

Competitive Analysis

Ann Arbor Web Hosting

Christopher Collins
Information Architect

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY..... 3

WEBSITE CONTENT..... 4

NAVIGATION 7

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES..... 8

COMPANY INFORMATION 8

CONTACT INFORMATION..... 9

CUSTOMER SUPPORT 9

OTHER FEATURES 9

Executive Summary

This competitive analysis was conducted between January 19th, 2011 and February 8th 2011 as part of Ann Arbor Web Hosting's website redesign process.

The goal of this analysis was to identify content and functionality in the websites of AAWH's local and regional competition and to use that data to inform the decision making process of the redesign.

Four competitors were identified using a Google search of "Web hosting in Ann Arbor". The competitors were selected from the first two results pages.

- Nexcess (*nexcess.net*) – regional competitor
- A2Hosting (*a2hosting.com*) – local competitor
- Interfluence (*Interfluence.com*) – local competitor
- BitServe (*bitserve.com*) – regional competitor

The analysis identified a core set of data that was present across all competitor's websites as well as unique content and practices only available on one of the competitor's sites. An item of key interest would be the various methods each website deploys to handle its customer technical support. While all of the websites provided some form of customer support, some chose to provide extensive technical documentation, client trouble-shooting, and frequently asked questions to better serve their clients. This content, in addition to other comparative data, is documented in further detail in the *Website Content (pg.4-6)* section of this document.

The analysis of the competitor's website also revealed practices and content that could be incorporated in to the re-design process for Ann Arbor Web Hosting's website. Among these are:

- Keyword and advanced search functionality
- The implementation of a Service Ticket based technical support system
- Graphical comparative pricing of tiered services
- Detailed technical information regarding AAWH's hardware and software capabilities
- Client Extranet functionality for handling account information
- Green Web Hosting
- Company blogs and Social Networking (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter)

Website Content

Functionality and Content found on all competitor websites:

Functionality:

- Global Navigation menu with links to Services and Contact Us pages

Content:

- Company Bio
- Tiered Product Comparisons
- Pricing Information
- Detailed Service Information
- At least two methods of contacting the company Phone and Email

Functionality and Content found on more than one competitor website:

Functionality:

- Customer support in the Main Navigation Menu
- Links to Company Bio or About Us pages in the Main Navigation Menu
- Links to Clients or Past Work Examples in the Main Navigation Menu
- Footer Navigation Menus with links to Contact Pages, Client Resources Pages, Company Bio Pages, and Products/Services pages. Of these, only two menus were globally consistent
- Log In to Client Extranets
- Links to Affiliate Programs
- Local Navigation Menus although only one was dynamic and specific to current page

Content:

- In addition to web hosting, multiple companies offered the following services or products
 - Web Design
 - Domain Registry
 - Affiliate Programs
- Terms of Service and Service Guarantee
- Service agreements and Acceptable Use Policies
- Company History
- Dedicated About Us page
- Links to clients or previous work

Competitive Analysis: annarborwebhosting.com 5

- Company Tour with one offering a flash animation walkthrough of their facility and detailed information on the facilities components
- Corporate affiliates and information on how to become an affiliate

- Company blog
- Dedicated email for sales and support. Two of the sites had dedicated email for billing and to report abuse.
- Dedicated phone lines for sales and support
- Mailing address
- Two sites had links to the following social networking sites
 - Twitter
 - Facebook
 - LinkedIn
- FAX number
- Customer Support Trouble Shooting information
- FAQs
- Client Tutorials
- Customer Support Contact information
- 24/7 technical support
- Service Ticket system when handling customer support issues
- Server Status bulletins and provided information on recent system upgrades and maintenance
- Green Web Hosting

Functionality and Content found on only one competitor website:

Functionality:

- Link to company's promotion page
- Order link in Main Navigation Menu
- Link for potential investors in Footer Navigation Menu
- Link to 3rd party broadband providers
- Link to site index from Footer Navigation Menu
- Global Search Functionality

Content:

- The following services we offered by only one website
 - Multimedia
 - SEO (Search Engine Optimization)
 - Web research
 - Copywriting
 - SSL Registration
 - Merchant Account Management
 - Music Distribution

Competitive Analysis: annarborwebhosting.com 6

- Client Testimonials
- Dedicated Career email
- Company Bio on home page
- Supported Software list
- Software Mirrors
- Live Tech Support (function was disabled at the time of analysis)
- Customer Support Forums

- Customer Wiki
- Flash Animations

Navigation

	Nexcess.net	A2Hosting.com	Interfluence.com	BitServe.com
Main Navigation Menu				
Global Main Menu Consistency	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Location	Top Right of page	Top of page	Top of page	Top of page
Function	Drop Down Menus	Links	Links	Links
Links				
Home	Company Icon redirects to Home Page	Company Icon redirects to Home Page	Company Icon redirects to Home Page	Yes
Contact	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Links to Services	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Customer Support	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
About Us/Company Bio	Yes	Yes	No	No
Clients/Past Work	In Drop Down Menu	No	Yes	No
Resources	In Drop Down Menu	No	Yes	Located within Support Link
Company Promotion Link	Yes	No	No	No
Order	No	Yes	No	No
Footer Navigation Menu	Bottom of page	Bottom of page	Bottom of page	None
Global Footer Menu Consistency	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
Mirrors Main Navigation Menu	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
Links				N/A
Investors	No	No	Yes	N/A
Contact Us	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Site Map	No	No	Yes	N/A
Web Design Tutorials/Client resources	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
About Us	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Local Music	No	No	Yes	N/A
Broadband and Wireless Services	No	No	Yes	N/A
Products and Services	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Past Clients	Yes	No	Yes	N/A
Site Index/Map	No	No	Yes	N/A
Affiliate Program	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
Extranet Log-In on Home Page	No (on support page)	Yes	No	Yes
Local Navigation Menus	No	Yes	Yes	No
Search Functionality	No	Search Box	No	No
Location	N/A	Left side, under main menu	N/A	N/A
Globally Consistent Location	N/A	Is moved further down page as Local Navigation Menu changes	N/A	N/A
Online Service Shopping	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Products and Services

Product/Service Information Located on home page	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Product and Services				
Web Hosting	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Web Design	No	No	Yes	Yes
Domain Registration	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Web Consulting	No	No	Yes	Yes
Multimedia	No	No	Yes	No
Search Optimization	No	No	Yes	No
Web Research	No	No	Yes	No
Copywriting	No	No	Yes	No
Music Distribution	No	No	Yes	No
SSL Registration	Yes	No	No	No
Merchant Account Management	No	Yes	No	No
Affiliate Program	Yes	Yes	No	No
Tiered Service/Product Comparison	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pricing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Detailed Service Information	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Terms of Service	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Acceptable Use Policy	Yes	Yes	No	No
Service Level agreement	Yes	Yes	No	No
Guarantee	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Company Information

Company Information				
Company Bio	Provided through a "Why Nexcess?" and "Company" link in the main navigation menu dropdowns. Links include Tours, About Us, Client History, Contact Info, Client History, Company Blog	About Us page links to a list of company highlights and services including Awards, Testimonials, Socially Responsible Hosting	Provided through a link to companies "About Us" page located in the main navigation menu.	Provided through a company press release located on the contact page
Facility Tour	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Detailed Hardware/Software Information	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Corporate Partners and Affiliates	Yes	Yes	No	No
Company History	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Information on becoming a company Affiliate	Yes	Yes	No	No
Career Information	Yes	No	No	No
Company Blog	Yes	Yes	No	No
Company Newsletter	No	Yes	No	No
Dedicated "Bio/About US" Page.	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Award Gallery	No	Yes	No	No
Client Testimonials		Yes	No	No
Recent Clients / Work preformed	>20 Examples	None	<20 Examples	<5 Examples

Contact Information

Contact Information				
Contact Information on Home page	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Contact Information	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Email:	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dedicated Email				
Sales	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Support	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Billing	Yes	Yes	No	No
Abuse	Yes	Yes	No	No
Careers	Yes	No	No	No
Telephone	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dedicated Phone				
Sales	Yes	No	No	Yes
Support	Yes	No	No	Yes
Mailing Address	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Maps	Yes	No	No	No
Twitter	Yes	Yes	No	No
Facebook	Yes	Yes	No	No
LinkedIn	Yes	Yes	No	No
FAX	Yes	Yes	No	No

Customer Support

Customer Support Information/Services				
24/7 Customer Support	Yes	Yes	No	No
Service Ticket System	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Customer Service Contact Information	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
FAQs	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Service Trouble Shooting	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Supported Software List	Yes	No	No	No
Software Mirrors Provided	Yes	No	No	No
Customer tutorials	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Server Status/Maintenance Updates	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Live Tech Support Chat	No	Yes (Currently Disabled)	No	No
Customer Support Forums	No	Yes	No	No
Customer Wiki	No	Yes	No	No

Other Features

Other Features				
Company Bio located on Home Page	No	No	No	Yes
Flash Animation	Yes	No	No	No
Green Web Hosting	Yes	Yes	No	No