

# HOW TO DIAGNOSE AND OVERCOME COMPETITIVE SEO CHALLENGES





Diagnosing a drop/rise in organic traffic as a result of competition is very difficult. Often times, your SEO competition differs from your actual marketplace competition.

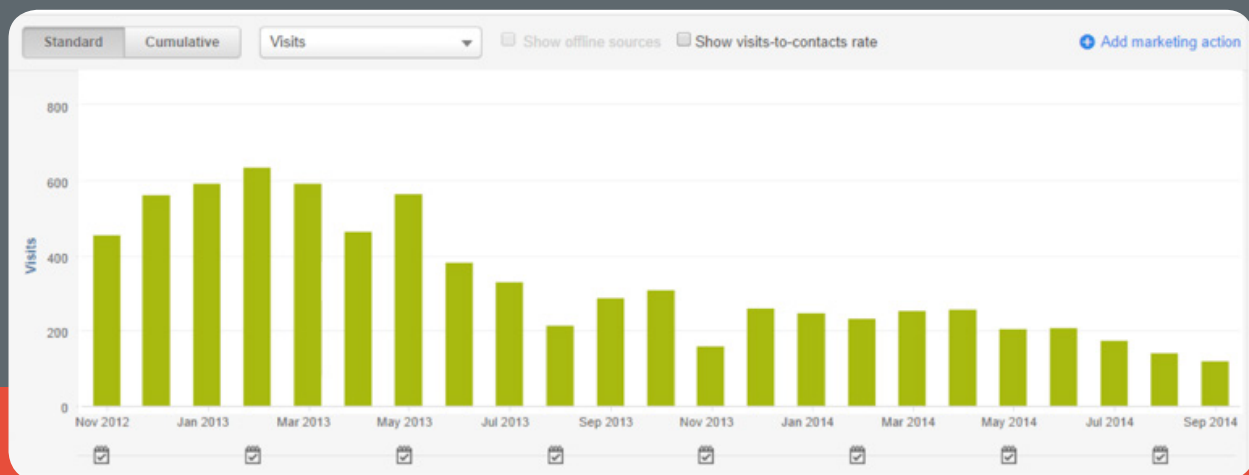
Identify your SEO competition by putting a few of your non-branded keywords into the Google. Who shows up? My guess is you'll see a variety of media, commercial, supplier and educational websites. These sites are all vying for the same #1 spot you're going after.

If you're facing a gradual decrease of search traffic over time due to increase competition, here's what you can do. First, spot the **symptoms** of a competitive SEO issue. Then, understand the **causes** of these pressures. Finally, create a strategy that will help you connect with your audience regardless of the fierceness of your competition.

## SYMPTOMS OF COMPETITIVE SEO ISSUE:

Gradual changes (over the course of months or years) in organic traffic / rankings are symptomatic of competitive SEO issues.

When looking at your web analytics, look for long-term sloping trends in organic traffic. You need to change your SEO strategy if you want to be found in Google in the future.



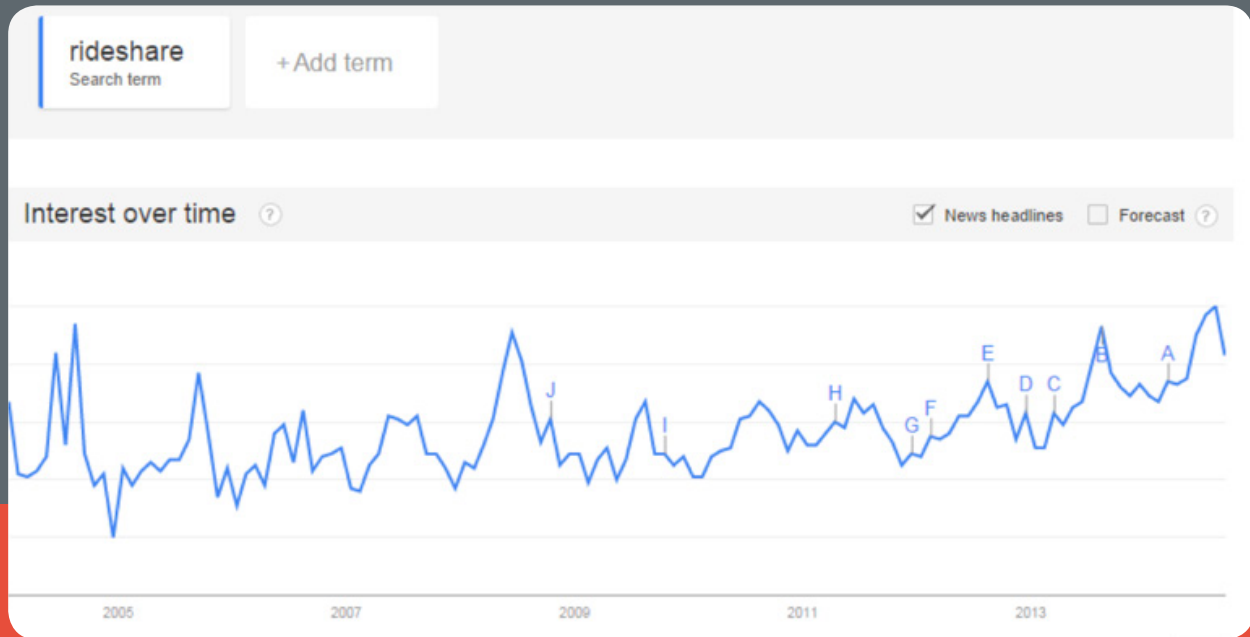
Before diagnosing your SEO issue, let's look at the main causes of competition in SEO traffic.

Competition in SEO is no different than competition in the real market. As the demand for content increases around Topic X, presumably the supply of content related to this topic will also increase. This leads to more competition in the SERPs.



# CAUSES OF COMPETITIVE SEO ISSUE:

Here's an example using 'ridesharing'. Via Google Trends, there is a gradual rise of people searching for "ridesharing" topics. This search growth indicates there is likely increased SEO competition.



As you've seen in the past few years, there's been a massive shift towards the Uber, Lyft, Sidecar and other ridesharing companies. These ridesharing companies are now building their brand, creating a glut of content, and earning links to their site. This all leads to an increased SEO competition for ridesharing sites.

**The ultimate causes of an increased competition in the market are:**

- ✓ Increased # of direct competitors in the market
- ✓ Increased variety of websites creating content about a topic (commercial, media, educational, etc)
- ✓ Increased # of established competitors entering a market

When thinking about your own industry, are any of these causes present? If not, there may be other SEO issues that are causing of your organic traffic change.



# SOLUTIONS TO OVERCOMING COMPETITIVE SEO ISSUES

So if increased competition is the diagnosis for your SEO woes, here's what you can do about it:

## 1. IDENTIFY YOUR TRUE SEO COMPETITORS:

Take your top 15-20 non-branded keyword targets and see what websites are garnering 1st page Google rankings.

Keyword (Google Ranking):	ridesharing	carpooling	taxi sharing	share a ride	car sharing
1	<a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Real-time_ridesharing">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Real-time_ridesharing</a>	<a href="https://www.carpooling.com/">https://www.carpooling.com/</a>	<a href="http://www.gobicab.com/">http://www.gobicab.com/</a>	<a href="http://sharetheride.com/">http://sharetheride.com/</a>	<a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carsharing">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carsharing</a>
2	<a href="http://www.rideshare.com/">http://www.rideshare.com/</a>	<a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carpool">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carpool</a>	<a href="https://bandwagon.io/">https://bandwagon.io/</a>	<a href="http://www.ridejoy.com/">http://www.ridejoy.com/</a>	<a href="http://www.carsharing.net/">http://www.carsharing.net/</a>
3	<a href="https://www.zimride.com/">https://www.zimride.com/</a>	<a href="https://carmacarpool.com/">https://carmacarpool.com/</a>	<a href="https://www.uber.com/">https://www.uber.com/</a>	<a href="https://www.sharetheridenc.org/">https://www.sharetheridenc.org/</a>	<a href="http://www.enterprise-carshare.com/">http://www.enterprise-carshare.com/</a>
4	<a href="http://rideshare.511.org/">http://rideshare.511.org/</a>	<a href="https://www.zimride.com/">https://www.zimride.com/</a>	<a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Share_taxi">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Share_taxi</a>	<a href="https://www.zimride.com/">https://www.zimride.com/</a>	<a href="http://www.zipcar.com/">http://www.zipcar.com/</a>
5	<a href="http://www.ridejoy.com/">http://www.ridejoy.com/</a>	<a href="http://techcrunch.com/2014/12/15/carpooling-us/">http://techcrunch.com/2014/12/15/carpooling-us/</a>	<a href="http://www.welcometocabwith.me/">http://www.welcometocabwith.me/</a>	<a href="https://www.lyft.com/">https://www.lyft.com/</a>	<a href="http://carsharing.org/">http://carsharing.org/</a>
6	<a href="http://www.rideshareonline.com/">http://www.rideshareonline.com/</a>	<a href="http://www.1800234ride.com/carpooling">http://www.1800234ride.com/carpooling</a>	<a href="http://www.newsweek.com/taxi-sharing-could-revolutionize-new-york-citys-transportation-system-267592">http://www.newsweek.com/taxi-sharing-could-revolutionize-new-york-citys-transportation-system-267592</a>	<a href="http://www.muni.org/departments/transit/sharide">http://www.muni.org/departments/transit/sharide</a>	<a href="http://futureofcarsharing.com/">http://futureofcarsharing.com/</a>
7	<a href="http://techcrunch.com/tag/ride-sharing/">http://techcrunch.com/tag/ride-sharing/</a>	<a href="https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.carpooling.android.es%26hl%3Den">https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.carpooling.android.es%26hl%3Den</a>	<a href="http://fortune.com/2014/09/01/share-a-taxi-with-a-stranger-idea-is-catching-in-big-cities/">http://fortune.com/2014/09/01/share-a-taxi-with-a-stranger-idea-is-catching-in-big-cities/</a>	<a href="http://www.cattransit.com/services/share-a-ride/about-share-a-ride/">http://www.cattransit.com/services/share-a-ride/about-share-a-ride/</a>	<a href="https://citycarshare.org/">https://citycarshare.org/</a>
8	<a href="http://www.vtapi.org/tdm/tdm34.htm">http://www.vtapi.org/tdm/tdm34.htm</a>	<a href="http://www.commuterpage.com/pages/transportation-options/ridesharing/">http://www.commuterpage.com/pages/transportation-options/ridesharing/</a>	<a href="http://www.verizonwireless.com/mobile-living/tech-smarts/taxi-ride-sharing-apps-uber-hailo-lyft/">http://www.verizonwireless.com/mobile-living/tech-smarts/taxi-ride-sharing-apps-uber-hailo-lyft/</a>	<a href="http://www.dvrpc.org/SAR/">http://www.dvrpc.org/SAR/</a>	<a href="https://liftshare.com/">https://liftshare.com/</a>
9	<a href="http://www.rideshareinfo.org/">http://www.rideshareinfo.org/</a>		<a href="http://hubcab.org/">http://hubcab.org/</a>	<a href="http://www.octa.net/share-the-ride/">http://www.octa.net/share-the-ride/</a>	

The websites that show up the most frequently in that target list of 15-20 keywords are your SEO competitors. From here we can see the Zimride, Ridejoy, ShareTheRide are top SEO competitors.

## 2. ANALYZE THEIR:

### Content:

- How unique is the content on their site?
- Are they a one page brochure website or are they a dynamic website that appeals to multiple personas.
- Are they regurgitating content found on other sites or are they providing a new angle on the topic?
- How frequently are they publishing content?
- What is the format of their content? Long form articles, infographics, videos, etc.

#### Backlinks:

- How many linking domains do they have?
- What is the relevancy of the websites linking to them?
- What is the quality of websites linking to them?
- What pages on their site are gaining the most links?

#### Rankings for targeted

- How many 1st page rankings do they have for a set of non-branded targeted keywords? Are there certain topics that a site ranks well for?

#### Brand:

- How well does this competitor stand out in the marketplace? How many websites are mentioning this brand?

#### Sharability:

- Social media doesn't impact your rankings directly. However, a large, engaged social following could build the buzz you need which will generate links. How big and engaged is their audience on social?
- What channels are they most active on?

#### UX on site:

- Is the site accessible on mobile and tablet?
- Does their site load at a nominal speed?

### 3. CREATE A HOLISTIC MARKETING STRATEGY THAT INCLUDES:

**Content creation and outreach:** You can't rely on content creation alone to produce great results. You have to spend time promoting the content on your site through social, PR, email, events, and manual outreach to generate sustainable SEO results.

**Brand building:** What are you doing as an organization to build awareness? Marketing can't be responsible for all of this. The market views your brand based on your mission, history, product, marketing and customer experience. As much as Google denies this, [there is a bias in favor of bigger brands in search.](#)

**Usability:** Make sure your site can be viewed on any device and that it doesn't load slowly.

**Segmentation:** Organize your database by lifecycle stage and persona to make sure the communications you are sending out are effective and timely.

**Goal-centric initiatives:** SEO shouldn't be the sole reason to make drastic change to your marketing strategy. SEO needs to fit within your marketing initiatives and should align clearly with your overall company/marketing goals.

Unfortunately, competitive issues are the hardest to overcome compared to other SEO issues. Overcoming these issues relies on building awareness through education, improving your product, and producing a remarkable brand experience.

Learn how SmartBug Media can help you accomplish your SEO and marketing goals.  
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