

Competitive Analysis Program Template

Selling to today's consumer is more competitive than ever. New products and services are introduced every minute of the day. So, how can you be more competitive without spending a fortune on advertising? Easy, just outsell them. How? Focus on one or more "focus areas" of your business. For more details of how to identify them and use them, just keep reading.

The Secret

The key to outselling your competition is to compare your product or services to theirs. Once you know what your competition is doing, then you can differentiate and improve on what they are doing.

The Program

Just follow our easy 8 step competitive program template and you will be on your way to out-thinking and out-selling your competition without breaking your budget. The 8 evaluation steps include: pricing, packaging, delivery, benefits, quality, availability, service, and proof. Just read through each topic area. See if the "When to Focus" statements apply to your current situation. Then, just answer the following questions.

The Plan

Once you've read about all the ways to outsell your competition it's time to put them to work.

Step 1) Discover. Read through the 8 Focus areas

Step 2) Rate. Now decide which focus areas you could use and how useful they would be to you. Rate them (1 highest-8 lowest) as to how closely the "When to Focus" bullet points match your current business situation.

Step 3) Pick. Take the top 3 focus areas, find the corresponding Answer pages.

- a) **Clarify.** Pick a sales goal of your next sales campaign. I.e. increase widget sales.
- b) **Answer** the "What to ask" questions. Elaborate as much as possible. I.e. Yes, we have a return policy. It states that customers should _____. Our competitor ABC Company has a similar policy.
- c) **Compare** the topic area answers. Find the topic that has the most complete answers. Use that as the theme of your campaign.

Step 4) Re-work your product or service to be more competitive using our selected focus area. I.e.

Here's an example of "ABC Company" results for there next sales campaign using our Competitive Analysis Program template.

Goal: For ABC Company to Increase widget sales.

Focus Area: Price

Competitor DEF Company also offers a widget. Their widget is square and costs \$10. They offer a warranty for 1 year and only take phone orders. Although our widget is also square, we are going to put it in round packaging (a low-cost way to give the perception of a difference). We will not only take phone orders, but also sell over the web, by mail, and in person. We will also give an "unlimited warranty" with exclusions. By re-packing the widget and offering extra services we will increase the price to \$15 and highlight in our marketing the service aspect and the savings over time.

Step 1. Discover

Project Name: _____ Today's Date: _____

_____ Focus Area 1. Price

Demonstrate value; try not to get into "price wars", if you have a quality product or service, charge for it. Be careful using discounts, they can become a way of life. Great to introduce new products or services.

When to Focus:

- a) Your competitor just introduced a new product or service
- b) Your competitors change their pricing dramatically
- c) There has been a major shift in your local/regional/national economy

_____ Focus Area 2. Packaging

Admit it, you do judge a book by its cover. So do your customers. Packaging gives a visual story that leaves a lasting impression. Make sure your packaging convey what you REALLY want to say.

When to Focus:

- a) You notice one of your products or services (that used to be a best seller) starts lagging in sales
- b) You have a hard time telling the difference between your products and services and your competition (they all look alike)
- c) You've already tried manipulating prices (with little success). You want to compete using non-price associated factors (benefits, quality, services, etc)

_____ Focus Area 3. Delivery

Traditionally, delivery or distribution has been seen as dealing with logistics: how to get the product or service to the customer.

When to Focus:

- a) You are still using paper and postage. Newer technology (especially the web) can deliver faster and more effectively than any other medium. If you are still in the "horse & buggy days" for getting your final product or service to your customers, you are not keeping up with your competition or what your customers expect.
- b) When your competition starts offering innovative new ways to get similar products and services to customers.

_____ Focus Area 4. Benefits

Offering benefits is a great way to add value to your products and services without changing prices.

When to Focus:

- a) One of your products or services that used to be a best seller starts lagging in sales
- b) When it's hard to tell the difference between your products and services and your competition (they all look alike)
- c) When you want to compete using non-price associated factors (benefits, quality, services, etc)

_____ Focus Area 5. Quality

Customers do value quality. However, they tend to have short memories. If you have a quality product or service, remind people. Don't forget, the higher the quality, the higher you may be able to set your price.

When to Focus:

- a) You have a product or service that has been around 10 years or more.
- b) You consistently get compliments, testimonials, awards, and customer comments about how "good" your product or service is.
- c) You want to compete using non-price associated factors and have quality testimonials to support your claims.

_____ Focus Area 6. Availability

Time is short and competition plentiful. If your customer wants to buy now be ready for them. Listen to your customers. Research when they want you and/or your products and services. Then, find a way to give it to them.

When to Focus:

- a) Your customer loyalty rates have been consistently dropping over the past few years.
- b) Your competition has changed their hours.
- c) Your competition is able to serve customers or deliver their products or services better or faster.
- d) You have a surplus of product stock

_____ Focus Area 7. Service

What have you done for me lately? No matter what you sell, how you deliver service is unique your own. This is one of the easiest ways to differentiate yourself from competitors. But, probably one of the hardest to deliver. We are in a service based economy. Everyone expects service. So, what are you doing to make your services unique?

When to Focus:

- a) You have an energized and committed staff
- b) You have the equipment to provide special services (e.g. computers, phone systems, website)
- c) You've recently upgraded your physical facilities (e.g. buildings, parking, customer areas)

_____ Focus Area 8. Proof

The moment of truth. The proof is in the pudding. Sayings like this have been around forever. There's a reason for that. People do not like to be disappointed. Especially when it affects their wallets. Consistently delivering what you say not only builds your brand but your reputation.

When to Focus:

- a) You have a squeaky clean reputation.
- b) Your competition does not have a squeaky clean reputation
- c) Customer satisfaction with the longevity of your products or quality of your services is above average.

Step 2. Rate

Please rate easiest (1) to hardest (8) for you to identify with and implement.

_____ 1. Price

Demonstrate value; try not to get into "price wars", if you have a quality product or service, charge for it. Be careful using discounts, they can become a way of life. Great to introduce new products or services.

_____ 2. Packaging

Admit it, you do judge a book by its cover. So do your customers. Packaging gives a visual story that leaves a lasting impression. Make sure your packaging convey what you REALLY want to say.

_____ 3. Delivery

Traditionally, delivery or distribution has been seen as dealing with logistics: how to get the product or service to the customer.

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Step 3. Answer

Please select the focus area and provide the appropriate answers. Elaborate as much as possible. The more complete your answers the easier it is to implement your program.

Focus Area 1. Price

Demonstrate value; try not to get into "price wars", if you have a quality product or service, charge for it. Be careful using discounts, they can become a way of life. Great to introduce new products or services.

What to ask:

What image do you want prices to convey? (Cheap vs. exclusive) Current vs. future?

Can you offer a lower price? Who approves it? Who's affected?

Can you offer a higher price and increase the perceived value of your product? Why do you think so?

Do you offer easier payment options than your competition? What are they?

Can you rename/relaunch an older product or service with a new more competitive price? What is it?

How sensitive are your customers to price changes? Do you know? Have you asked them?

Can you offer more product features than your competition? What are the current ones? Future?

Do your features support the benefits you offer? Do you clearly state them? Where?

Focus Area 2. Packaging

Admit it, you do judge a book by its cover. So do your customers. Packaging gives a visual story that leaves a lasting impression. Make sure your packaging convey what you REALLY want to say.

What to ask:

Can you package your product/service more attractively? What do they currently look like? What changes could be made?

Do the colors of your packaging relate to your product/service and/or other collateral materials? What are they?

Can you package your product/service into a smaller or larger package? Combine to make a "combo" package? What would you combine?

Can you update how you market the product/service? Do you have the resources (time, staff, budget)?

Are you including features and/or benefits in your descriptions? What are they?

Are you using images or mostly copy? Why?

Focus Area 3. Delivery

Traditionally, delivery or distribution has been seen as dealing with logistics: how to get the product or service to the customer.

What to ask:

Are you using databases to record and track customer purchases? What kind? Who uses them? Do they work?

If you charge for shipping, do you have a high enough profit margin to offer free shipping?

Can you get your products or services into your customers' hands faster? How?

What methods are you currently using for your product/service delivery? What about your competition?

Are you using new technology to simplify your delivery or sales process for customers? Which ones?

Focus Area 4. Benefits

Offering benefits is a great way to add value to your products and services without changing prices.

What to ask:

Are you currently offering benefits? How long? What are they?

What benefits could you offer that customers would see as valuable but do not negatively affect your bottom line? What would they be?

Can you offer more benefits than your competition? What benefits do they offer?

Are your benefits more valuable to your customer? Why?

Are you able to effectively deliver current benefit offerings? Future? How?

Focus Area 5. Quality

Customers do value quality. However, they tend to have short memories. If you have a quality product or service, remind people. Don't forget, the higher the quality, the higher you may be able to set your price.

What to ask:

Is your product built and tested to last longer than your competition?

Can you improve the overall quality of your product? How? How long?

Can you make your product faster at solving your customers' problem?

Is your product easier to use than your competition? Why?

How long has your product/service(s) been around?

Are there any recent changes that have improved the quality of your products/services?

Focus Area 6. Availability

Time is short and competition plentiful. If your customer wants to buy now be ready for them. Listen to your customers. Research when they want you and/or your products and services. Then, find a way to give it to them.

What to ask:

When do your customers say they would like to buy from you? Do you know?

Is your product or service always available? Why or why not?

Can customers get the questions they need answered any time of the day or night? How?

Does your competition make their customers talk to a machine?

How do your "available" hours compare to your competition?

Can your partner with another company to help you expand availability?

Can you outsource any area that you do not have the expertise or staff to handle?

Are you willing to experiment with a "special extended hours" promotion? Other staff?

Focus Area 7. Service

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What to ask:

What's some of the unique services your provide?

How do you regularly communicate your service offerings to customers and potential customers?

Do you offer your customers free 24 hour customer service or support?

Can you provide any free services?

Do you provide free bonuses when your customers buy from you?

Are your bonuses more valuable than your competition? Why?

Has your staff participated in customer service programs?

Will your staff support you if extended services are added?

Focus Area 8. Proof

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What to ask:

Can you provide more proof than your competition that your product or service is more reliable, better made, better serviced? What is it?

Can you provide stronger testimonials or endorsements? What are they?

Do you have a stronger guarantee than your competition? What are yours? Your competition?

Do you offer warranties or guarantees? Why or why not?

Do you provide an easier return policy? Why or why not?

Step 4. Re-work

Project Goal: _____

Focus Area: _____

Theme: _____

Competitors Targeted: _____

Dates of Campaign: _____

Resources Needed (equipment, staff, budget, materials): _____

Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
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- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Other Information