

1. Competitive audit goal(s)

The goal of this competitive audit is to identify key features in competitors' inventory management applications and discover gaps that could be addressed in our solution.

2. Who are your key competitors? (Description)

I have identified 3 key competitors:

- Sortly, a direct competitor based out of CA that offers only inventory management for businesses of all sizes
- Zoho, a direct competitor that provides a powerful inventory management app with integrations to many sales channels and other internal software, such as a CRM
- InFlow Inventory, an indirect competitor out of Toronto that helps small business track, order, and sell inventory

3. What are the type and quality of competitors' products?

(Description)

Sortly's inventory management application is fairly straightforward: you use the app to track all inventory, including various details and metadata about all equipment, including cost. The application comes in mobile and desktop format, is cloud based, and resembles an ERP system. Items and item types are stored in user-built folders, which could make searching, sorting, and filtering content difficult. The app provides detailed and extensible reporting as well as automated push notifications and email alerting.

Zoho's inventory management is incredibly robust and geared more towards larger businesses that use a complex technology stack. It offers the same solutions as Sortly with added features such as CRM integrations, B2B workflows for ordering and invoice generation, and a complete document management and note-taking solution. This product is best when used with other Zoho applications and is therefore not a great option for small, not for profit organizations.

InFlow Inventory is an inventory management, purchasing, and retail platform, making it an indirect competitor as our client is not interested in reselling any of the inventory it intakes. The interface is clean and succinct and there is a plethora of tutorials and community outreach on the web. As with the others, many of the core features can be accessed and used via a mobile application. However, the software is best used with the company's



proprietary hardware, such as scanners and label makers, which might be cumbersome and expensive for our client.

4. How do competitors position themselves in the market?

(Description)

Sortly positions itself as an “intuitive, cloud-based solution for managing” inventory, assets, equipment, supplies, and more. It is focused on serving businesses of all sizes and offers one thing and one thing only: **tracking** inventory. It does not dig into purchasing integrations and works best as a standalone system.

Zoho is meant for larger businesses with a complex and mature technology stack. It is best utilized parallel to a CRM, an accounting system, company-wide IAM solutions, etc, though it claims to work wonderfully for businesses of all sizes. The branding is extensible so clients can fit it to their internal brand.

InFlow Inventory positions itself as a solution for small or startup retail businesses. It focuses on solving all inventory solutions by being “the cure for inventory spreadsheets,” which is relevant to any small businesses or NPOs that can’t afford or refuse to embrace more modern technological solutions. The interface is colorful and foolproof, making this optimal for those without technical chops.

5. How do competitors talk about themselves? (Description)

Sortly is proud of its portfolio of business successes in its short tenure on the market. It refers to its product as the easiest to learn and navigate out of the plethora of options and emphasizes the strength of its OOTB reporting for business insights.

Zoho displays their inventory management software as something best used to help developed businesses unify their disparate technologies for a more streamlined business operation. It produces very deep-level data and insights likely intended for larger teams with more resources and expertise to derive meaningful messaging from them.

InFlow presents itself as a “hit-the-ground-running” solution for small businesses or startups that have just recently discovered the need for a more complex inventory management solution. Nothing about the platform is intimidating for someone who doesn’t have the technical experience to work with more advanced technology. It provides many out-of-the-box business integrations for order placement and management and it’s proud of the simplicity it provides to very small operations.



6. Competitors' strengths (List)

Sortly strengths:

- Familiar interface that matches users' mental models
- Fully extensible product management and metadata standardization
- Heavy focus on inventory management

Zoho strengths:

- Strong integrations with internal applications and external vendors
- Robust reporting and data collection
- Includes document sharing and notes

InFlow Inventory strengths:

- Simple, straightforward interface
- Inventory management is customizable to fit needs of the business
- Pricing and simplicity of the interface is clearly intended for very small businesses
- Includes a single interface for B2B ordering



7. Competitors' weaknesses (List)

Sortly weaknesses:

- Does not include any purchasing options or ways to generate invoices (critical)
- Unable to customize branding to fit businesses guidelines
- Asynchronous offline usage will lead to data conflicts

Zoho weaknesses:

- There is way too many features in this app, which will prove stressful and distracting for our identified users
- Branding and lack of proper responsive design are antiquated; the product feels old and not cared for
- While notes are a feature, they are not integrated into the inventory itself and are instead isolated in a tab that seems like an afterthought from the initial product rollout

InFlow Inventory weaknesses:

- Many features require the purchase and use of proprietary hardware in addition to the base cost
- Navigation is a bit too simplified and blends in too well with the background
- There is a large emphasis on fulfilling and selling items, which does not apply here

8. Gaps (List)

Some gaps we identified include:

- Competitors tend to try to do too much with their product; they are focused on large business integration or retail rather than simple inventory management and purchasing
- Most similar products assume the purchasing company has money for a plethora of integrations and other software stacks with which their inventory management solution can connect
- User management and permissions appear more complicated than non-technically adept individuals may be able to manage

9. Opportunities (List)



Part 2 - Competitive Audit Report

Google UX Design Certificate

Some opportunities we identified include:

- Focus on the core principles: inventory management and product purchasing
- A mobile app is expected by the users
- Push notifications and email integrations are critical for org-wide communication
- Maintain a minimalist design for best usability
- Provide a communication feature tied specifically to specific items or item types
- Allow users to easily change the metadata required for various items and item types
- Potential: provide an option to use barcode scanning and generation with cheap and universal hardware

