

Competitive Analysis

Ann Arbor Web Hosting

John Green
Information Architect
September 29, 2009

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Website Content	4
Hosting Plans	6
Website Functionality	7
Domain Name Registration	7
Search Functionality.....	8
Order Forms	8
Online Forms & Contact Information.....	9
Additional Functionality	9

Executive Summary

This competitive analysis was conducted as part of the initial Ann Arbor Web Hosting website design and launch. The goal of this analysis was to identify the content and functionality at competing websites, both to inform the designer(s) as well as to better understand areas of competitive advantage.

The competitor websites examined were:

- *A2 Hosting* (regional competitor) - <http://www.a2hosting.com/>
- *Nexcess.net* (regional competitor) - <http://www.nexcess.net/>
- *Yahoo! Small Business Webhosting* (national competitor) - <http://smallbusiness.yahoo.com/webhosting/>
- *GoDaddy.com* (national competitor) - <http://www.godaddy.com/>

The analysis revealed a core set of content that was covered by most if not all the competitor websites, as well as unique content only available at a single competitor website. Also of note is the wide range of plans available for each type of web hosting – ranging from cheap plans with basic features to more expensive plans with additional features. The *Website Content* section provides additional details concerning the information available at those competitor websites.

Examining the website functionality that is offered by the competitors also raises a number of possibilities for the new website. Notable among that functionality was:

- Domain name availability search, including multiple top-level domains
- Extensive support options, including live online chat as well as support via telephone
- Order Wizards with support for multiple payment types

The analysis documents additional areas of functionality, while providing further details about the items mentioned previously.

Website Content

Content that is common to more than one competitor website:

- About Us
- Affiliate Programs
- Awards Won
- BBBOnline
- Blog
- Data Center / Our Facility
- FAQs
- Help Center
- Hosting Plans of various types
- Jobs / Careers
- Merchant Accounts
- News
- Partners
- Promotions
- Ratepoint.com logo (customer rating site)
- Social Networking (Facebook, Twitter, et. al.)
- SSL Certificates
- Testimonials
- Webpage building software of various types

Content found at only one competitor website:

- About You (present on one website – allows the user to choose their role in order to better use their site)
- Advocate Program
- Customer Forums
- Customer Wiki
- Domain Auctions
- Domain Parking
- Environmental (“Green”) Hosting
- Glossary of Terms
- McAfee Secure
- Newsletter
- Software Tutorials
- TRUSTe
- Trustwave.com logo (security & compliance site)

Policies, terms, and statements:

- 30-Day Satisfaction / Money Back Guarantee
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Domain Registration Agreement
- Privacy Policy

- Terms of Service / Terms and Conditions
- Uptime Guarantee

Types of navigational support provided:

- Expandable Global Navigation (present on two of the websites)
- Order Process – Progress Buttons (Next, Continue, Back, etc.) (frequently encountered)
- Order Process – Start Over / Empty Cart Buttons (present on two of the websites)
- Select A Service dropdown menu (present on one website)
- Sitemaps (frequently encountered)

Hosting Plans

Most competitor websites offer multiple plans for each type of hosting, with increasingly expensive plans containing more additional features.

	A2 Hosting	Nexcess.Net	Yahoo!	GoDaddy
Web Hosting	2 plans	6 plans ¹	1 plan	3 plans
Reseller Hosting	3 plans	4 plans		3 plans
Virtual Private Server Hosting ²	4 plans	4 plans		3 plans
Semi-Dedicated Server Hosting	1 plan			
Dedicated Server Hosting	3 plans	3 plans		3 plans

¹ Referred to as “Shared Hosting Plans.”

² Referred to as “VPS Hosting”, “Virtual Private Servers”, and “Virtual Dedicated Server,” respectively.

Additionally, each competitor offers different options for billing cycle duration:

	A2 Hosting	Nexcess.Net	Yahoo!	GoDaddy
Monthly	Y	Y	Y	
Quarterly (3 months)		Y	Y	Y
Semiannually (6 months)	Y	Y		
Annually (12 months)	Y	Y	Y	Y
24 months / 2 Years	Y			Y
36 months / 3 Years	Y			Y

Y = Yes - the website offers that billing cycle duration

Website Functionality

Domain Name Registration

Each competitor website offers domain registration and varying amounts of top-level domains beyond the traditional .com.

	A2 Hosting	Nexcess.Net	Yahoo!	GoDaddy
Top-Level Domains available	25	12	6	62
- *.com	Y	Y	Y	Y
- *.net	Y	Y	Y	Y
- *.org	Y	Y	Y	Y
- *.biz	Y	Y	Y	Y
- *.info	Y	Y	Y	Y
- *.us	Y		Y	Y
- *.ag				Y
- *.am				Y
- *.asia				Y
- *.at				
- *.be				Y
- *.bz	Y			Y
- *.ca	Y			Y
- *.cc	Y			Y
- *.cn	Y	Y		Y
- *.co.in				Y
- *.co.nz				Y
- *.co.uk	Y	Y		Y
- *.com.ag				Y
- *.com.bz				Y
- *.com.cn	Y	Y		Y
- *.com.es				Y
- *.com.mx				Y
- *.com.tw	Y			Y
- *.de	Y			Y
- *.es				Y
- *.eu				Y
- *.firm.in				Y
- *.fm				Y
- *.gen.in				Y
- *.gs				Y
- *.idv.tw	Y			Y
- *.in				Y
- *.ind.in				Y
- *.jobs				Y
- *.jp				Y
- *.kids.us	Y			
- *.me				Y
- *.me.uk		Y		Y
- *.mobi				Y
- *.ms				Y
- *.mx				Y
- *.name	Y			

	A2 Hosting	Nexcess.Net	Yahoo!	GoDaddy
- *.net.ag				Y
- *.net.bz				Y
- *.net.cn	Y	Y		Y
- *.net.in				Y
- *.net.nz				Y
- *.nl				Y
- *.nom.es				Y
- *.nu	Y			Y
- *.net.ag				Y
- *.org.cn	Y	Y		Y
- *.org.es				Y
- *.org.in				Y
- *.org.nz				Y
- *.org.tw	Y			Y
- *.org.uk	Y	Y		Y
- *.tc				Y
- *.tk				Y
- *.tm	Y			
- *.tv	Y			Y
- *.tw				Y
- *.vg				Y
- *.ws	Y			Y

Y = Yes - the website offers that top-level domain

Search Functionality

	A2 Hosting	Nexcess.Net	Yahoo!	GoDaddy
Website Search (keyword)	Y		Y	Y
Domain Name Search	Y	Y	Y	Y
Help/Support Search (keyword)	Y		Y	Y
Job Search				Y

Y = Yes - the website contains that functionality

Order Forms

	A2 Hosting	Nexcess.Net	Yahoo!	GoDaddy
Required to create an account	Y	Y	Y	Y
Domain Registration	Y	Y	Y	Y
Domain Transfer	Y	Y	Y	Y
Payment Options	Y	Y	Y	Y
- Visa	Y	Y	Y	Y
- MasterCard	Y	Y	Y	Y
- Discover	Y	Y	Y	Y
- American Express	Y	Y	Y	Y
- JCB				Y
- PayPal	Y	Y	Y	Y
- Check	Y ¹			Y ²
- Gift Cards				Y

Y = Yes - the website contains that functionality

¹ Website states that that the patron's account will not be set up until payment is received.

² Website requires patron’s bank account information (account and routing numbers), patron’s driver’s license number, and agreement to the “Pay by Check Agreement” to pay with this option.

Online Forms & Contact Information

	A2 Hosting	Nexcess.Net	Yahoo!	GoDaddy
General Contact/Feedback form	Y ¹		Y	Y
Contact Information Provided	Y	Y	Y	Y
- Email Address(es)		Y		
- Phone	Y	Y	Y	Y
- Fax	Y	Y		Y
- Mail	Y	Y		Y
Submit a Support Ticket form	Y	Y		
Password Reset form	Y			Y
eNewsletter Signup	Y			
Product Advisor Form				Y
Special Email Offers Signup				Y

Y = Yes - the website contains that functionality

¹ Website features both a “Sales Questions / General Contact Form” and a “Customer Feedback” form.

Additional Functionality

	A2 Hosting	Nexcess.Net	Yahoo!	GoDaddy
Account Login	Y	Y	Y	Y
Community/Support Forum	Y			Y
Customer Wiki	Y			
Live Support	Y	Y		
Multi-lingual Support				Y - Spanish
Virtual Tour			Y ¹	

Y = Yes - the website contains that functionality

¹ Presented in Adobe Flash