

Reverse engineer your competitor's Backlink Strategy

Execution Time: ~1-4 hours

(depending on number of competitors and how large they are)



Goal: To have a crystal clear overview of your competitors backlink authority and strategy.

Ideal Outcome: You have a document that not only summarizes your competitor's backlink standing and strategy, but also lists and classifies all their links.

Prerequisites or requirements: You will need access to an ahrefs account.

Why this is important: Knowing your competitors will let you know how much work you have ahead of you, as well as which strategies work best for them and that you might be able to replicate.

Where this is done: In Ahrefs and Google Sheets.

When this is done: As soon as you start working on a website's SEO, and then periodically every 3 months.

Who does this: The person responsible for SEO.

Included Resource

SOP Library's Competitor Backlink Strategy Template

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Competitors General Overview				
2					
3		Name	URL	Ahrefs Rank	Difference
4	Brand:	Insight Timer	https://insighttimer.com/	8438	
5	Competitor #1	Headspace	https://www.headspace.com/	2317	6121
6	Competitor #2	Calm	https://www.calm.com/	4764	3674
7	Competitor #3			28749	-20311
8	Competitor #4			7704	734

TEMPLATE

Identify your competitors

1. Select which option applies to you (and click on it to jump to the right section):
 - a. (option 1) I want to identify who is competing with me for a given keyword.
 - b. (option 2) I want to identify who my competitors are across all keywords.

- a. (option 1) If you're looking for competitors for specific keywords, your best bet is to simply Google your keyword using incognito mode and see which websites come up in the organic results.

Important: Make sure your IP address matches the market your website is competing in (for example, if you're going after the US market, make sure you're browsing using a US VPN).

You can use [this website](#) to check your IP address. If necessary, use a VPN to change your IP address.

Example:

Google meditation apps **Your keyword here**

Ad - www.medtofoundation.org/ -
Free Guided Meditations - Free Forever Meditation App
 Live a healthier, happier, more well-rested life in just a few minutes a day with Medito. Helpful guided meditation [will help](#) to help you breathe, sleep, relax & focus. Become A Volunteer, Join Newsletter, Highlights: Newsletters Available, Donation Option Available.

Meditations To Help You Practice Listen to Our Free Meditations Download Now Download for iOS Download for Android

Ad - www.heartfulness.org/ -
Free Guided Meditation App - Free Online Meditation Classes
 HeartsApp Facilitates Guided Practices of Meditation & Relaxation with Yogic Transmission. Download the HeartsApp That Facilitates Guided Practices of Heartfulness Meditation. Spirituality. Non-profit organization.
 About Heartfulness · Learn Meditation Basics · Heartfulness Retreats

Our Top Picks

- Best Overall: **Calm** ...
- Best Budget: **Insight Timer** ...
- Best for Sleep: **Headspace: Meditation & Sleep** ...
- Best for Beginners: **Ten Percent Happier Meditation** ...
- Best for Kids: **Stop, Breathe & Think Kids** ...
- Best Guided: **Buddhify** ...
- Best For Focus: **Unplug** ...
- Best Selection: **Simple Habit**.

Jul 5, 2020
 www.verywellmind.com | ... | Meditation *
The 8 Best Meditation Apps of 2020 - Verywell Mind

People also ask

- Is there a completely free meditation app?
- What's a good meditation app?
- Is Calm app free?
- Are meditation apps worth it?

www.oprahmag.com | life > health > best-meditation-a-...
11 Best Meditation Apps 2020 - Oprah Magazine
 Mar 16, 2020 - The Best Meditation Apps to Help With Anxiety - 1 of 11 Calm. Just as the name of this meditation app states, Calm is a portal to peace of mind. - 2 ...

Ads (Ignore)

1st Organic Result

People Also Ask Widget (Ignore)

2nd Organic Result

1. Go through the list of organic results on the first page and select the competitors that are only a little bit larger than your business or smaller and add them to the [Competitor Backlink Strategy Template](#).

- i. **Example:** Do **not** pick a competitor like Wikipedia, Coca-Cola or the kinds. Those brands will likely have resources and assets that you will not be able to replicate. Considering them direct competitors might not be useful if your aim is to overdo/replicate their success (unless the brand you are working on is actually of such size)

	Name	URL
Brand:	Insight Timer	https://insighttimer.com/
Competitor #1	Headspace	https://www.headspace.com/
Competitor #2	Calm	https://www.calm.com/
Competitor #3	Ten Percent Happier	https://www.tenpercent.com/
Competitor #4	Mindful	https://www.mindful.org/

Your Competitors

b. (option 2) If you're looking for overall competitors across all keywords:

1. Open [ahrefs](#) and query your own domain:



2. Click 'Organic Search' and then select the country where you want to compete:



3. Your Top 10 competitor list will show up below:

- Top 10 competitors**
- 1 mindful.org
 - 2 headspace.com
 - 3 mindworks.org
 - 4 chopra.com
 - 5 mindvalley.com
 - 6 tarabrach.com
 - 7 eocinstitute.org
 - 8 lionsroar.com
 - 9 meditativemind.org
 - 10 mindfulnessexercis.com



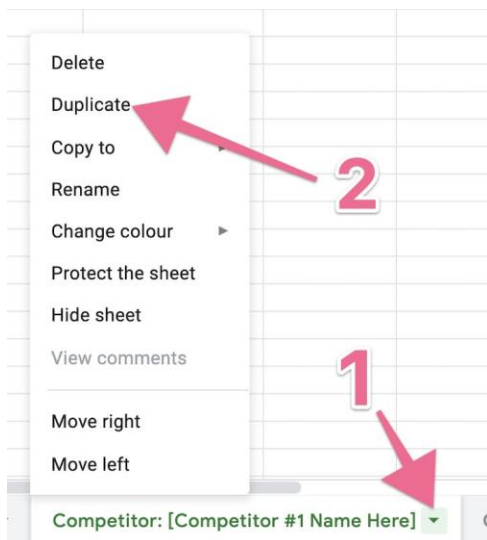
4. Go through the list of organic results on the first page and select the competitors that are only a little bit larger than your business or smaller and add them to the [Competitor Backlink Strategy Template](#).

i. **Example:** Do **not** pick a competitor like Wikipedia, Coca-Cola or the kinds. Those brands will likely have resources and assets that you will not be able to replicate so considering them direct competitors might not be useful if your aim is to overdo/replicate their success. (unless the brand you are working on is actually of such size)

Brand:	Insight Timer	
Competitor #1	Calm	https://www.calm.com/
Competitor #2	Headspace	https://www.headspace.com/
Competitor #3	10 percent happier	https://www.tenpercent.com/
Competitor #3	Mindful	https://www.mindful.org/

Your brand **Your competitors**

2. Duplicate the Competitor sheet as many times as you need until you have a sheet for each competitor and rename it as such:



Analyze your competitors' link profile

Note: You will be performing this for each competitor that you have on your list.

1. Query your competitor's domain in ahrefs.



2. On the top, you'll find your competitor's main backlink metrics:



- **Ahrefs Rank** - If you sort all the websites in the world by the strength of their backlink profiles, you get the Ahrefs Rank (AR). Lower is stronger.
- **DR** - Domain Rating (DR) shows the strength of a target website's backlink profile on a logarithmic scale from 0 to 100, with the latter being the strongest. It's essentially a less granular version of Ahrefs Rank (AR).
- **UR** - URL Rating (UR) shows the strength of a target page's backlink profile on a logarithmic scale from 0 to 100, with the latter being the strongest.
- **Backlinks** - The total number of links from other websites pointing to your target.
- **Referring domains** - The total number of unique domains linking to your target.

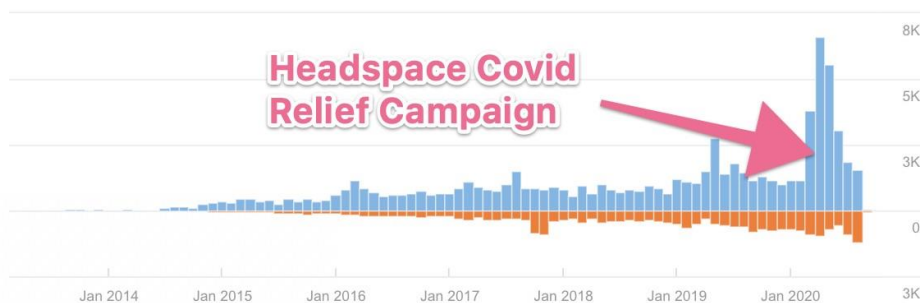
(Source for descriptions: Ahrefs)

3. Add those metrics to the [Competitor Backlink Strategy Template](#):

Competitors General Overview												
Brand:	Name	URL	Ahrefs Rank	Difference	UR	Difference	DR	Difference	Backlinks	Difference	Referring Domains	Difference
	Insight Timer	https://insighttimer.com/	8438		85		82		127000		15700	
Competitor #1	Headspace	https://www.headspace.com/	2317	6121	88	3.53%	88	7.32%	236000	85.83%	50000	218.47%
Competitor #2	Calm	https://www.calm.com/	4764	3674	87	2.35%	85	3.66%	5500000	4230.71%	29800	89.81%
Competitor #3	Ten Percent Happier	https://www.tenpercent.com/	28749	-20311	81	-4.71%	76	-7.32%	25900	-79.61%	5840	-62.80%
Competitor #4	Mindful	https://www.mindful.org/	7704	754	47	-44.71%	83	1.22%	302000	137.80%	20200	28.66%

4. Scroll down to analyze the timeline of links acquired.
 - a. **What to look for:** Specific periods when your competitor might have acquired a lot of links. This may signal a specific strategy that was used that worked very well. (and you might want to replicate)

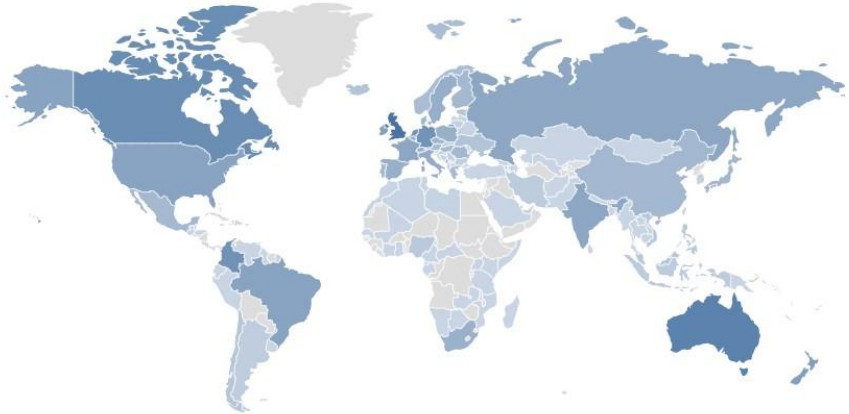
New & lost referring domains LIVE LINKS



- b. Add any findings to your comments on the spreadsheet.
5. On the ahrefs report, scroll down to the CTLDs Distribution Map to visualize where links are coming from.
 - a. **What to look for:** Typically, your links will be coming from countries where the brand has some kind of an audience. If a brand is global, global links are expected. If it's local, links from that specific country are to be expected.
 - i. **Example:** If a website is targeting a Spanish audience and most of their links are coming from Russia (.ru) it might be an indication that their link profile might not be natural.

CTLDs distribution

.com	30,909	61%
.org	3,583	7%
.uk	3,526	7%
.au	1,500	2%
.net	1,214	2%
.ca	803	1%
.edu	595	1%
.co	572	1%
.de	540	1%
.nl	511	1%
.info	375	<1%
.nz	274	<1%
.io	259	<1%
.ie	233	<1%
.us	224	<1%



- b. Add any findings to your comments on the spreadsheet.
6. On the ahrefs report, scroll down to the Anchors Table to analyze the anchor text of your competitor's links.
 - a. **What to look for:** Typically, your competitor's most frequent anchors will be your competitor's brand name or generic text (such as 'here' or '<a>no text' etc). If that is not the case, your competitor might be aggressively building links (possibly unnaturally) for that specific keyword. If it's an odd anchor text (like another brand's name), it might indicate a rebranding he went through, merge, or acquisition that is worth noting.
 - i. **Example:** In the images below, the first example shows a natural anchor distribution for Headspace, the bottom example shows an unnatural one.

Anchors	Referring domains
headspace	29,577 59%
headspace app	2,643 5%
https://www.headspace.com/	1,564 3%
headspace.com	1,217 2%
www.headspace.com	1,042 2%
meditation	681 1%
here	620 1%
<a>no text	560 1%
https://www.headspace.com	544 1%
https://www.headspace.com/covid-19	493 1%

✓ Branded / Generic

Versus:

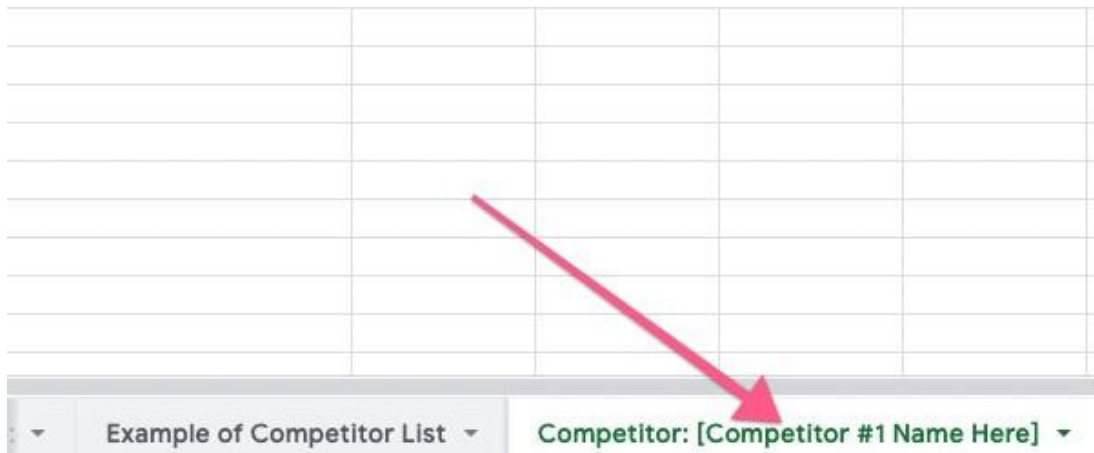
Anchors	Referring domains
meditation app download	29,577 59%
best meditation service	2,643 5%
meditation online	1,217 2%
sleep meditation	1,042 2%
MeditateBeats	681 1%
meditation	620 1%
Headspace	560 1%
<a>no text	544 1%
https://www.headspace.com	493 1%
https://www.headspace.com/covid-19	

✗ Possibly unnatural

[View full report](#)

b. Add any findings to your comments on the spreadsheet.

3. Make a copy of the [Competitor Backlink Strategy Template](#) by clicking “Export as Google Doc”.
4. Then head over to the “Competitor: [Competitor #1 Name Here]” tab. Replace the competitor’s name.



5. On your copy of “[Competitor Backlink Strategy Template](#)” make sure your cursor is selecting Cell A1:

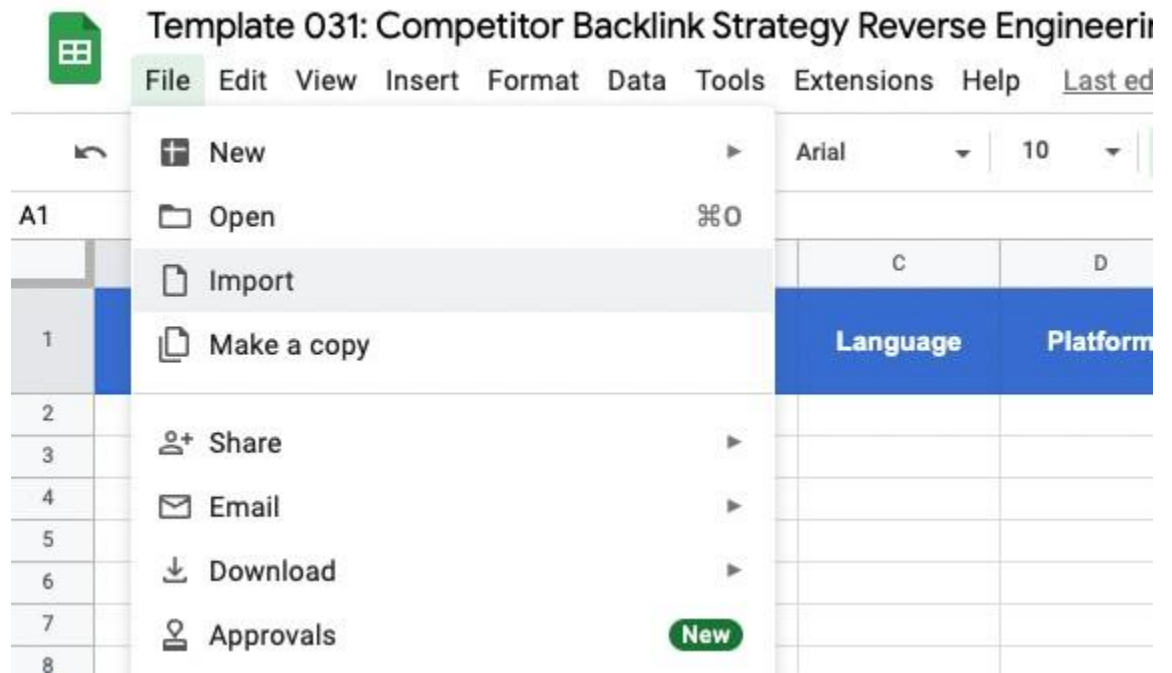
Template 031: Competitor Backlink Strategy Reverse Engineering Worksheet

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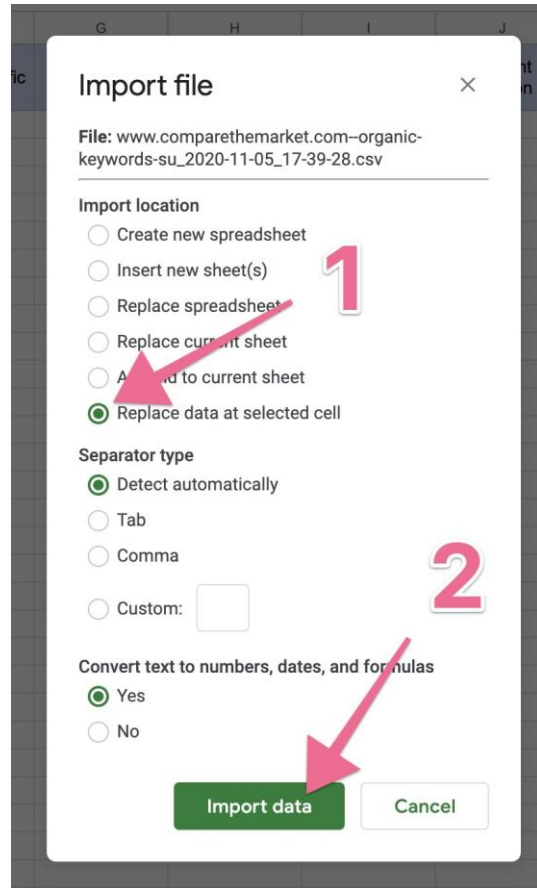
100% £ % .0 .00 123 Arial 10 B I S A

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Referring page title	Referring page URL	Language	Platform	Referring page HTTP code
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					

6. Click ‘File’ → ‘Import’



7. Select 'Replace data at selected cell' → 'Import data'



8. Your competitor's backlink profile will be imported. (Do not change or replace the headers, all the columns should align just perfectly, there's no need to edit them)

Template 031: Competitor Backlink Strategy Reverse Engineering Worksheet ☆

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Extensions Help Last edit was seconds ago

100% £ % .0 .00 123 Arial 10 B I S A

	A	B	C	D
1	Referring page title	Referring page URL	Language	Platform
2	and host of The Tim Ferriss Show podcast (400M+ downloads)	https://tim.blog/	en	wordpress
3	WELCOME TO NIGHT VALE	tonightvale.com/	en	
4	BEE Free Free online email editor to build responsive layout	https://beefree.io/	en	wordpress
5	Discounts for Healthcare Workers and First Responders - Her	her-covid-workers/	en	wordpress
6	Stop Menopausal Weight Gain and Slim Your Mid-Section With	sal-belly-fat.aspx	en	
7	How To Meditate - Meditation 101: Meditation Techniques & Be	beginner-s-how-to	en	ecommerce
8	The Best Meditation Apps for 2022 Reviews by Wirecutter	meditation-apps/	en	
9	The 7 Best Meditation Apps of 2022	n-apps-4767322	en	
10	How to cope with suicidal thoughts	n-how-to-cope/		
11	Anxiety Shaking: Causes and Treatments	https://www.heal	en	
12	Can You Take Tylenol While Pregnant?	https://www.baby	en	
13	Company Core Values: 75 Examples From Top Employers B	https://builtin.cor	en	
14	The 10 Best Fitness Apps to Download in 2022	https://www.very	en	
15	Self care ideas: 27 totally free ways to practice self-care from I	https://www.mari	en	wordpress
16	Home - Troy School District	https://www.troy	en	

9. Go through each link and for each fill out:

- a. **Link type:** If you had to classify this link how would you classify it?
 - i. **Example:** *Directory, Forum, Comment, Article, Review, Testimonial, Partnership, App Store, Social, Affiliate, Podcast, etc.*
- b. **Spam:** Is this link spammy?
 - i. **Example:** *Gambling, Adult, Pharma, belonging to pages with dozens of links, weird-looking content, a lot of irrelevant topics in the same domain/page, poor content.*
- c. **Attainable:** Would you be able to get this link with your current resources?
 - i. **Example:** *If the link is a business directory, you can simply list your business there as well.*

Linked Domain	Link Type	Spam	Attainable	Action to Take
1	App Store	No	No	
29542	Spam	Yes	No	
18	App Store	No	No	
12	Article	No	Maybe	Launch Similar COVID Program
17	Article	No	No	
21	Client List	No	No	
26	Client List	No	No	

- d. **Action to take:** Will you want to take some action now knowing how your competitor acquired this link?
- i. **Example:** Competitor launched a COVID Health Care program that got him a ton of backlinks, your action in order to acquire these as well might be to also launch a similar program and reach out to those pages letting them know.