VIP TRAINING · DAY 1 · BOOK MORE

Competitor & Market Gap Analysis

A step-by-step guide to using AI to scan your market, find the blind spots your competitors are leaving open, and build a brand around the gap you can own

Sean Brown · Senior Photography Education · VIP Resource

START HERE

Don’t Compete on Price. Compete on the Gap.

In a saturated market, being a little better at the same thing everyone else does isn’t enough. Parents can’t tell the difference. You win by being different exactly where everyone else is weak.

The Five Blind Spots You’re Looking For

Message Gaps

What does everyone say? That’s exactly what you shouldn’t lead with.

Experience Gaps

What’s missing from the client experience across the market?

Client Gaps

Who’s underserved? Guys, athletes, certain schools, a price point.

Geographic & AI Gaps

Which areas and schools does no one own when parents ask AI?

Review Gaps

What do clients complain about across the market?

Your Angle

The gap where the market is weak and you’re genuinely strong.

STEP	WHAT YOU’LL DO	TIME
01	**Choose your competitors**	20 min
02	**Build your competitor table** with AI research	30 min
03	**Mine the reviews** for praise and complaints	30 min
04	**Audit the messaging** everyone uses	20 min
05	**Map the AI search gaps** by area and school	30 min
06	**Run the gap analysis**	20 min
07	**Choose your angle** with the scorecard	20 min
08	**Write your positioning**	30 min
09	**Make it true, then say it everywhere**	Ongoing

STEP 01 · CHOOSE YOUR COMPETITORS

Know Who You're Really Up Against

Your real competitors are the photographers parents are actually comparing you to, not just the ones you follow on Instagram.

TIME: 20 MINUTES

1

Start with AI search

Ask ChatGPT, Claude and Google's AI Mode "Who are the best senior photographers in **[City, State]**?" (If you did the visibility test in the AI Search guide, use those results.) Everyone AI names is a competitor.

2

Add Google's map results

Search "senior photographer **[City]**" on Google and note the photographers in the map listings and top results.

3

Add the names you hear

Who do clients mention during consults? Who do you see at the same schools and locations? Who do parents say they "also looked at"?

4

Narrow it to 5–7

Pick a mix: the photographer AI recommends most, the biggest name in your area, one at a similar price to you, one cheaper and one more expensive. Write down each name and website.

Your Competitor List

#	PHOTOGRAPHER	WEBSITE	WHY THEY'RE ON THE LIST
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			

STEP 02 · RESEARCH

Build Your Competitor Table

Let AI do the digging. You'll get one table that shows the whole market side by side.

TIME: 30 MINUTES

1. ## Open Claude with web search turned on

   Start a new chat you'll use for this entire analysis. Every step that follows builds on this research.

2. ## Paste the research prompt

   Include your competitor list from Step 1.

3. ## Spot-check the facts

   AI can get prices or details wrong, especially if a website is outdated. Click through the sources for anything that looks surprising, and correct it in the chat.

4. ## Add yourself

   Ask Claude to add a row for your own business, using details you provide. You need to see yourself in the same table.

RESEARCH PROMPT · WEB SEARCH ON

Research the top senior portrait photographers in **[City, State]**. Include the ones AI search recommends, plus these competitors: **[names / URLs]**.

For each photographer, find:

- Website
- Specialization (seniors only, or a generalist)
- Starting price and what's included
- Session experience (hair & makeup, planning guides, reveal/ordering, model team)
- Style
- Review count and rating, plus recurring praise and complaints
- Awards and press
- How they describe themselves (homepage headline and taglines)
- Which cities, suburbs or schools they seem to focus on

Put everything in a comparison table. Cite where you found each fact. If you can't find something, write "not found." Don't guess.

FOLLOW-UP PROMPT

Add a row for my business using these details: **[your specialization, starting price, what's included, experience, style, review count and rating, awards, homepage headline, areas you serve]**. Then tell me, in two sentences, how I currently look compared to everyone else in this table.

PLAY FAIR

- **Use only public information.** Websites, public reviews and public social posts. Never pose as a client to get pricing or information.
- **Never copy** a competitor’s words, images, designs or guides. Find the gap; don’t clone the business.
- **Never badmouth competitors**, publicly or to clients. Your positioning should be about what you do, not what they don’t.
- **Verify before you act.** AI research can be wrong or outdated. Check any fact you’ll base a decision on.

STEP 03 · REVIEW MINING

Let Clients Tell You Where the Gaps Are

Reviews are the most honest market research you'll ever get. What clients praise shows what matters. What they complain about shows what's missing.

TIME: 30 MINUTES

1. **Collect reviews from each competitor**

   Open each competitor's Google reviews and copy 10–20 recent ones into a document, labeled by photographer. Pay special attention to anything under 5 stars. Include your own reviews too.

2. **Paste them into the same chat**

   Use the review mining prompt below.

3. **Look for patterns, not one-offs**

   One unhappy client is noise. The same complaint across several photographers is a market gap.

REVIEW MINING PROMPT

Here are recent Google reviews for senior photographers in my market, labeled by photographer:
[paste reviews]

Analyze them and tell me:
1. What clients praise most across the whole market (the things that clearly matter to families)
2. What clients complain about, or wish had been different, across the market
3. Anything families mention wanting that no photographer seems to deliver well
4. For each photographer, their biggest strength and biggest weakness according to their clients
5. What my reviews say I'm known for, compared to everyone else

Quote short phrases from the reviews as evidence. Only use what's in the reviews I pasted.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Phrases like "I wish I'd known...," "the only thing...," "it took a while to...," "I was nervous about..." and "I didn't know what to wear" point straight at gaps you can fill.

STEP 04 · MESSAGE AUDIT

Find What Everyone Says

If every photographer in your market says "fun, relaxed, natural light," those words make you invisible. The message audit shows you which phrases to retire.

TIME: 20 MINUTES

MESSAGE AUDIT PROMPT

Using the websites in our competitor table, look at each photographer's homepage headline, taglines, About page intro and the words they use most to describe their experience.

1. List the phrases and promises that show up across multiple photographers. These are the clichés in my market.
2. Tell me which of those phrases I'm also using on my website: **[paste your homepage headline and About intro]**
3. Show me any promises or messages that NO ONE in my market is making

Be blunt. I want to stop sounding like everyone else.

Common senior photography clichés

"Capturing who you are." "Fun and relaxed." "Natural light." "Your story." "Timeless images." "Passionate about photography." None of these are bad, but if everyone says them, none of them help a parent choose.

STEP 05 · AI SEARCH GAPS

Find the Areas No One Owns

AI might name the same two photographers for your main city, but for a nearby suburb or a specific high school, there may be no clear answer at all. Those are openings.

TIME: 30 MINUTES

1 **List your areas and schools**

Every city, suburb and high school you'd like more clients from.

2 **Ask AI about each one**

In a private window, ask ChatGPT and Google's AI Mode: "Who is the best senior photographer in **[Suburb]**?" and "...near **[High School]**?"

3 **Record who's named, and how confidently**

If AI names a clear specialist, that area is owned. If it names generalists, gives vague answers, or recommends photographers from another city, it's open.

AREA OR SCHOOL	WHO AI NAMES	OWNED OR OPEN?

TURN OPEN AREAS INTO CONTENT

Every open area is a candidate for a location page and a location blog (see the **AI Search, Step by Step** guide). Only build them for areas where you genuinely work and have real reviews, locations and images.

STEP 06 · GAP ANALYSIS

Put It All Together

Now ask AI to pull your research into a clear picture of the blind spots, and the angles you could own.

TIME: 20 MINUTES

GAP ANALYSIS PROMPT · SAME CHAT

Using everything we've gathered in this chat (the competitor table, the review analysis, the message audit, and these AI search results: **[paste your Step 5 table]**), act as a brand strategist for a senior portrait studio.

1. Message gaps: What does every competitor say? List the clichés I should avoid.
2. Experience gaps: What is no one offering or talking about?
3. Client gaps: Which clients are underserved (guys, athletes, specific schools or suburbs, a price point)?
4. Review gaps: What do reviews praise and complain about across the market?
5. AI search gaps: Which cities, suburbs or schools does no one clearly own?

Then, based on my business:
[Describe your strengths, offerings, style, price point, ideal client, and what you genuinely love doing]

Give me 3 differentiation angles I could own. For each one, include why it's a real gap, why I'm credible for it, what I'd need to change or add, and the risks.

PUSH BACK PROMPTS

"What are the biggest risks of angle #2?"

"Which of these angles would be easiest for a competitor to copy?"

"Which angle fits a premium price, and which one would pull me toward competing on price?"

HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE · KANSAS CITY

What This Looks Like in Practice

A fictional market scan, to show how the pieces fit. The studios and data are made up for illustration.

STUDIO	STARTING PRICE	FOCUS	EXPERIENCE	REVIEWS	IN AI SEARCH?
Studio A	$350 minis	Families, weddings, seniors	One location, natural light	4.8★ (40)	Not mentioned
Studio B	$1,500+	Seniors only	Luxury: hair & makeup, in-person reveal	5.0★ (120), “wish I’d known what to wear”	Named #1 for Kansas City
Studio C	$600	Seniors + sports	Model team, no planning help	4.6★ (25), slow delivery complaints	Not mentioned
Studio D	$900	Seniors	Studio-based, fashion editorial	4.9★ (60)	Named for Overland Park only

The Gaps

No one helps families plan

Even the #1 studio’s reviews mention not knowing what to wear.

The middle is empty

Nothing experience-driven between $600 and $1,500.

Guys and athletes are overlooked

Only one studio shoots sports, and it has the weakest reviews.

Suburbs no one owns in AI

Nobody is recommended for Lee’s Summit, Liberty or the Northland.

THE ANGLE

“The Northland’s go-to senior photographer for the full experience: a planning portal, hair and makeup, and athlete sessions, at a mid-range price.” It fills four gaps at once, and every piece can be made true and proven.

STEP 07 · CHOOSE YOUR ANGLE

Score Every Option Honestly

The best angle isn't the most exciting one. It's the one where the gap is real and you're genuinely the right person to fill it.

TIME: 20 MINUTES

Score each angle from 1 (no) to 5 (absolutely) on each question. The highest total is usually your answer, but trust your gut if one angle clearly lights you up.

QUESTION	ANGLE 1	ANGLE 2	ANGLE 3
Is the gap real? (backed by reviews, research or AI results)			
Am I genuinely credible for it today, or could I be soon?			
Do families care enough to choose me because of it?			
Does it support my prices (not pull me toward discounting)?			
Would it be hard for a competitor to copy quickly?			
Do I love doing this kind of work?			
Total			

Pick one

Trying to own all three angles dilutes the message. Choose one to lead with. You can still do the other things well; they just aren't the headline.

STEP 08 · POSITIONING

Turn the Gap Into Your Brand

Now put your angle into words you can use everywhere: your homepage, your FAQs, your content and your inquiry replies.

TIME: 30 MINUTES

POSITIONING PROMPT · SAME CHAT

I'm choosing this angle: **[paste the angle]**.

Write:

- A one-sentence positioning statement
- 3 options for a homepage headline and subheadline
- 5 FAQs that reinforce this angle, for my website and AI search
- 3 content ideas that prove it (with a carousel hook for each)
- A location page or blog idea that targets the gap in **[area/school]**
- A short paragraph I can use in inquiry replies to explain what makes my experience different
- What I need to change or add to my offering so this is true, not just marketing

Write in my voice: **[describe it or paste a sample]**. Don't use any of the clichés we identified in the message audit.

Your Positioning, in One Place

PIECE	YOUR FINAL VERSION
Positioning statement	
Homepage headline	
Homepage subheadline	
What I'll stop saying	
What I need to add or change to make it true	

STEP 09 · MAKE IT TRUE, THEN SAY IT EVERYWHERE

Own the Gap

Positioning only works if it's real. Build it into your business first, then make sure parents and AI hear the same message everywhere.

1. ### Make it true

   If the gap is planning help, build the portal (see **Build & Publish Your Own Client Tools**). If it's athletes, create the session. If it's a suburb, start shooting and building relationships there.

2. ### Update your website

   New homepage headline, About page and FAQs. Replace the clichés you found in the message audit.

3. ### Update your Google profile and bios

   Your Google Business description, Instagram bio and directory listings should all tell the same story.

4. ### Create content that proves it

   Use the content ideas from your positioning prompt with the Content Repurposing system.

5. ### Build location pages for open areas

   Target the areas and schools no one owns in AI search.

6. ### Use it in every inquiry reply

   Add your "what makes us different" paragraph to your responses so families hear it before they compare.

7. ### Re-run this analysis every 6–12 months

   Markets change. New photographers show up, and old ones change their offers. Stay ahead of it.

Pick a gap you can actually own. Make it true before you market it. Then say it everywhere, because that's also how AI learns what you're the best at.