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## How To "Spy" On Your Competition

Welcome to another edition of Michael Rasmussen's Internet Success Letter. In this issue, you'll learn all about how you can stay on the cutting edge in your niche by using some of my proven "**spy tactics**". These tactics are guaranteed to help you stay one step ahead of your competition, no matter what niche you're involved in.

When most people hear the word "spy", they think about the James Bond movies where spying has some sort of negative connotation. I look at spying (at least in this context) as market research, however. How else are you going to stay hip to what's going on in your industry unless you keep a close eye on your competition?

### Why Spy?

There are tons of reasons you'd want to spy on your competition. Here are the ones that I think are the most important:

#### #1 - Stay current about what's going on in your niche

I made the mistake of focusing only on pay per click advertising for a while, and when I finally checked back in, I found a whole bunch of new things that I had never heard of (like blog and ping, adsense sites, streaming video, etc).

Now that I've spent some time studying what my competitors are up to, I'm able to stay on the cutting edge of Internet marketing and add entire new dimensions to my business.

You also want to spy for self-protection.

#### #2 - Make sure nobody is stealing from you or copying you

This happens more than you think. Nearly every month I have to email someone's web host or their merchant processor to get them shut down, because they thought it would be okay to just sell my products and keep the profits (without bothering to check with me, of course).

One place you'll find this happening all the time is on eBay. Make sure you check eBay once or twice a month to make sure nobody is offering your products for sale on there.

#### #3 - Damage control

No matter how clean you keep your reputation, people are always going to gossip about you. In fact, the more popular you become, the more they will gossip.

Staying on top of your competition is one way to make sure that if they say something derogatory about you in one of their publications, you'll be alerted about it right away, and you'll be able to deal with it quickly.

### Preparing To Spy

The first thing you need to know is **who** you're actually spying on.

Before you launch your spy campaign, you need to spend a day searching around the net and finding all your major competitors.

If you want to save yourself from doing this tedious work, then just hire someone from elance.com to do it for you.

Here are the main places you should look:

<http://www.google.com> - Look at the ads on the right side of the screen, and also the top 50 listings under your major keywords.

<http://www.clickbank.com/marketplace> - Not only will you get to see who's out there, but Clickbank also ranks them in order of sales. The top ranked people are the ones you should follow the closest.

<http://groups.google.com> - You can browse the usenet groups from this site. It's a very handy place to do market research and also to find competitors.

<http://groups.yahoo.com> - Yahoo groups is another great place to find competitors. Some of them actually run discussion groups on there, and believe me, that's a goldmine for doing market research.

**SIDENOTE:** Make sure you set up a completely different email account for joining these groups. And also, make sure that email account does not contain the domain of your website, or your real name. If I ran a gardening discussion group, and someone with the email address **ralph@gardening-secrets-exposed.com** joined my group, I would not let him in, because I'd know he was in there doing market research, or maybe he's even hoping to spam.

Okay, onto the tactics.

### **Spy Tactic #1 - Get On Their List**

Why get on their list? You want to check out several things:

- How do they treat their list?
- Do you look forward to their emails, or are they nothing but annoying promotions?
- Do they give valuable content, or are they just trying to squeeze the list for all it's worth?
- Are their emails formatted in HTML, text, or are they PDF downloads?

- What can you do in your email marketing that they aren't doing?

I've been on the lists of many marketers over the years, and there are very few people who **REALLY** treat their readers well. I've learned from their mistakes (and my own), and that's why I'm sending out these premium newsletters now. I want to give you content that is **TRULY** valuable so that you'll stick with me over the years. I'm in this for the long haul, not for the quick buck (and that's a promise).

### **Spy Tactic #2 - Become Their Customer**

Yes, I'm actually telling you to buy their products. That's really the only way you're going to get the full experience of what it's like to be a customer of theirs. Maybe they are doing something that you never thought of.

I recently purchased a product from a well-known marketer, and I noticed that he asks people to call a toll free number before they open the product (it was a physical product, not a digital download).

When I called, I was greeted with a recorded message from the product developer himself. He spent a solid 10 minutes thanking me for buying the product, and giving me little tips and tricks on how to get the most out of the product that I just bought.

Now THAT'S a technique I never thought of, but you can bet that I'll be using it in the future.

By the way, it's also a good idea to actually send a question or two to the product developer just so you can see how well they respond to their paying customers. Do they respond personally or do they use virtual assistants? Do you get real emails or canned, pre-written emails? This stuff matters, so pay attention to it, and learn whatever you can from the experience of being their customer.

### **Spy Tactic #3 - Get A History Lesson**

Here's a fun little tactic that almost nobody uses.

Did you know that you can find out what your competitor's website used to look like when he or she first got started? Yep, there's a website that archives this stuff, and makes it available to you for free. Here's the link:

<http://www.archive.org/web/web.php>

I love checking out my competitors' sites and seeing how they've evolved over the years. You might see them using an idea or a tactic that you were planning to use, but they chose to stop using it for some reason. That's valuable information (especially if they're an experienced marketer), because it'll save you the trouble of having to test it out yourself.

Oh, and while you're at it, check out your own website as well. It's fun to see how you first got started with your very first site, especially if your site is many years old.

### **Spy Tactic #4 – Discover How They Train Their Army**

Does your competitor have an affiliate program? Then what are you waiting for? Get in there and sign up! Is he spending time to train his affiliates? Does he give them marketing tools that are already created for him? Things like:

- solo ads
- classified ads
- banners

Your competition might be doing a better job than you when it comes to training his affiliates. Take some time and see what it's like to be his affiliate, and then use that knowledge to beef up your own affiliate program.

### **In Conclusion**

Nothing will bring you up to speed in your particular niche faster than spending a few days REALLY studying how your competition is doing business.

If you take the best of what you learn from all your competitors and apply that wisdom to your own business, you are definitely going to be more successful in the years to come.

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter. I'd really like to hear what you think about it. Feel free to email me with your thoughts. I'd really love to hear from you.

Your Friend,

*Michael Rasmussen*

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