

products. She looks for value (rather than the lowest price), putting a high emphasis on product quality. She would not expect to do any work herself.

In short, Brad has (like most businesses) identified both a local and a national angle to his online presence. He has also proved that there is indeed demand for printing over the internet on small print runs with rapid delivery. This will be his focus.

Who are your competitors and what can you learn from them?

No proposition development is complete without an honest assessment of what your competitors are up to. If you are in a locally based clicks-and-mortar business like Brad's, your assessment should take into account both your local and your global competition. Do a search on both your local Google and Google.com. Cross-reference this with data from Alexa (see the section on tracking and tuning, page 224). Focus on competitors that enjoy both good rankings and high traffic levels.

Ignore the SEO aspects for now and focus on the business ideas contained in your competitors' sites and how these are presented. A useful tool to use is so-called SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis, where you draw four boxes in a 2×2 table for each competitor. In the first box you note the strengths of the competitor, in the second their weaknesses, in the third their opportunities, and in the fourth their threats. Strengths and weaknesses are things inherent to their business as it operates today (and are generally internal). Opportunities and threats are things external to the business and are normally forward looking.

Look at each competitor website objectively and put yourself in the minds of your customers. Do you like the look of the website? Can you use it? Does it address each customer group separately, focus on one segment, or try to be all things at once? Is it easy to get information and do business? Before you become too obsessed with the SEO aspects, it