



Jeremy**Tuber**

Initial Online Marketing Synopsis

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Recipient: Gatesix

"Never hire someone who knows less than you do about what he's hired to do."

- Malcolm S. Forbes 1919-1990, American Publisher, Businessman

"If you're not a risk taker, you should get the hell out of business."

- Ray Kroc 1902-1984, American Businessman, Founder of McDonalds

"Entrepreneurs are simply those who understand that there is little difference between obstacle and opportunity and are able to turn both to their advantage."

- Victor Kiam American Businessman, CEO of Remington

Preface:

Before I get started I'd point out that I regard this as just an initial, concise but very broad overview of your online marketing presence - this is far from a comprehensive report. If you see some value in my findings and recommendations and would like a more detailed report, I would be happy to discuss providing you a more comprehensive review of your online marketing position.

To give you an idea of how quickly I was able to generate these ideas (so you have an idea on whether or not I can think quickly on my feet) I kept my competitive analysis of your 4 competitors to an hour (so I invested just 15 minutes per site), I also only invested 30-45 minutes revisiting the Gatesix web site and about an hour and a half putting together and writing this report.

Lastly, I also wanted to point out that while many of my ideas and recommendations below are from a sales/marketing perspective, and still many of them come from a design/creative director perspective. Design and marketing should always be tied together, since I have aptitude in both areas, you'll see comments that a marketing manager may point out to you, as well as a creative director - I hope both will be helpful.

Competitive Analysis:

Overall I was disappointed with the quality, branding and marketing focus of your competition (which is good news for Gatesix)! Of the three of competitors here in Phoenix, the only one that has a professional, clean, easily navigated site that might attract the same type of clients Gatesix would is iology.

Based on just their company web site, I felt that both Sitewire and Forty Media tried to go for a more "creative, edgy" web site, but not only do I see these web sites as messy, unattractive to look at and confusing, but I believe strongly that they will dissuade higher-end corporate clients from wanting to do business with them. In my opinion, these two companies may attract some "outside the box" eccentric companies and entrepreneurs, but most of the mid-large sized companies out there I believe they've positioned themselves very poorly. In the end, I thought the quality of both of their web sites were below yours.

In looking at Blitz, out of CA, these guys are on a completely different level creatively than any of the creative firms here in town. I was (as most people would be), rather impressed with their company web site, creativity and client list. All of that said, based on their "edgy, in your face style" and extremely high profile client list, I don't believe they truly are a direct competitor of yours. While there are some overlapping deliverables, I see Blitz currently offering very different services and going after very different clients than Gatesix. I believe you can easily position your company in such a way that clients wouldn't see you as better or worse than them, just different - trying to attract a different market niche. If you decided to go after their market niche, that's still possible but would require us to develop solid marketing research and strategy.

Finally, looking at iology web site, I felt they were the competitor I believe poses the most challenge to you. Their site is professional and it's clean and I did like how they put together a tabbed format for their case studies (interactive, easy to navigate and clean). Where I think this web site falls flat is that its approach is the complete opposite of Blitz - instead of having too much personality, this one has very little. It also has very little in terms of multimedia (other than quick flash animations), there is no video or no audio.

Bottom line: I didn't see a major threat to Gatesix from any of these competitors.

Gatesix's Web Site Synopsis:

For attracting higher-end, success-driven corporate clients, I think Gatesix's site is positioned well. I like the color scheme, the clean interface and use of white space. I would however like to see more case studies, and I would present them in the same clean way that iology does (rather than using a pdf).

I can't help but wonder if every prospect that visits your site knows exactly what gate she/he should look into - I'll bet they don't, so I'd suggest devoting some real estate on your main page to address prospect's that might not necessarily know what they're looking for. Do all of your prospects know exact what: interactive design, interactive marketing or staff augmentation mean, or how they can take advantage of it? If they don't you may want to help them.

In looking at all of the web sites (your competitors included), I didn't see a clear, compelling call to action that would effectively persuade a prospect to make contact with the creative agency. Companies (whether they are dealing with low or higher priced clients) often have a soft step or an offer to get prospect's to take action - again, I didn't see this on any of the web sites and I believe that will limit the number of prospects that will take action.

On both my Can-Do Graphics and JeremyTuber.com web sites I offered and got a terrific response from offering a free business credibility consultation to clients. In fact, on the back of my business card I have, *"If your current marketing efforts aren't providing you these benefits? Maybe it's time to consider other options. Call me today, let's discuss your current situation as well as uncover new opportunities."* Clients found value in this, they found it compelling - and they called. Compare this with what your current call to action is, *"Your future is waiting...Contact us today for interactive website design services at sales@gatesix.com or 623-572-7725."* I believe that if this was strengthened, defined some real value from the client's perspective and included some form of a soft step, you'd see an increase in the number of prospects that call versus those that don't.

Moving on, I'd like to see pictures, audio files or even video of the management team. In almost all of the other web sites I was able to see the management team. Showing your clients who they're going to talk to and work with when they do contact you lessens their perceived risk and it adds a human, personal touch to your company. I love the clean, corporate look that your web site has, but I'd encourage you to make it more personal. Forty Media has a *"Meet the Team"* section on the main page, and while I think the way they've done this is sloppy, I'd love to see you incorporate your video/multimedia in showing clients that there are genuine people working at Gatesix, and that it's not just a faceless corporation.

A few of other quick notes:

- I would replacing the stock photo of the woman using what looks like a Palm or smart phone, I don't believe she relates to your overall message, and she looks odd.
- All of the design examples take you to the same portfolio page, which is a little odd. Most of the examples come up with *"Detail not available"*, which I'd recommend you remove or actually add the detail in there. I would combine the design examples with real case studies.
- Consider removing or modifying the vertical navigation on the design example page - no where else on the site do you have vertical navigation, and it looks out of place.
- On one of your competitor's sites I saw before and after examples, I've found these to be extremely compelling visual examples for clients. Being able to show clients first-hand how you were able to visually improve a client's branding and positioning is extremely powerful, I'd suggest you incorporate this.

Gatesix's Web Site Synopsis, Cont:

- Just as I've done on the jeremytuber.com site, I would incorporate video, audio or even small written testimonials. These, particularly if they are provided by higher-end, higher-profile clients can lessen risk for clients, and add to your prestige.
- In tying in with the call to action comments I made above, I'd like to see the web site do a more effective job in selling the next step in your sales process, which I'd guess is a face to face or teleconference meeting. Telling a prospect that "Your future is waiting..." and asking them to call or to fill out quote request without promising any value isn't going to entice a lot of prospects to call, and it's going to hinder sales. There's a lot of room for improvement here. In your call to action let's explain to clients what value they'll receive from contacting you - let's talk to them about how we're able to effectively solve their challenges.
- Lastly, I'd like to look at the stats for each one of your web pages. On an information level, I think the site is well put together, but on a marketing/sales level, I wonder if some of the pages are really needed. I would consolidate the web site a little and make it more focused building your credibility, showing your results/testimonials and finally, getting clients to contact you.