

3 WAYS TO CATCH UP WITH YOUR COMPETITION AFTER YOU INEVITABLY FALL BEHIND

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Throughout February, we've been talking about what companies can do to gain an edge over their competitors (and indeed, [February's webinar](#) delves further into this discussion). But what about companies that, for whatever reason, fall behind their competitors? Whether it's a lack of time, energy, resources or something else, when one company gains an edge, another company loses it. And that's realistic - most of us in business know that there are *always* setbacks.

So what if you've lost your business's competitive edge? And more importantly, how do you get it back? Since every business faces their own set of hurdles, it's not about the setbacks; it's how you trudge ahead and claw your way back to the top - no matter what.



Some companies just have it easy. Like Starbucks, they've always been atop the coffee world, haven't they? Nope. [Even Starbucks needed saving](#), and if they can come all the way back to where they are today, your business can too.

Here are 3 ways you can catch back up with your competition if and (unless you're lucky) when you hit a snag and fall behind your competitors:

Be Honest And Realistic

If you're reading this post and thinking, "Why are these guys being so negative about businesses?" Bear with us until the end and give this a shot, and know that we don't view the things we're saying as negative - just pragmatic. It's a tough world to do business in, but it's impossible for companies who expect it to be easy (or *stay* easy if the stars do align).

If you've ever had any contact with super successful entrepreneurs or business owners, you've probably heard the phrase "don't drink your own Kool-Aid." That's essentially what we mean when we say be honest and realistic about your business. Don't let success fool you into a false sense of security because that'll only compound things if and when they do get rough. The closer your perception of your business is to reality, the easier it'll be to get back on track when the time comes.



Here's an example: your company has experienced three straight years of sales growth. When year four starts off slower than expected, you don't think anything of it because, hey, things will sort themselves out in quarter two. Before you know it, you're in Q4 staring down a 50% decrease in sales for the year. So what really happened?

Once you realized there was problem, you eventually discovered that a new competitor opened up shop around the same time you started taking a hit. The new guys used aggressive marketing tactics, offered a great customer experience and set their prices just a hair lower than yours. Huh - no wonder you lost so many clients. All the information was there for you to see, but you weren't looking for it because - you guessed it - you were sipping on your own Kool-Aid.

It's difficult to balance pragmatism with the confidence and courage that it takes to run a successful business, but that's how you know it's the right thing to do!

Think Outside The Box

Remaining self-aware of your company's position amongst the competition is a good preventative measure, but what do you do if you've already fallen behind? It's reasonable to assume that any company who is after your customers has done their research, so it'll take some digital savvy to gain back your turf.

One of the best ways to even things up with your competitors is to eliminate any advantages they have over you. In the world of inbound marketing, every link a company has represents a small edge over other brands in the industry that don't have the link. [Moz](#) just released an updated version of their Link Opportunities tool that does a great job at uncovering sites within your niche that are linking to two of your stronger competitors, but not to you.

The 'Link Intersect Tool' is effective in two ways, and we'll briefly run through both of them. For the first method, think of two heavyweights in your industry and plug their URLs into the tool. We're using Moz and our partners over at [HubSpot](#). These brands produce exceptional digital marketing resources, which is one of the primary goals of WSI World. Here's what the results look like:

URL:

Show Metrics

Reclaim Links | Unlinked Mentions | **Link Intersect**

Find sites or pages that link to your competition or other sites in your niche, but don't link to you. [Tips on using Link Intersect](#)

Show

1)

2)

not linking to

1 - 50 of 4,338 Link Intersect Results

Page Title and Link Source	PA	Date Found
Blog EN www.prestashop.com/blog/en/feed/	92	08/17/2014
Social Media Examiner: Social media marketing how to, research, case studies, news and more! Social Media ... www.socialmediaexaminer.com/	86	10/11/2014
Social media marketing - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media_marketing	87	08/05/2014
[No Title] www.socialmediatoday.com/	86	12/26/2014
[No Title] www.entrepreneur.com/article/238908	79	12/20/2014
@ProBlogger feeds.feedburner.com/ProBloggerHelpingBloggersEarnMoney	79	09/08/2014
24 Eye-Popping SEO Statistics - Search Engine Journal www.searchenginejournal.com/24-eye-popping-seo-statistics/42665/	79	09/18/2014
ProBlogger Blog Tips - The Blog : @ProBlogger www.problogger.net/blog/	78	08/20/2014

There are 4,338 pages that link to both Moz and HubSpot's root domains but not WSI's, so there are plenty of opportunities out there. Many of these links come from places we're aware of, like [Social Media Examiner](#), another big industry resource. On the other hand, there are a ton of not-so-obvious opportunities for us to target in our link outreach. For example, here's a [comprehensive list of tools and blogs for startup companies](#) that we certainly aspire to be on, and there's also the [social media marketing page on Wikipedia](#), which is a link that seems obvious but isn't something we thought to target.

If plugging in the big guns seems like an ambitious place to start, try Googling a keyword or phrase associated with your business and using the top two hits. We tried 'digital marketing resources,' a term that WSI ranks for on the first page of Google. Here are the results the Link Intersect tools spits out for that query:

The screenshot shows a web analytics tool interface. On the left is a sidebar with various tools like 'Inbound Links', 'Rank Tracker', and 'Keyword Difficulty'. The main area has a search bar with the URL 'http://www.wsiworld.com/' and a 'Search' button. Below the search bar are tabs for 'Reclaim Links', 'Unlinked Mentions', and 'Link Intersect'. The 'Link Intersect' tab is active, showing a search for sites that link to competitors but not to the user's site. Two competitor URLs are entered: 'http://www.exacttarget.com' and 'http://digitalmarketingdepot.com/'. The target site is 'fillinyoursite.com'. Below this, there are 19 results for 'Link Intersect Results'. The results are displayed in a table with columns for 'Page Title and Link Source', 'PA', and 'Date Found'.

Page Title and Link Source	PA	Date Found
[No Title] searchengineand.com/using-autocomplete-hijack-local-search-results-improve-online-reputation-199568	73	12/13/2014
77 Percent Of Us Want To Get Marketing Messages Via Email & There's No Close Second Place, Study Says marketingland.com/77-percent-of-us-want-to-get-marketing-messages-via-email-theres-no-close-second-place-study...	69	11/07/2014
[No Title] searchengineand.com/scaling-systematizing-link-building-190469	66	12/24/2014
Omni-Channel Finally Becomes Mainstream In 2015 marketinsider.com/omni-channel-finally-becomes-mainstream-2015-111366	63	12/22/2014

Since we narrowed our search parameters, we got much more specific results, and a manageable list of 19 links to sift through. The most fruitful information in this set of data is that a number of articles on [Search Engine Land](#) and [Marketing Land](#) link to sites like WSI World.

The technical process of this exercise is simple, but there's immense value in the resulting data, and you'll be surprised at how many ideas you'll get from looking at a list of industry sites that your competitors have beaten you to. It's inspiring, humbling and definitely helps you to think outside the box.

Improve The Customer Experience

If you look back at the [Starbucks situation](#) one more time, their recovery was completely based on improving the experience of their customers. They closed their stores to retrain their baristas. The new CEO invited customers to email him directly. They focused on creating a better website and having more of a presence on social media. And they made the tough decision to close over 600 locations, in essence admitting that opening them was a mistake.

Your business wouldn't exist without customers, and at the end of the day, it won't last if somebody else is willing to treat your customers better than you are. If you've fallen behind your competitors, chances are it's because they realized this before you did. But if the stats and the history show us anything, it's that just because you lose some customers, doesn't mean they're gone forever. **Be honest about your business, think outside the box, improve the customer's experience and go win them back!**

Said another way, catching up with your competition boils down to doing a better job running your business (or marketing team, one-man operation, etc). You had the business sense, determination and digital marketing know-how to build up a solid customer base, which means you have the skills to do it again. And when you do, you'll never take your customers - or your success - for granted.
