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How To Ethically Spy On Your C

2 Comments

Do you want to learn how to steal your competition's secrets?



Do you want to do it an ethical way?

One of the most effective ways to build a successful business is to model your successful competitors.

Knowledge is power.

The more information you have the higher the chances you have of succeeding.

I've been watching the show **Billions** on Showtime. The main reason why Bobby Axelrod (the hedge fund manager) the show's protagonist, is successful is because of insider information.

He makes trades knowing beforehand facts about a company before they are made public. The show is a great cat and mouse game between Bobby Axelrod and the district prosecutor.

I'm not advocating you do illegal things, instead, you can use the tools available to you to gather information on your competition.

In marketing, you can copy your successful competitors and model what they do, but to be a leader in your field you have to be unique. The information we gather here is strictly for your own education.

You can take this information and use it to craft your message in a unique and compelling way.

What is Competitive Intelligence?

Wikipedia defines it as the following:

“Competitive intelligence is the action of defining, gathering, analyzing, and distributing intelligence about products, customer competitors, and any aspect of the environment needed to support executives and managers making strategic decisions for an organization.”

There are two types of competitive intelligence: strategic intelligence and tactical intelligence.

Strategic Intelligence

This type of intelligence is a 10,000-foot view of your marketplace. It's supposed to answer questions about the long-term impact of new ideas and technologies.

Some questions that should be answered include:

- Where should we as a company be in X years?
- What are the strategic risks and opportunities facing us?

Tactical Intelligence

Tactical intelligence is generally gathering information on the sales process of your competitors. Some questions that should be answered include:

- Product – what are people selling?
- Price – what price are they charging?
- Promotion – what activities are they conducting for promoting this product?
- Place – where are they selling this product?
- Other – sales force structure, clinical trial design, technical issues, etc.

For the rest of the blog post, I'll be focusing on tips for gathering tactical intelligence.

The Importance of Competitive Intelligence

What's working in your marketplace?

What types of offers are converting?

What claims and promises are being made?

You must answer these questions accurately to get a deep understanding of your marketplace. This knowledge will help you make better decisions. For example, if we know a specific sales funnel works in a niche you can model what they are doing. Russel Brunson calls this **Funnel Hacking**.

It's very important to reverse engineer what your competitors are doing. When you successfully reverse engineer their strategies you can begin to test them for your own business. We're doing this to gather information on what's working in your niche.

1 Identify & Reverse Engineer Your Competition

The first thing you have to do is to identify your direct and indirect competitors. Make a list of at least 5 competitors in your space. You probably already know 5 or 6 competitors in your space.

However, there are a lot of different tools you can use to identify more competitors.

For example, I'll be using **Precision Nutrition** to do a competitive analysis.

- Go to Similar Web and type www.precisionnutrition.com



Sign In

Our Products Resources Company Pricing [Live Demo](#)

Get insights for any website or app

Websites | Mobile apps

http://www.precisionnutrition.com/

Search

Trending Website Searches: airbnb.com ebay.com amazon.com



- Scroll all the way down and take a look at your competitors. This will give a broad overview of both direct and indirect competitors.

Precisionnutrition.com [+ Add Competitors](#) [Download PDF](#)

Similar Sites ¹

Similarity Rank

| | | | | |
|------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Facebook.com | Youmeworks.com | Builtlean.com | GN Gourmetnutrition.c. | T-Nation.com |
| Proteinpower.com | Elitefts.com | Johnberardi.com | Performancemenu... | Amazon.com |

- In order to see more sites, you can sign up for the free demo. I recommend you do this to take a snapshot and find some competitors you didn't know about.

2 Build a database of your competition (Use screenshot Evernote)

Once you've found a list of competitors you want to research its time to start building a database. I like [Evernote](#) to build this database.

You can easily take screenshots by using the [Clip to Evernote](#). It also organizes different screenshots in folders.

Here's how you can structure your folders:

- Website homepage
- Landing Pages
- Ad Creatives
- Retargeting Ads
- Trip Wire/Upsell Offers

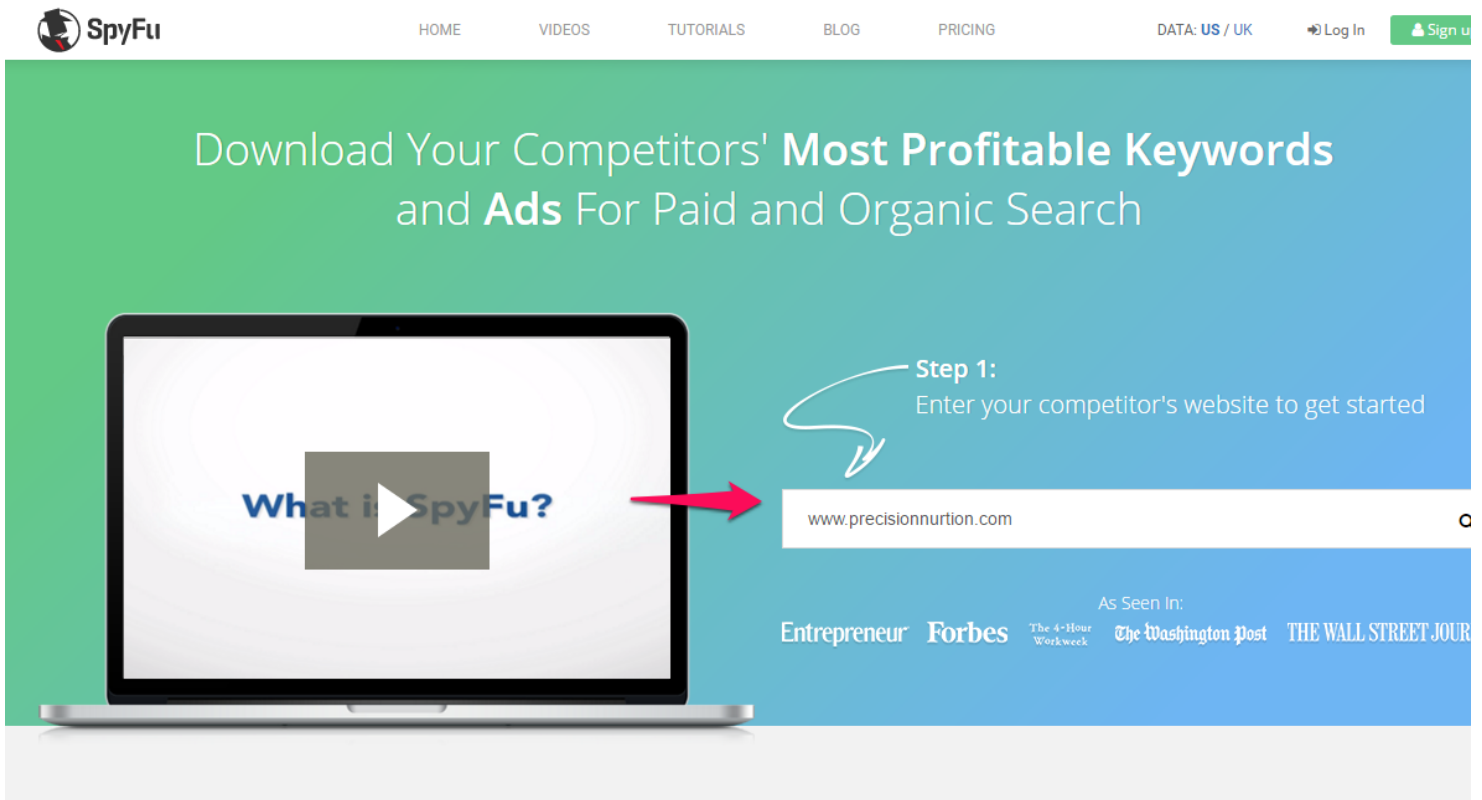
It's important to take screenshots because the landing pages often change. Also, make sure to record URLs into your folders.

3 Determine Your Competition's Advertising Budgets

There are several tools you can use to identify your competition's budgets. [AdBeat](#) and [WhatRunsWh](#) both powerful and provide good data. However, they might be out of your budget.

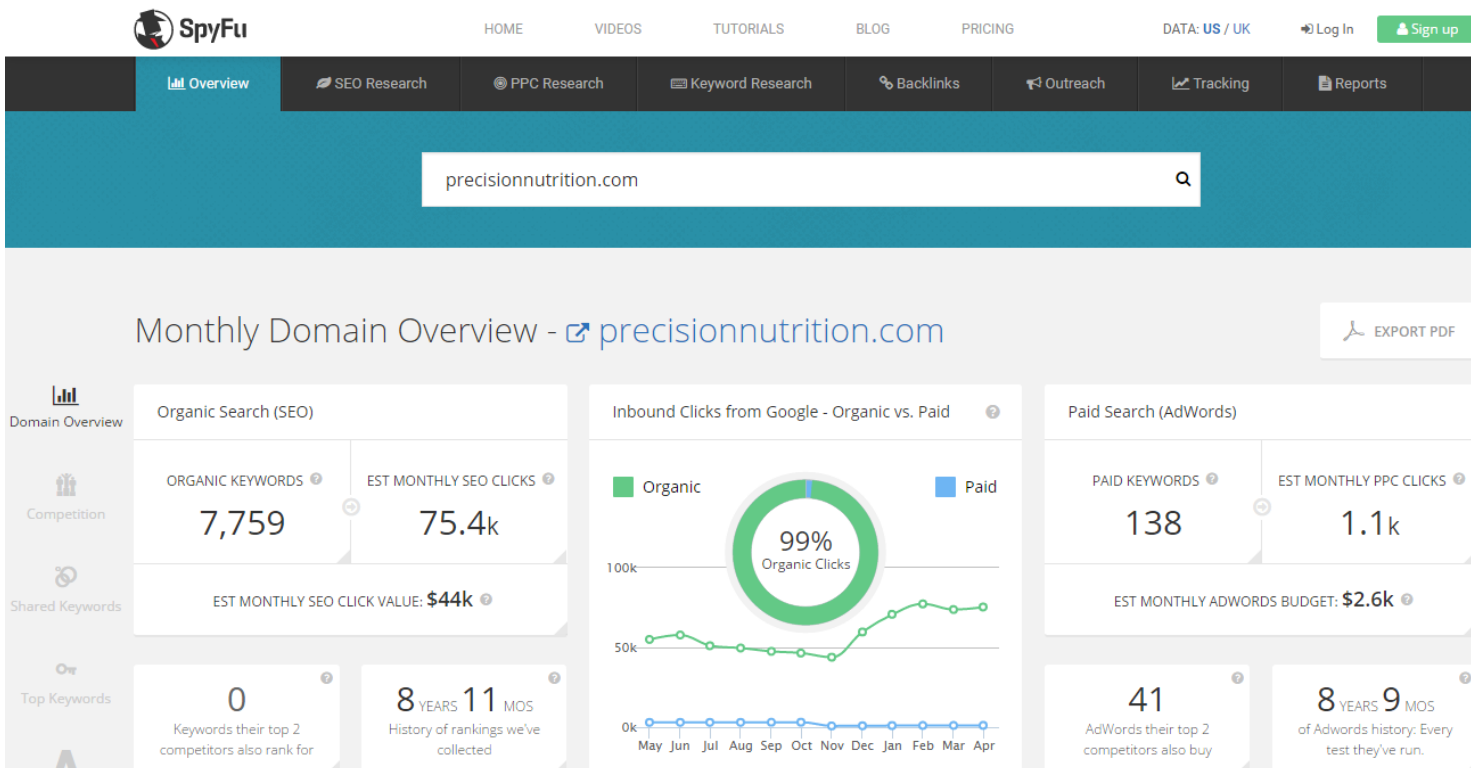
I've used [SpyFu](#) and have had good success with it. The free version gives you a ton of data but if you want to take a step further I would try the paid version and use it at least for a month.

- Go to Spyfu and type your competitor website. In this example, we'll again be using Precision Nutrition.



The banner features the SpyFu logo at the top left. Navigation links include HOME, VIDEOS, TUTORIALS, BLOG, PRICING, DATA: US / UK, Log In, and Sign up. The main headline reads: "Download Your Competitors' Most Profitable Keywords and Ads For Paid and Organic Search". Below this, a laptop displays a video player with the text "What is SpyFu?". A red arrow points from the video player to a search bar containing "www.precisionnurtion.com". A callout box says "Step 1: Enter your competitor's website to get started". At the bottom, it lists "As Seen In:" followed by logos for Entrepreneur, Forbes, The 4-Hour Workweek, The Washington Post, and THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

- The toolbar gives you a broad overview of their SEO, PPC, Keywords, Backlinks, Outreach, and Tracking. You can also see that their only spending about \$1.1K/month on Paid Search.



The dashboard shows a navigation bar with tabs for Overview, SEO Research, PPC Research, Keyword Research, Backlinks, Outreach, Tracking, and Reports. The search bar contains "precisionnutrition.com". The main heading is "Monthly Domain Overview - precisionnutrition.com" with an "EXPORT PDF" button. The dashboard is divided into several sections:

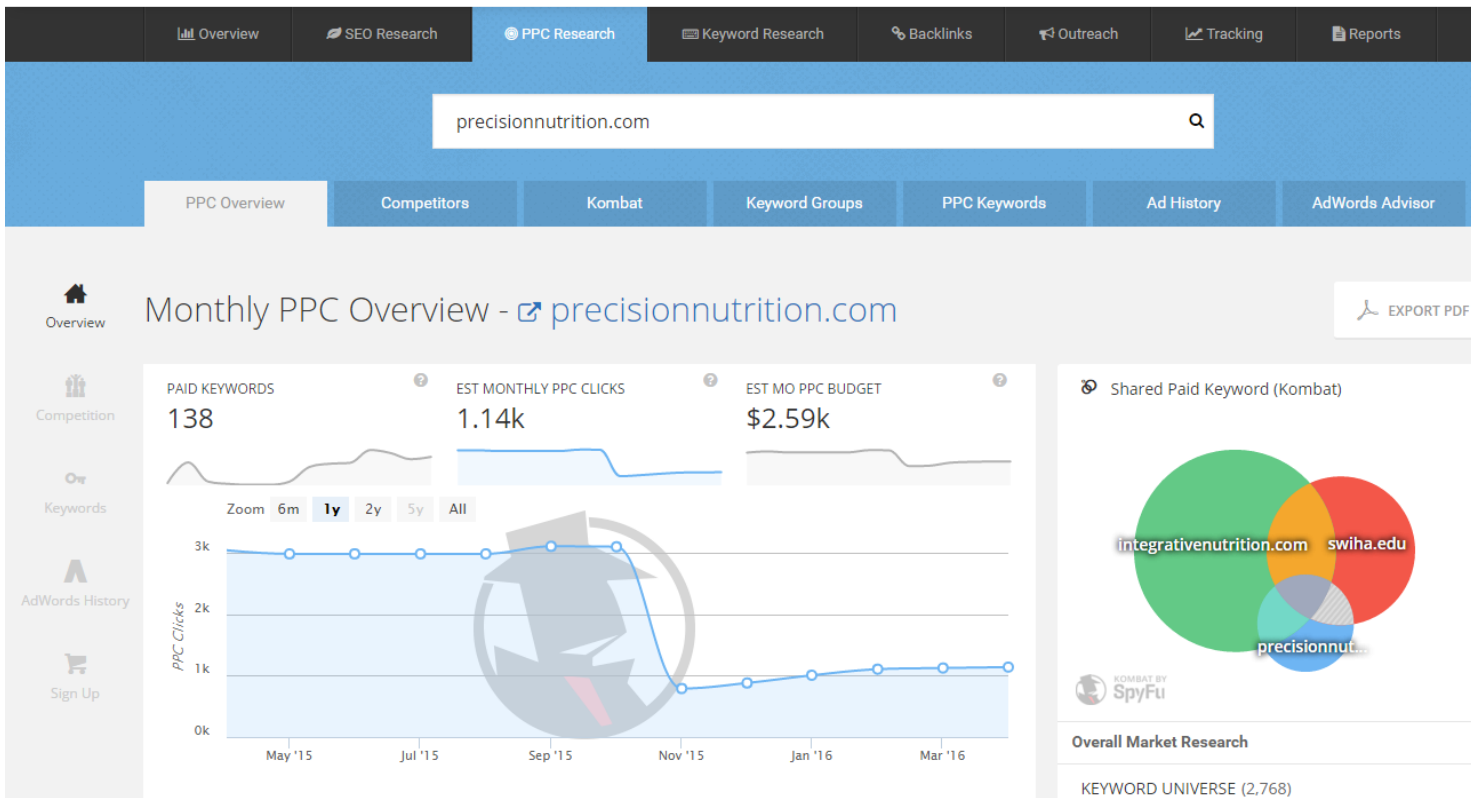
- Domain Overview:** Includes metrics for Organic Search (SEO), Inbound Clicks from Google (Organic vs. Paid), and Paid Search (AdWords).
- Organic Search (SEO):** Shows 7,759 Organic Keywords, 75.4k EST Monthly SEO Clicks, and an EST Monthly SEO Click Value of \$44k.
- Inbound Clicks from Google - Organic vs. Paid:** A chart showing 99% Organic Clicks. The Y-axis ranges from 0k to 100k. The X-axis shows months from May to April.
- Paid Search (AdWords):** Shows 138 Paid Keywords, 1.1k EST Monthly PPC Clicks, and an EST Monthly AdWords Budget of \$2.6k.
- Competitive Metrics:** Shows 0 Top Keywords (Keywords their top 2 competitors also rank for), 8 Years 11 Mos History of rankings we've collected, 41 AdWords their top 2 competitors also buy, and 8 Years 9 Mos of Adwords history: Every test they've run.

- Scroll all the way down to Adwords History and you can look at the top performing Ad and the average CPC.

The screenshot displays the 'AdWords History' interface. On the left is a navigation sidebar with options like 'Domain Overview', 'Competition', 'Shared Keywords', 'Top Keywords', 'AdWords History', 'Ranking History', and 'Inbound Links'. The main area features a table of keywords with columns for 'Keywords', 'Daily Clicks', 'Cost / Click', and 'Coverage'. The top row shows 'nutrition certification' with 81 clicks, a cost of \$3.86, and 50% coverage. Below this, a detailed view of an ad is shown for 'Nutrition Certification' with a position of 3. To the right, a 'Top Ads' sidebar provides a summary of ad performance, including '5 of 18 Avg Ad Position' and '7% in Top of Page'.

| Keywords | Daily Clicks | Cost / Click | Coverage |
|----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|----------|
| nutrition certification | 81 | \$3.86 | 50% |
| become a nutritionist | 21 | \$3.78 | 58% |
| nutritionist certification | 16 | \$3.45 | 58% |
| holistic nutrition certification | 7 | \$6.83 | 58% |
| nutrition coaching | 18 | \$3.98 | 42% |
| login to see all results | 1 | \$6.33 | 50% |
| login to see all results | 2 | \$8.87 | 58% |
| login to see all results | 0 | \$7.58 | 50% |
| login to see all results | 5 | \$2.13 | 50% |
| login to see all results | 4 | \$7.20 | 50% |
| login to see all results | 1 | \$8.66 | 50% |
| login to see all results | 1 | \$16.29 | 58% |
| login to see all results | 2 | \$7.27 | 50% |
| login to see all results | 1 | \$8.95 | 67% |

- When you click PPC overview you can see their estimated PPC monthly budget, competition, keywords, and history. They have been collecting this data for over 8 years for this company.



4 Determine Your Competition's Demographics (Alexa)

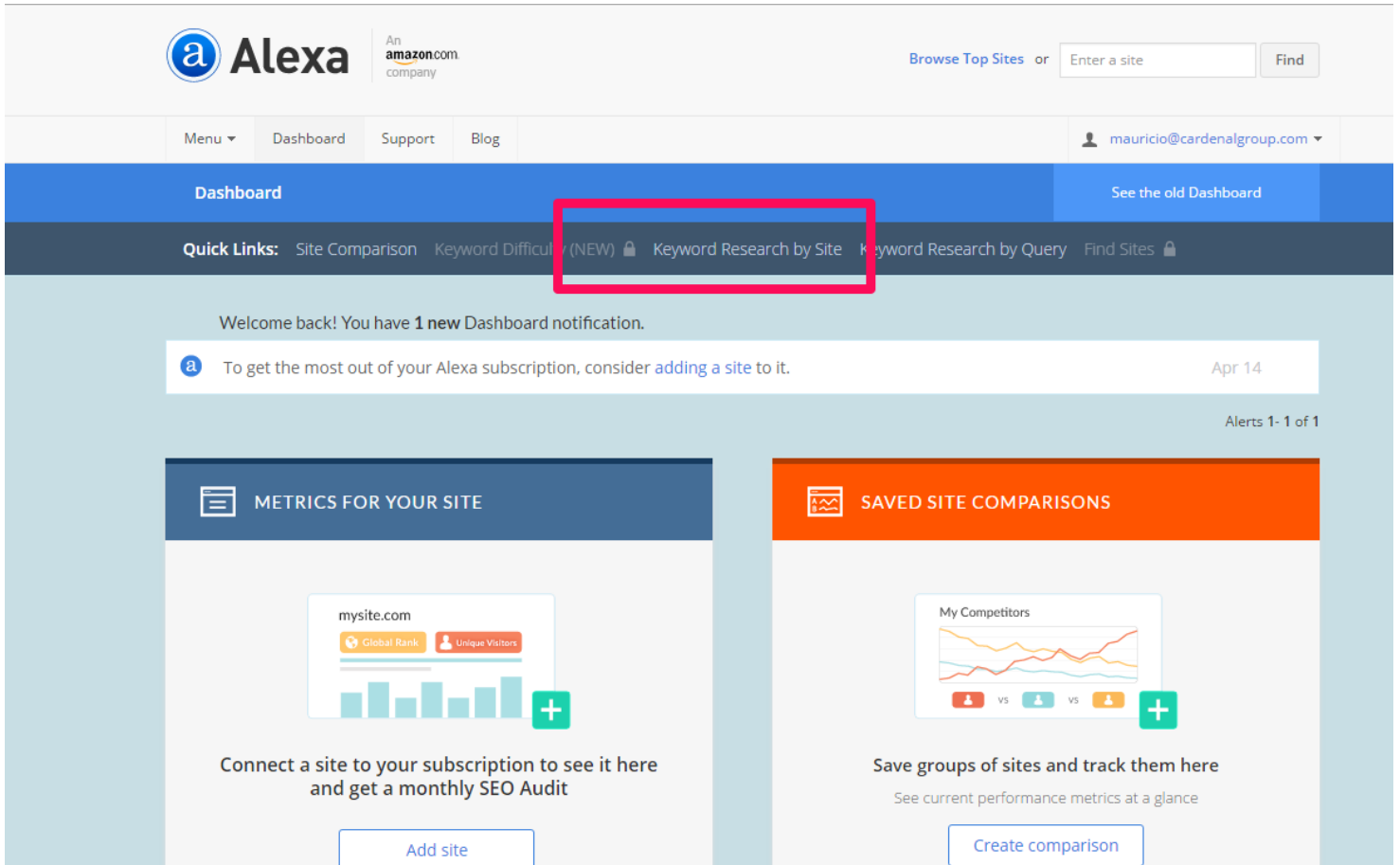
Before you start any marketing campaign it's important to understand the psychographics and demog of your target audience. With Alexa, you can easily get a broad overview of the demographics of your competitors.

Demographics are things like

- Age
- Gender
- Location
- Education Level
- Income Level

Sign up for [Alexa's Insight Plan](#) and start with the free trial. You won't need more than 7 days to gather

Once you're logged in click on the Keyword Research by site:



Enter your competitor's URL.

Site Keywords

Site Overview

Site Comparisons

Sites Linking in

Site Keywords

Organic

Paid

Paid Competition

Enter a site above to get started.

Scroll down to Audience Geography and you'll get an overview of which countries have the most traff

Audience Geography

Where are this site's visitors located?

Visitors by Country

| Country | Percent of Visitors | Rank in Country |
|----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| United States | 58.5% | 9,942 |
| United Kingdom | 7.0% | 11,761 |
| India | 5.8% | 49,305 |
| Canada | 4.0% | 9,697 |
| Australia | 2.3% | 16,234 |

[More](#)

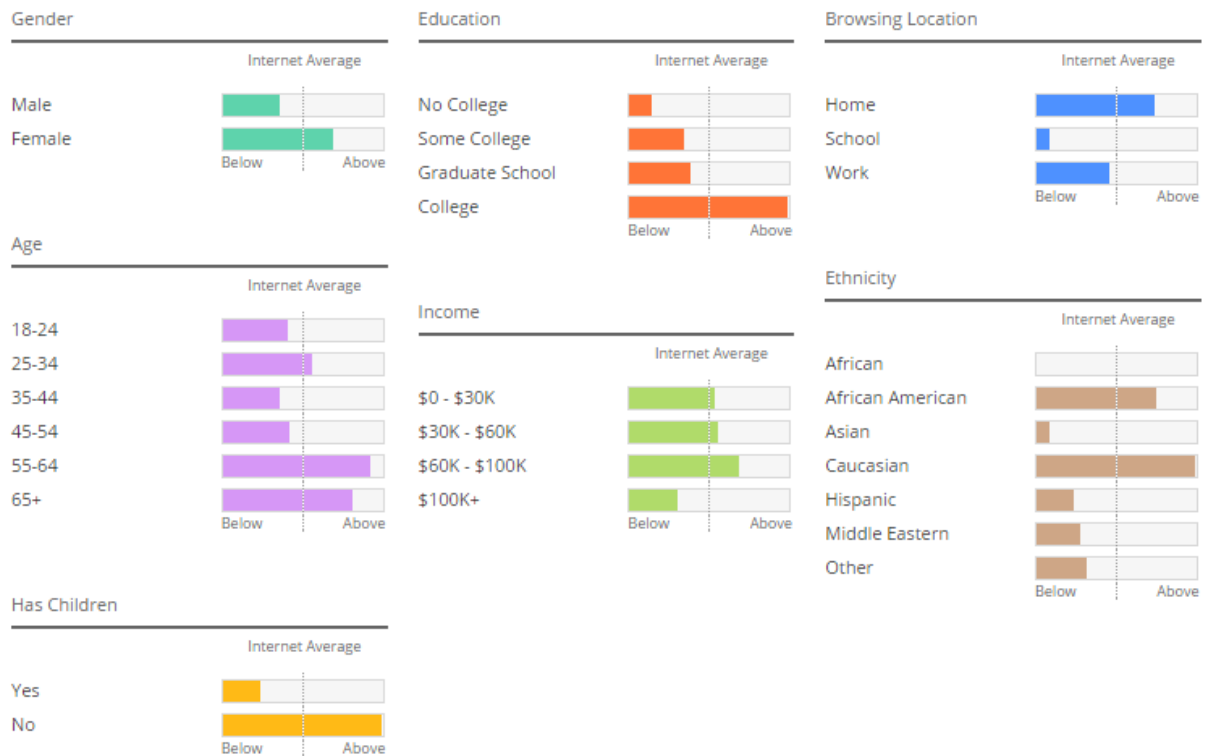
Scroll all the way down and you'll get a view of the demographics of the visitors that visit Precision Nu

Who visits precisionnutrition.com?



Audience Demographics

How similar is this site's audience to the general internet population?



Save these two documents in a folder.

5 Identify High ROI Keywords

What keywords are providing your competitors with an ROI?

We can use **Alexa** to determine the most profitable keywords your competition is using.

First, click on site keywords:

Menu Dashboard Support Blog mauricio@cardenalgrou.com

Competitive Intelligence

Site Overview precisionnutrition.com

This site's metrics are estimated. Is this your site? Certify your site's metrics.

How popular is precisionnutrition.com?

Site Overview Site Comparisons Sites Linking in Site Keywords

Need an API? Get direct access to traffic data, related links and more with Alexa's Web Information Service. Learn More

Alexa Traffic Ranks How is this site ranked relative to other sites?

Global Rank 31,452 (▲ 784)

Rank in United States 9,942

You can export the organic keywords into a CSV file.

Competitive Intelligence

Site Keywords precisionnutrition.com

Site Overview Site Comparisons Sites Linking in Site Keywords Organic Paid Paid Competition

Need an API? Get direct access to traffic data, related links and more with Alexa's Web Information Service. Learn More

Organic Keywords for precisionnutrition.com Export CSV

| Keyword | Popularity | Advertising Competition | % of Search Traffic |
|-----------------------------------|------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. alkaline water | 40 / 100 | 74 / 100 | 33.00% |
| 2. elimination diet | 30 / 100 | 15 / 100 | 11.61% |
| 3. how to make chocolate | 29 / 100 | 39 / 100 | 5.62% |
| 4. intermittent fasting for women | 22 / 100 | 0 / 100 | 1.89% |
| 5. john berardi | 17 / 100 | 21 / 100 | 1.40% |
| 6. nutrition coach | 17 / 100 | 58 / 100 | 1.30% |
| 7. intermittent fasting | 45 / 100 | 17 / 100 | 1.09% |
| 8. working out while sick | 15 / 100 | 10 / 100 | 0.98% |
| 9. working out when sick | 15 / 100 | 0 / 100 | 0.94% |
| 10. making chocolate | 13 / 100 | 45 / 100 | 0.88% |
| 11. exercising while sick | 13 / 100 | 0 / 100 | 0.86% |
| 12. nutrient timing | 16 / 100 | 40 / 100 | 0.84% |

The next step is to export the paid keywords in another CSV file

Competitive Intelligence

Site Keywords

precisionnutrition.com x

Site Overview

Site Comparisons

Sites Linking in

Site Keywords

Organic

Paid

Paid Competition

Paid Keywords for precisionnutrition.com

↓ [Export CSV](#)

| Keyword ? | Advertising Activity ? | Popularity ? | Advertising Competition ? |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. precision nutrition | 37 / 100 | 32 / 100 | 13 / 100 |
| 2. nutrition certification | 24 / 100 | 19 / 100 | 88 / 100 |
| 3. precision nutrition certification | 22 / 100 | 11 / 100 | 59 / 100 |
| 4. nutritionist certification | 21 / 100 | 17 / 100 | 73 / 100 |
| 5. holistic nutrition certification | 15 / 100 | 11 / 100 | 74 / 100 |
| 6. john berardi | 15 / 100 | 17 / 100 | 21 / 100 |
| 7. precision nutrition cost | 15 / 100 | 10 / 100 | 10 / 100 |
| 8. becoming a nutritionist | 13 / 100 | 9 / 100 | 89 / 100 |
| 9. nutrition certification online | 13 / 100 | 13 / 100 | 76 / 100 |
| 10. sports nutrition certification | 13 / 100 | 13 / 100 | 71 / 100 |
| 11. best nutrition certification | 11 / 100 | 0 / 100 | 93 / 100 |
| 12. functional nutrition certification | 11 / 100 | 4 / 100 | 100 / 100 |
| 13. nutrition certification programs | 11 / 100 | 9 / 100 | 64 / 100 |
| 14. nutrition coach certification | 11 / 100 | 1 / 100 | 75 / 100 |
| 15. nutrition courses | 11 / 100 | 19 / 100 | 85 / 100 |

Need an API?
Get direct access to traffic data, related links and more with Alexa's Web Information Service. [Learn More](#)

Once you have this database of keywords you can use this to create an **SEO campaign** targeting **low competition** and high ROI keywords.

6 Build A Landing Page Swipe File

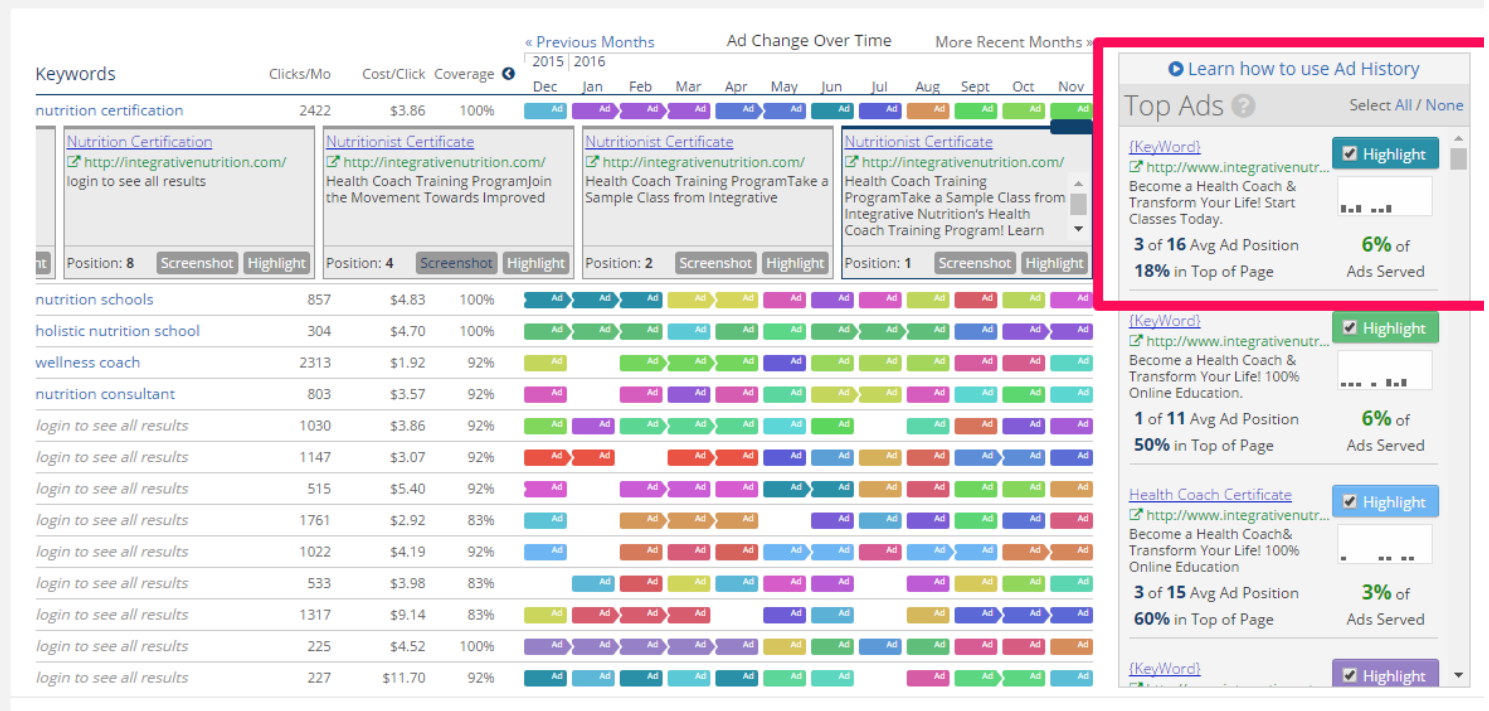
Building a Landing page swipe file will give provide with a great understanding of the copy, images, and being used in your marketplace.

I use a Google Chrome plugin called **Full Screen Capture** . With one click of the button, I can capture the entire landing page reliably-without requesting extra permissions.

For example, let's take a look at **Integrative Nutrition**

They are spending over \$28,000/month on PPC. Take a look at the keywords they are using and the landing page. Most of the keywords direct them to their homepage which they use as the landing page.

AdWords History



Driving traffic to a non-targeted landing page is one of the **biggest mistakes** that companies make. This conversion rates and your relevancy scores.

Here are some things to keep tabs

Creative:

- Images
- Copy
- Headlines
- Upsell offers
- Downsell offers

You can also look at where they are getting their traffic from on their landing pages. Are they using affiliate traffic? Warm or cold traffic? Etc...

7 Sign up for your competition's email lists

By now you should know how important it is to use emails to follow up with your leads. Chances are, none of your competitors don't have an effective email follow-up campaign.

But the ones that do, you should sign up for their lists. Sign up for different offers and see what sequence they use to get their customers to buy.

This will give you a great understanding of what objections they have to overcome, the psychology, and a lot of information is needed for your prospects to make a decision.

For this step, you can either create a new email address or you can use the + sign trick. The + sign trick allows you to embed any text after your regular email address.

For example, if your email address is stevesmith@gmail.com you can use stevesmith+*anytextyouwant*@gmail.com

This will allow you to filter any emails from that address.

8 Determine your marketplace's sophistication level

This relates to the level of awareness of your marketplace. How many similar products/services has your market been advertised to before?

What promises are being made?

What unique mechanisms are being claimed?

I wrote a long piece on how you can determine your marketplace's sophistication level and the best strategies for each level [here](#).

9 What Buying Patterns Can You Find From Amazon?

Amazon is the world's third largest search engine. Unlike most channels Amazon's users are looking to right away. A great way to find what information your prospects are looking for is to look for the best in your niche.

What books/videos are your prospects buying?

For our example, we've selected the best sellers for medical books here:

amazon try Prime Books

Departments

Books Advanced Search New Releases Best Sellers The New York Times® Best Sellers Children's Books Textbooks Textbook Rentals Sell Us Your Books Best Books of the Month Kindle eBooks

Amazon Best Sellers
Our most popular products based on sales. Updated hourly.

Any Department
Books
Medical Books
Administration & Medicine
Economics
Allied Health Professions
Basic Sciences
Dentistry
History
Medical Informatics
Medicine
Nursing
Pharmacology
Psychology
Research
Veterinary Medicine

Best Sellers in Medical Books

- 1.** **MICHAEL LEWIS**
THE UNDOING PROJECT
A Friendship that Changed Our Minds
Michael Lewis
★★★★☆ 80
Hardcover
\$17.37 ✓Prime
- 2.** **WHEN BREATH BECOMES AIR**
PAUL KALANITHI
★★★★☆ 5,238
Hardcover
\$15.00 ✓Prime
- 3.** **MICHAEL LEWIS**
THE UNDOING PROJECT
A Friendship that Changed Our Minds
Michael Lewis
★★★★☆ 80
Audible Audio Edition
\$23.95
- 4.** **MICHAEL LEWIS**
THE UNDOING PROJECT
A Friendship that Changed Our Minds
Michael Lewis
- 5.** **THINKING, FAST AND SLOW**
DANIEL KAHNEMAN
★★★★☆ 5,238
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\$15.00 ✓Prime
- 6.** **WHEN BREATH BECOMES AIR**
PAUL KALANITHI
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Hardcover
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Most Wanted For

Most Wanted For

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| MICHAEL LEWIS THE UNDOING PROJECT A Friendship that Changed Our Minds Michael Lewis ★★★★☆ 80 Hardcover \$17.37 ✓Prime | MICHAEL LEWIS THE UNDOING PROJECT A Friendship that Changed Our Minds Michael Lewis ★★★★☆ 80 Kindle Edition \$14.87 | WHEN BREATH BECOMES AIR PAUL KALANITHI ★★★★☆ 5,238 Hardcover \$15.00 ✓Prime |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Gift Ideas

Gift Ideas

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| MICHAEL LEWIS THE UNDOING PROJECT A Friendship that Changed Our Minds Michael Lewis ★★★★☆ 80 Hardcover \$17.37 ✓Prime | WHEN BREATH BECOMES AIR PAUL KALANITHI ★★★★☆ 5,238 Hardcover \$15.00 ✓Prime | THE GENE SERRAVALLO ★★★★☆ 5,238 Hardcover \$15.00 ✓Prime |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|

You can then use this information to learn what your prospects are reading and who are the leaders in space. I bet you'll discover some new people that you didn't even know existed.

10 Reverse Engineer Technology

There are a lot of tools that can provide you information on where your competitors are advertising and much they are spending. I'll provide a brief breakdown below:

Follow

Follow.net gives you a lot of great information for free. It pulls a lot of great information from their paid version and provides you with a handy chart breakdown. You can look up your competitors:

- Traffic Estimates
- Search Engine Marketing
- Display Advertising
- Demographics

SEMRUSH

This SEO tool allows you look at your competitor's keywords and traffic. It's a great tool that I use all the time. The free version provides a lot of great information but there's a paid version that gives a lot more detail. You can check the following:

- Keyword Research
- Traffic: Organic & Paid
- Product Listing Ads
- Backlinks
- Display Advertising
- Advertising Research

Similar Web

Another fantastic tool that provides lots of insights into your competitor's data. One of its best features is seeing your competitor's top referring sites. This allows you to know where exactly they are getting their traffic from. This is a great way to find affiliate traffic.

SpyFu

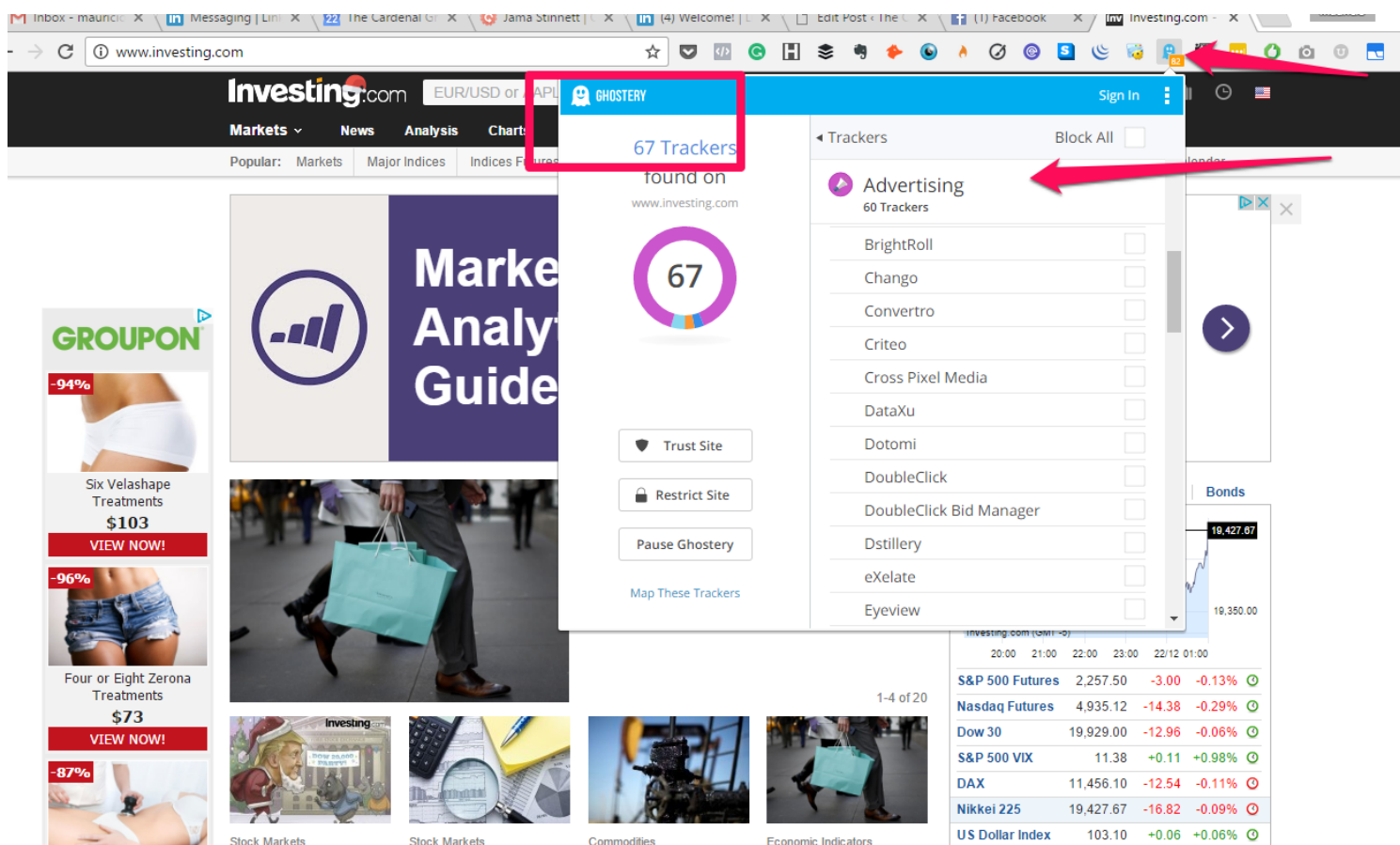
This is probably my favorite tool. It provides a broad overview of your competitor's SEO and PPC information. You can look at different Keywords, Landing pages, competitor's competitors, and traffic

overview.

Ghostery

This Google Chrome plugin allows you to what scripts your competitors are using on their sites. For example if your competitor is doing Facebook Ads and Google Remarketing you can find the scripts on Ghostery

Take a look at the trackers from Ghostery from the site investing.com There are over 67 trackers on the site. This is a quick way to know what they're doing with advertising.



There are a lot more tools you can use that I won't get into here, but this will provide you with a good overview. Finally, in order to see the entire sales process, I highly recommend that you buy your competition's products/services.





This will give you a good understanding of their sales process is what they use to overcome last minute objections, what discounts/specials they use, what free trials/entry offer they use...etc

Conclusion

This information is strictly for educational purposes. I don't recommend that you copy your competitor this can hurt you long-term. In order to truly stand out, and be the leader in your space you must be unique and different.

However, you can take what your successful competitors are doing and model the most successful parts of their marketing.

What do you think? Have you ever spied on your competition before?

 Mauricio Cardenal  December 26, 2016  content marketing, Lead Generation  competition

About the Author

My name is Mauricio and I'm the founder of The Cardinal Group. I write about online marketing, sales, and entrepreneurship.

Leave a Reply

2 comments



DL - February 18, 2017

This is an exceptional article. Very well done.



AdSpy - June 17, 2018

Hi Mauricio,

That is one comprehensive article! By the way, we are AdSpy.com - the largest Facebook Instagram Spy Tool. We came across your blog about spying on competition and were

wondering if you would be interested in promoting or reviewing as well our social media intelligence tool called AdSpy and possibly add us here in your blog post or write a separate review about it as a new social media ad spy tool this 2018?

We can offer free trials to you and your visitors, exclusive discounts and we are always looking for new ways to collaborate and cooperate with engaging blogs like yours if you have suggestions of how we can help each other out.

Our main selling points are:

- The largest database out of any social media spy tool in history
- Both Facebook & Instagram
- 32 million ads and growing every day
- Mobile ads
- 7 million advertisers tracked daily since 2016
- 180 countries
- 80 different languages
- Search by ad text, URL, landing page URLs, comments, affiliate networks
- Filter by user age, gender, daily and total likes
- Set when the ads was created or seen by users
- Search by technologies used, for example search all ads which use Shopify on its landing pages
- Affiliate offer scanning in all URLs including landing pages and redirects. Comprehensive system using residential IPs and real browsers to avoid cloakers

Please let us know your thoughts on this and we hope for your kind feedback.

Thanks,
The AdSpy Team

Leave a Reply:

Name *

E-Mail *

Website

Save my name, email, and website in this browser for the next time I comment.

SUBMIT COMMENT

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