

Competitor analysis -- worked example

Three competitors analysed to a conclusion, plus what each column is for.

The competitors below are illustrative composites, not real companies. What matters is the shape of the conclusion in the final column.

Three kinds of competitor

Getting this wrong is the most common analysis error: the site outranking you may not be competing for your customer at all.

Type	What it means	Watch out for
Direct	Sells the same thing to the same buyer.	Easy to obsess over. Usually the least useful for finding a gap.
Adjacent	Solves the same problem a different way.	Where substitution actually comes from, and usually ignored.
Search-only	Outranks you but does not compete commercially -- a directory, a publisher, a tool.	You may not be able to beat them. Decide whether the query is worth contesting at all.

Worked analysis

Established incumbent (illustrative) -- Direct

Field	Finding
Positioning claim	"The complete platform for growing teams"
Price signal	No published price, "book a demo" only
Their weakness	Nothing for a buyer under 20 people; every page assumes an enterprise procurement process.
What I will do	Publish transparent pricing and a page written for a 5-20 person team.

Content publisher (illustrative) -- Search-only

Field	Finding
Positioning claim	A media site monetised by affiliate links
Price signal	n/a
Their weakness	Their reviews are written from documentation, not use. No original assets.
What I will do	Compete on originality rather than volume: real files and tested verdicts they cannot match.

Cheaper alternative (illustrative) -- Adjacent

Field	Finding
Positioning claim	"Do it yourself in an afternoon"
Price signal	Published, low, self-serve
Their weakness	No support and no accountability, which matters the moment something breaks.
What I will do	Make the cost of getting it wrong explicit, rather than arguing about price.

What goes in each column

Column	What goes in it
Competitor	Name and URL.
Type	Direct, adjacent, or a search competitor who is not a business competitor.
Positioning claim	The promise on their homepage, in their words.
Price signal	Published price, "from" price, or none. Note which.
Primary channel	Where their traffic visibly comes from.
Est. organic traffic	From your SEO tool. Directional only.
Ranking pages that matter	The pages beating you for queries you want.
Content depth	Thin, comparable, or substantially better than yours.
Proof they use	Case studies, numbers, logos, reviews, or nothing.
Their weakness	The gap you could credibly occupy.
What I will do	One action. A row with no action is research, not analysis.

Where the data comes from

Column	Source
Positioning claim	Their homepage hero. Copy it verbatim -- paraphrasing hides how vague it is.
Price signal	Pricing page, or its absence. "No published price" is itself a finding.
Est. organic traffic	Ahrefs, Semrush or similar. Comparable within one tool only.
Ranking pages	Your own Search Console queries, then check who ranks above you.
Proof they use	Homepage and case studies. Note whether the numbers have a baseline.

Mistakes to avoid

- Listing twenty competitors. Three analysed properly beats twenty in a spreadsheet nobody reads.
- Only tracking direct competitors, and missing the adjacent substitute that is actually taking your buyers.
- Comparing traffic estimates across different tools as if they were the same number.
- Recording what they do without deciding what you will do. That is research, not analysis.
- Copying a competitor's strength instead of finding the gap they have left. You will always be second at their game.
- Doing it once. It is only useful as a repeated measurement -- quarterly is enough.

Your analysis

Competitor

Type

Positioning claim

Their weakness

What I will do

Review date
