to help position your company for ultimate findability.

Our subject this month is BJSpyAssociates.com. Owner Ben Otano is a private investigator and police officer for the state of New York. BJSpyAssociates.com sells consumer spy gadgets including video surveillance, counter surveillance and personal protection equipment. After closing his retail business, Otano successfully transferred his loyal brick-and-mortar customer base to his e-commerce website. According to Google Results, BJSpyAssociates' primary competitors are SpyAssociates.com, Spyville.com and BrickHouseSecurity.com. Otano indicated SafetyBasement.com and SpyBase.com as his real competitors.

In the theme of covert intelligence gathering, let's take a careful look at what these websites are doing better, equal or worse. This will help make a number of findability recommendations to get BJSpyAssociates.com found by consumers.

The Problem

Competitors are winning the battle for new customers online.

"Our website has not met its full potential and we know we have been missing revenue. Our loyal customers keep coming back but the lack of new customers is frustrating — we feel like we are spinning our wheels without moving forward."
— Ben Otano, owner, BJSpyAssociates.com

Unfortunately for BJSpyAssociates.com, their competitors have better findability and, as a result, Otano is losing a huge percentage of potential sales. Currently BJSpyAssociates.com has a Findability Score of 39 percent, based primarily on a poor pay-per-click (PPC) Campaign, bad search engine optimization (SEO) design, the lack of having a blog and social media efforts. I recommend giving its competitors a taste of their own medicine; let's "spy" to see exactly where Otano's site isn't measuring up.

More information

Visit FindabilityFormula.com to see the criteria for Findability Score assessments.

Action Plan

Gather Competitive Intelligence — "007 Style"

We don't have something as exciting as a missile firing from the hood of a brand new BMW, but these tools are free or low cost and will give you an edge in marketing your site.

Tool #1 – SEOmoz.org

SEOmoz measures the strength of pages, blogs and entire domains based on factors inherent to popularity, influence and ranking ability. It also measures your impact compared against others in your industry.

Tool #2 – WebsiteGrader.com

WebsiteGrader is a free SEO tool from HubSpot that measures marketing effectiveness of a website. It provides a score that incorporates website traffic, SEO, social popularity and other technical factors. It also provides some basic advice on how a website can be improved from a marketing perspective.

Tool #3- SpyFu.com

SpyFu is a free PPC tool that gives great intelligence on how competitive certain keywords are in Google. In addition to giving insight on cost-per-click (CPC) and average number of clicks per day, SpyFu also displays the ad text for competitors in this space.

The Challenge

After running our tools, we determined:

1. The competition is stronger. In the SEO Domain Strength Tool (SEOmoz's Trifecta), BJSpyAssociates.com scored only 5 percent, whereas its main competitors scored 30 percent or higher.

2. The competition had a better website strategy. In the WebsiteGrader tool, BJSpyAssociates scored a 67 for organic findability. Unfortunately, its competitors score in the high 90s.

3. Competition is fierce in PPC. SpyFu shows that for most of BJSpyAssociates.com's keywords, many competitors vie for the traffic and most of them offer special incentives to click on their ad.

BJSpyAssociates.com needs to become more competitive online, matching or exceeding its competitors' scores.

The Solution?

We have used the tools to pinpoint distinct differences in their approach and technical challenges among BJSpyAssociates.com's top three competitors. These recommendations are based on the results from running the ratings reports in these tools. It's time to take our reconnaissance mission to the next level.

The Recipe for Success … Shaken, Not Stirred

Tip #1: Blog as if your company depended on it

HubSpot data shows that according to the search engines, none of its competitors have a blog associated with their website. For example, SafetyBasement.com has a blog sitting off-site on Blogger and, because it is off-site, they get no search engine credit for it. So by simply setting up a blog on the BJSpyAssociates.com website, including it in the sitemap, and using core keywords in its blog posts, it will gain a tremendous competitive advantage. SEOmoz also indicates in its scoring metrics that having a blog is an important competitive factor. BJSpyAssociates might also want to add some del.icio.us bookmarks to match the competition.

Competing Websites

Site	Website Grade	Google Page Rank	Google Indexed Pages	Traffic Rank	Blog Rank	Inbound Links	del.icio.us Bookmarks
bjspyassociates.com	68	1	206	9,027,000	Not Ranked	70	0
safetybasement.com	94	3	1,870	944,400	Not Ranked	952	2
spybase.com	93	4	731	597,684	Not Ranked	540	19

Tip # 2: Have the best pick-up lines at the PPC cocktail party

"Our number one frustration was the number of conversions from all of our pay-per-click campaigns and the fact that other ads from much smaller websites were ranking higher than ours."
— Ben Otano, owner, BJSpyAssociates.com

One of the keys to running a successful PPC campaign is having solid ad text (the four-line entry that will display on the results pages in the area of the page called "Sponsored Links"). It is extremely important to understand the ad text landscape when writing ads; otherwise your competitors may have an identical or more compelling offer.

SpyFu shows us what ads competitors are running in PPC, as well as the keywords' competitive level. Using this tool, I recommend BJSpyAssociates.com select a longer-tail keyphrase, such as "Video surveillance security system," which has only seven competitors, opposed to "video surveillance" which has 21 competitors. In addition, when crafting ad text, almost all of the competitors are advertising "low prices," so BJSpyAssociates.com could include a different offer such as "Best Quality" or "Free Shipping" to differentiate themselves.

Tip # 3: Selecting Your Spy Team

This SEOmoz report shows that BJSpyAssociates.com has no Google News Mentions, whereas its three competitors have several. Otano needs to create more press releases about his company and products.

Google News Mentions

http://www.spyassociates.com 20%	3
http://www.spyville.com 28%	8
http://www.brickhousesecurity.com 39%	20
http://www.bjspyassociates.com 0%	0

Your Spy Kit

Spying on the competition can be a time-intensive endeavor. You need a team. Meet your new top agents: Google, Yahoo! and Windows Live Alerts. Setting these alerts can keep you abreast of anything posted under your competitor's names, website URL's and core keywords.

- **Google.com/Alerts** — Sends updates regarding any targeted keywords from Google
- **Alerts.Yahoo.com** — Sends updates regarding any targeted keywords from Yahoo!
- **Alerts.Live.com** — Sends updates regarding any targeted keywords from Windows Live

Setting alerts could help BJSpyAssociates.com stay on top of its competitors, without having to spend hours searching the competitive landscape in search engines.

Using these tools and recommendations, BJSpyAssociates.com stands a much better chance of beating its competitors to gain valuable new markets of consumers. Remember, for successful findability you must understand the findability of your competitors and adjust your campaigns accordingly. By matching and beating the PPC, SEO and social media offerings of your competitors, you are setting yourself up to succeed on your Internet marketing mission.

Need Website Findability?

Do you know a website that could use a facelift, or have you tried any of these suggestions on your site? Send your suggestions to findability@websitemagazine.com. I'm always on the lookout for my next Findability Makeover Subject!

Heather Lutze has spent the last 10 years helping business owners get their enterprises noticed on the Web by their target audiences. She is the author of "The Findability Formula: The Easy, Non-Technical Approach to Search Engine Marketing." Visit FindabilityFormula.com for tools and resources to increase your site's findability.