



THE COMPETITIVE DEPOSITIONING PLAYBOOK

How to expose and capitalize on competitors' weaknesses

(without being the marketplace bully)

The state of B2B competition

Competition across industry is heating up as the number of new market entrants and disruptors increases exponentially. To illuminate this, the SBA reports that 16 million new business applications have been filed since 2021, 5.5 million of which were filed in 2023 alone.

In addition, since COVID, customers have had a heavier influence on the market with ever-evolving preferences and buying habits, which forces businesses to compete harder for their loyalty. For example, 80% of B2B purchases are influenced by a client's customer experience. Moreover, the profile of B2B buyers is changing due to generational shifts. Forrester estimates that 73% of millennials are now taking part in the B2B sales processes, bringing their preferences for self-serve, digital-first approaches.

As a result of the marketplace getting increasingly crowded and buyer loyalty becoming fickle, **staying competitive is at the top of every C-suite's priority list.**

This playbook is intended to help tech marketers deploy full-funnel marketing campaigns that deposition competitors in both subtle and direct ways. We'll cover:

RESEARCH / MESSAGING / CHANNELS / MESSENGERS

Know where you stand

Your executives might think your brand does something so special that you're in a league of your own with no competitors. That might be true – but the marketplace will categorize you based on their perceptions.

Put on your customer hat and look wide and deep to thoroughly identify competitors – both direct and perceived.



**PRODUCT/SERVICE
REVIEWS**



**INDUSTRY/CONSUMER
AWARD PROGRAMS**



**CROWD-SOURCED
REVIEW SITES**



MEDIA HEADLINES



**TRADESHOW/CONFERENCE
EXHIBITOR LISTS**



**GOOD OLD-FASHIONED
SEARCH RESULTS**

Next, create a **competitor matrix** that categorizes and organizes your competition. These documents can take many shapes and forms – in other words, there's no one perfect template. Create a layout that works best for your business.

For example, if your tech company operates in multiple global regions and faces a unique set of competitors in each country, you'll want to reflect that in your matrix. On the other hand, if you have a software platform that competes against point solution players, you'll want to organize competition by feature.

During your research, pay close attention to competitors' weak spots and claims that aren't backed up by customer reviews. For example, if a competitor boasts about its customer service, but reviews consistently point to dissatisfaction here, that's a key point to call out in your depositioning efforts.

It all begins with your brand

Before you can deposition competitors, you've got to make sure your brand's messaging is on point. Why? Because clearly articulating what makes your brand shine and sparking imagination in your buyers' brains carries more weight than a negative message about a competitor.

Always.

Does your brand messaging...

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ (x) need love after several years of collecting dust? | ☒ (✓) have a unique tone & voice that sets it apart? |
| ☐ (x) feel like everything is crammed into one statement, making it meaningless? | ☒ (✓) clearly state what makes you different? |
| ☐ (x) sound and look too much like your competitors? | ☒ (✓) use language that resonates with your target audiences? |
| | ☒ (✓) address your personas' biggest challenges? |

Once you decide whether a full messaging revamp is needed or whether it simply needs to weave in competitive differentiators, take inventory of where in the buyer's journey your brand is weakest.

The 'Decision Stage' is the most obvious stage to apply competitive messaging, but you'll also need to adapt your messaging for phase one and two in order to begin seeding your differentiators early in the process.

1

AWARENESS STAGE

Prospect is experiencing a problem or has identified an opportunity and begins to do educational research. In this phase, it's all about brand awareness. You'll want to start seeding your brand name and positioning in educational content so you're part of the consideration phase.

2

CONSIDERATION STAGE

Prospect can now clearly name their problem and begins researching solutions. Helping them navigate that decision with content that focuses on your brand's strengths against competitors will help drive them to the next stage.

3

DECISION STAGE

Prospect now compiles a list of all available solutions/vendors and makes a final purchase decision. This is where you can lean heavily on competitor weaknesses to close the deal.

Go boldly into the marketplace

After your research and messaging are locked in, it's time to identify the best channels for packaging and deploying competitive communications. We'll cover 8 of these on the following pages.

SPOT HERO
#2 in the App Store

Key Metrics:
 - iOS: 4.9 Stars, 48.9K Ratings
 - Android: 4.4 Stars, 4.9K Ratings
 - Better Business Bureau: A+ Not Accredited
 - HQ: Chicago, IL, 605 S. Clark St., Chicago, IL 60603-5209
 - Founded: 2011
 - Annual Revenue: n/a, \$0.9M
 - # of Employees: 250+
 - Investment: \$10M-\$100M over 5 rounds (\$10, \$50M Series D)
 - Acquisitions: Parking Panda, DOT and ParkPulse, DOT5
 - Partnerships: Movoo, Traveler, Oxford, Deloitte, Waze Navigation, Android, carGoogle Assistant, Hertz (Connected Car), Concur, Weyburn & Co., Management, The Parking Spot (Near Airport Parking)

Solution Overview
 Mobile payment app for reservations. Ideal customers are airport (and near-airport), event (stadiums), garage reservations (operators), monthly parking (cities). SpotHero for Business (employers) and SpotHero for Fleet.
 Key Markets: Diverse, New York and Chicago
 Current Opportunities: SpotHero nearly doubled its number of airport parking facilities in 2019.
 Strategy: targeting "right" locations, educating parking operators on rates
 Pricing Model: 15% plus fee, "always standard rate"

Key Strengths
 - Focus on reservations
 - Customer Experience is key
 - Strategic venues relationships
 - Name recognition and brand value
 - User base (Monthly parking)
 - Marketing efforts around events (SEM)
 - Thought Leadership / publications like TechCrunch

Customer Examples
 - Stadiums: MLB, NBA, NFL, NHL (difficult to distinguish stadium parking from nearby parking)
 - Events: SF 49ers, Royal Farms Arena, Chicago Marathon, TD Garden Race for the Cure, Tribeca Film Festival
 - Airports: First two formal on-airport parking partnerships with Toronto Pearson International Airport and Austin-Bergstrom International Airport, but near-airport parking at 44+ airports.
 - Cities: Reservations in most major cities
 - Monthly Parking: Austin, Boston, Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, Miami, NYC, Philadelphia, Phoenix, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Washington DC.

Key Website Info
 - 20-25M Cars Parked
 - in 100+ cities in the U.S.
 - 6,000+ garages, lots, valets in the U.S.
 - #1 downloaded parking reservation app
 - 500+ Parking Partners
 - 2M+ Parking Spaces
 - 4.7M+ Mobile App Downloads
 - 50+ Major Metros / 300 Cities
 - 60 Airports 100,000 spots at 400 facilities
 - Accepts Apple Pay and Android Pay
 - HeroConnect - Developer Platform
 - SpotHero IQ - demand and occupancy data platform

Key Weaknesses
 - No on-demand parking solution
 - No client access to backend system
 - Clients cannot be Merchant of Record

ParkMobile BATTLECARD - PAGE 01

Battle cards

- Primarily used as internal collateral, battle cards help sales reps, customer service associates and marketers alike keep key company differentiators at their fingertips.
- Every quarter revisit your battle cards to make sure the data in them is up-to-date.

Search & display ads

- Bid on competitors' key terms in order to show up in search results related to those brands.
- Run display ads that use competitive messaging on key industry sites where buyers frequent.
- Refine ad targeting to reach competitor's followers.

sugarcrm

Less force, more sales.

Blow off busy work using Sugar Sell for sales force automation.

WATCH VIDEO

PART 3: CHANNELS CONT.

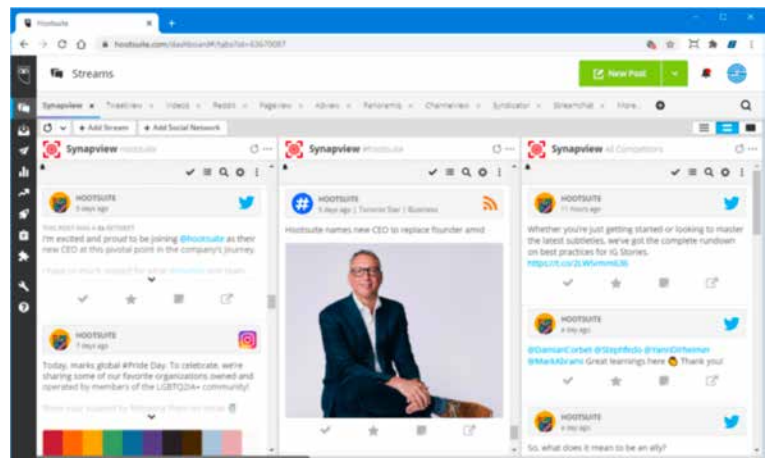


Landing & pillar pages

- Create landing and/or pillar pages that help buyers make informed decisions. Example topics include:
 - Feature & price comparisons
 - Savings calculators
 - Buying how to's (e.g., What to include in a consulting RFP)
 - Customer testimonials
 - Demo videos focusing on differentiators

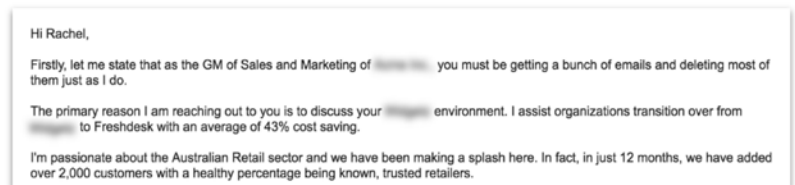
Social media

- Establish a social media listening practice in order to scan for mentions of competitors and other relevant industry terms.
- When you see customers mention competitors (especially in a negative light), your brand channel or key internal stakeholders can reply appropriately and direct them to your solutions.
- Listening tools to consider include Synapview, Buzzsumo, Brandwatch & Meltwater.



Email marketing

- Use competitive intelligence tools to pull lists of your competitor's customers.
- Craft email messaging that tells them what makes your brand different and why they should opt for your solution.
- Share materials to objectively prove your point without being disparaging to the competitor.
- Key moments when competitive-based email marketing can be impactful:
 - Your competitor is acquired
 - Your competitor pivots and changes its legacy focus
 - Your competitor is embroiled in legal trouble, experiences a breach, etc.



Direct mail

- Use competitive intelligence tools to pull lists of your competitors' customers' mailing addresses.
- Top-performing direct mail pieces include:
 - Timeliness / urgency
 - Discount codes / coupon
 - Trial offer code
 - In-person event invitation

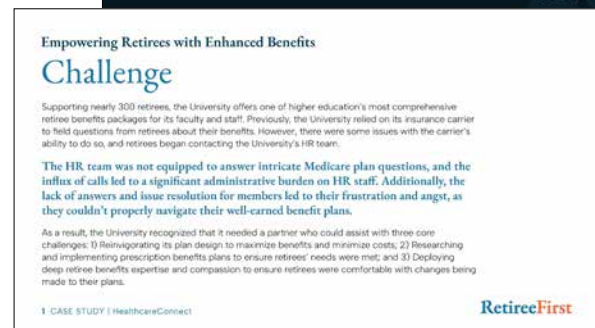
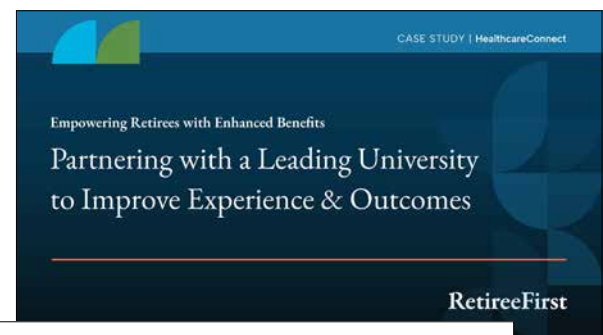


Transition guides

- These long-format pieces can be digital or print and are used to guide more complex sales cycles and products with implementation periods.
- They are a helpful example of how your company approaches customer service, and also help address potential objections.

Case studies

- For B2B brands, case studies and testimonials play a vital role in shepherding prospects through the buyer's journey.
- The holy grail of case studies is when a customer shares why they switched from a competitor to your company.
- Case studies can (and should!) be ungated and take multiple formats, including video and PDF. Don't forget to use quotes and stats from the case study in social content, too.



Let other people do the talking

Credibility is king. Build programs that enable third-parties and customers to share their experiences with your products/services.

Bonus: You gain testimonials that you can use in other marketing assets, and you'll gain SEO and backlink power in the process, too.

CUSTOMER REVIEW SITES

From B2B sites like G2 and Clutch, there's a plethora of places your company should have profiles on. Then, build a strategy for soliciting reviews on them that showcase why customers love you versus the competition.

PAID/EARNED PRODUCT REVIEWS

Media outlets and product review sites offer free and paid product reviews. Having an independent reviewer articulate why you're superior to the competition is a highly valuable piece of sales enablement.

MEDIA

Pitch media your customer case studies and new customer announcements. The goal? To get a reporter to ask your customer why they chose you or switched from another company.

At Alloy, we help tech-enabled brands navigate their competitive landscape with a balance of **creativity** and **analytical thinking**.

It's one reason why we've been recognized for Best Thought Leadership Campaign, Best Multichannel Campaign, Best Email Campaign and much more.

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