

“Niche Spy” Secrets

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Introduction

One of the things you're going to need to know is how to be a super sleuth on the 'net. Gurus have no shame in spying on other marketers.

It goes on all the time – even in the offline world. One cola company will come out with a cherry flavor and the others line up right behind them to do the same. One fast food burger joint puts out a burger with jalapeno peppers and the rest follow suit shortly after.

Now let me clarify something right now that's REALLY important:

I do NOT advocate STEALING ideas and ripping off people's hard work!

This does, unfortunately happen to many marketers – and rest assured it's going to happen to you to. To prevent being dominated in the market, you'll have to always be the best at the information you provide.

Still, you can get *great* ideas from spying – and do things *better* than another marketer or *different* and make a killing in the marketplace. A lot of marketers worry that unless they have an idea that's NEW to the market, then they can't compete. Not true at all.

I'm going to take you through a series of spy spots that I want you to bookmark in a file and refer to whenever you need a new niche idea and don't know what might sell well.

Secret #1: Spy Where Others Are Selling

The first logical place to do some sleuthing is where *other* marketers are already selling info products. The two biggest names are ClickBank and PayDotCom.

This is where marketers list their info products so that affiliates can get a special code to promote them and earn a commission on the sale. There are six tasks I want you to complete when you spy at the affiliate depots.

- 1. View the Marketplace.** Go to the marketplace as a consumer to see what all is selling. Go through from top to bottom in your niche category because sometimes you'll see some great ideas ranking low because they're either new or the marketer had a good idea but isn't savvy about selling it.
- 2. Choose a Category.** When I talk about choosing a category, remember this has to be something you personally would feel comfortable writing about, talking about and blogging about for a long time. Don't just see a category with something selling well that doesn't interest you in the least bit and make that your life's purpose online.
- 3. Size Up the Sales.** Unfortunately, some marketers will inflate their numbers (like gravity) by using a bunch of different affiliate accounts. But for the most part, you can give the stats a little bit of credence. Look to see how many are selling, what they charge, etc.
- 4. Visit the Site.** Marketers have a link to their actual site in these marketplaces. You want to visit it to see what you think about the competition.
- 5. List the Pros and Cons.** Can you see glaring mistakes? Stuff you are really admiring about the competitor's site? Jot it down to remind you what you like and dislike.
- 6. Brainstorm a Product of Your Own.** What could you do different? Better? Remember, this isn't a method to steal, but to conduct valid research so you'll know what works in the marketplace.

So let's evaluate the Eat Stop Eat site that's listed: <http://eatstopeat.com>

When you visit the site, click through to the Women's area.

Pros: lots of testimonials, author's background included.

Cons: graphics aren't up to par, sales copy isn't consumer-focused, top tier product is pricey compared to a diet book you could get in Barnes and Noble.

So you take that information and brainstorm your own product idea from there. Now since this is a periodic fasting product, you can follow the same advice and just do it better, since there's much to improve upon.

Or, you can switch it up and create something new – obviously it's selling because people can endure short bursts of fasting better than one lengthy span of time where they get drained of energy, lightheaded and weak.

This is a problem that happens with many diets, so your brainstorming might lead you to develop a product specifically focused on energy boosting weight loss programs. Put your own spin on it and then ensure you don't make the same mistakes the original product owner made with his or her site.

Secret #2: Spy at Marketing “Water Holes” & Content Directories

There are three main places where marketers discuss and promote their niche topics openly, allowing you to spy on their niche ideas.

The first ones are Marketing Forums such as my favorite, the Warrior Forum. I go here myself and sometimes drop a niche idea into the main discussion area because I know it's going to be hot, but I don't have the time or interest in it to pursue it myself.

Other marketers just don't know when to keep their cards close to their chest, so they start talking about a hot niche and how to pursue it and fail to realize other people are thinking to themselves, “Hey thanks for the great idea!”

Sometimes you can simply look at the questions people have and turn those into a product of your own. Here are some actual thread topics that could be turned into a product:

“Why Is WordPress So Hard?”

“Does Anyone Know How to Use Google Groups?”

“Why Is Facebook So Hard?”

You could take any of those and if you learn the system, taking screen shots along the way, make a product for that solution.

Ezine Articles is another marketing hangout you can spy at. Just looking at the titles of the articles on the front page can provide you with a huge variety of niche possibilities, like one article that focused on the connection between self esteem and weight loss.

There might be a whole eBook in that idea! You can also search categories for ideas like you do on ClickBank and PayDotCom, starting broad and narrowing it down to more specific categories.

Elnance is a freelance site where you can hire someone to write an eBook for you, right? So as a marketer, you would usually post a project description about what it is you needed.

I discovered from one of my high profile ghostwriting clients, that many marketers (including him) troll the project boards to see what topics OTHER marketers want written about so that they can jump on the bandwagon and get a product out of their own.

This happened once when the Bird Flu was a big topic – it was on Oprah, in the news – and suddenly, I was getting inundated with requests for Bird Flu Survivalists eBooks. All because the marketing spies didn't want to be left out when it came time to capitalize on consumer fears!

So you can search projects as well as feedback for ghostwriters to see what projects they've already completed for other marketers. At a quick glance I can see that there are eBooks being requested for:

- Hypothyroidism
- Recession-Proofing Your Life
- Do It Yourself Wound Care (which might be great since in this economy people are cutting down on medical spending)
- Basic Photography tutorials
- Retirement Investing and so on...

If you register for free as a service professional, you'll be able to read the full product description. But often, you can get enough from the titles of the project post and the teaser description they offer on the site.

Secret #3: Spy on News Networks

Fox News and CNN as well as local news stations and even news blog sites can give you insight into what topics are poised for profitability. For example, when the Obama's dog was announced – the Portuguese Water Dog – you can bet several marketers jumped on the chance to create eBooks about it since more families will copycat the Obamas and want to learn about choosing the dog, training it, and caring for it.

These news sites have categories – including Health, Science, Crime and more. Go through the categories of each one and see what niche ideas come to you. Here are a few I found on Fox, CNN and my local NBC affiliate site:

From FoxNews.com I find these in just a few minutes:

- How to Get King-Size Treatment at Any Hotel (the travel niche is still a hot one and people want to know about saving money and getting something for nothing)
- Water Therapy for Multiple Sclerosis
- The Best Foods for Good Heart Health

From CNN.com I find these ideas:

- Women Over 55 Flocking to Facebook (hmmm, a Facebook for Baby Boomers idea, maybe?)
- How to Release the Vice-Grip of a Headache
- \$40,000 Wedding for About \$3,000

From my local TV station's website:

- Incorrect Labels Stop Shoppers' Savings (this is all about ripping consumers off when they think they're getting a bargain, which is important in this economy)
- Make Money on Twitter
- Temp Agencies See Flood of Job Seekers (so maybe your product could help teach people how to dominate in their job interviews when it's at an all time high of competitiveness)

Secret #4: Spy Where Consumers Shop Online

There are two great places for online shopping – Amazon and Barnes and Noble. I personally shop at both and I also spy there for niche ideas, too.

Amazon.com lets you look up books and magazines and sort them by bestseller lists. So for example, let's say I know I would like to tap into the weight loss niche in some way, shape or form.

I would go to Amazon, click on books from the left-hand menu, and look up the bestsellers list for the health, mind and body category. This tells me what consumers are hungry for – and right now, in regards to weight loss, it's revving up your metabolism and going on a non-diet kind of diet.

If I switch to magazines, and specifically look at hot-selling health magazines, I notice that people are spending the most money on learning to cook light and practice yoga.

Barnes and Noble's website works pretty much the same – choose your category from the home page and look at the bestseller list for that category. Here, I see that the same topics from Amazon's list are present, but I also see a book selling well called the Flat Belly diet. If you were to do some keyword research, you'd realize that there are a TON of searches conducted daily based on belly fat alone.

Secret #5: Spy Where People Are Seeking Solutions

There are three really cool sites where people either publish how to articles or they ask questions – and you can benefit from spying on both types.

The first one is eHow.com. You can go here and look up the top eHow articles, articles of the day, and more. So one I see right off the bat is how to increase a car's fuel efficiency. This is a hot topic when gas prices are high or the economy's simply in a slump.

HowToDoThings.com is another good spy site you can use. You can dig down into categories and look at the overall popular list of topics.

Yahoo Answers is a little bit different. It's where people go to *ask* questions. They don't write articles – but this can be very powerful and in fact, many marketers use Yahoo Answers to promote links to their sites. If they find a question that their eBook answers, they respond and add a link to the paid product.

But for research purposes, you're going to spy on what consumers need to know. So let's say you had an interest in parenting topics. You would click on that category and see what parents or people who want to be parents want to find out, such as how to conceive a baby, how to name your baby, how to potty train your toddler, how to get little kids to obey, and so on.

You can also search by using the advanced search system and type in a niche relevant keyword to get results on all of the questions that have been asked on that topic. So remember that example I mentioned before about belly fat?

When I conduct a search for the keyword phrase *belly fat* on Yahoo Answers, I discover someone wanting to get rid of their belly fat in 2 weeks – and another which asked about losing it in one month - which could be an idea for the slant of your niche product – losing belly fat *FAST*.

Final Secrets...

So now you have an idea of where to GET some ideas. Start keeping your eyes open and your ears accustomed to listening to what consumers need. You might hear your girlfriends talking about how they wish they could lose belly fat or get Junior to quit biting his classmates in preschool.

Spend a day practicing the art of finding niche ideas. Try to find one from each of the sites I mentioned as well as one from someone you talked to during the day. If someone said they were tired and stressed about money, it's a niche idea! If they said they were tired of gas prices going up, pay attention to that comment as a possible product idea.

You'll be really surprised once you start paying attention at all the ideas that get thrown at you throughout the course of a day – only this time, you'll be ready to capitalize on them!