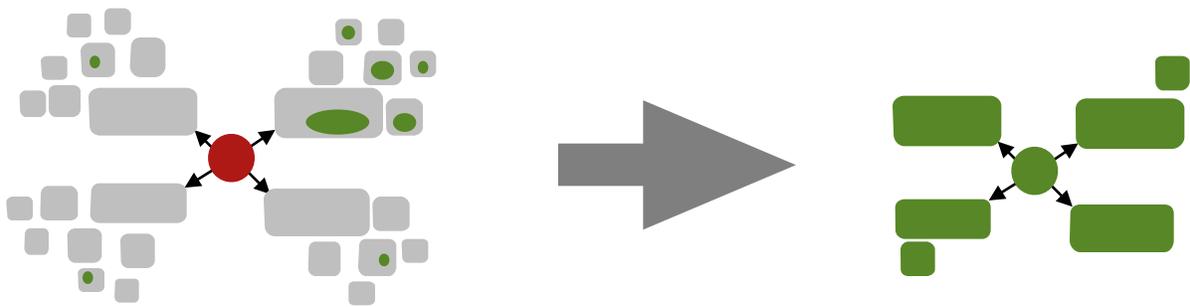


Attract Visitors, Get Leads, and **Win Customers** with a B2B Minisite



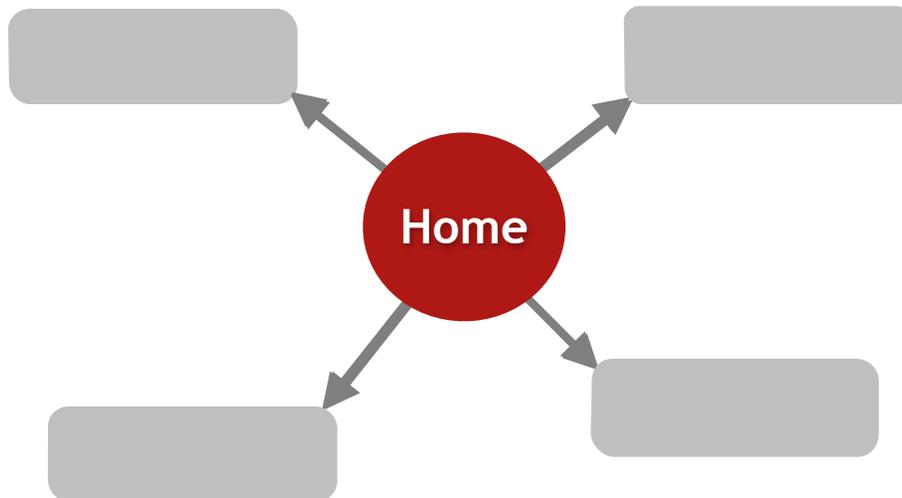
This document is frequently updated. Get a current copy at:
<http://www.greenwave-solutions.com/minisites>

Get out a Pencil

This book will have a lot more value for you if you read it with a pencil. If you've printed it out, you'll find space to answer questions. If you're reading it on a device, get a notebook.

Your Website

Go to your business's website. In the diagram below, write the four major places visitors can get from your website's homepage. Then, around each gray rectangle, jot down some of the other pages those main pages go to. Spend a few minutes doing this.



Your Audiences

Consider each of these visitors to your site. Write down how they got to your site (direct, a search term, from a link, ads, etc.). Under that, write down what you think they were hoping to get from your site. **Be specific.** If they come from search, what search terms do they use? If they come from a link, where was it?

Audience #1: Your top customers

Audience #2: Your average customer

Audience #3: Non-customers in your target market, ready to buy

Audience #4: Non-customers in your target market, doing research

Audience #5: Non-customers in related markets

Audience #6: *an audience you want:* _____

Audience #7: *an audience you want:* _____

If one of these doesn't apply, cross it out and write in one that does. Look over your answers. Are they specific? If you said "ad", what do you mean? Is it an AdWord? A banner ad? A print ad? Write that down. What's the best ad you're running for that audience?

If you are having trouble with #6 and #7, think of an adjacent market that you could serve, but hasn't heard of you. Or perhaps you need to hire a few top salespeople or software developers. They are audiences, too. How are they finding you? What do they want?

Finally, make sure that you are writing down what *they want* to find on your site, not what *they are* finding or what you are hoping to sell them.

Minisite 101

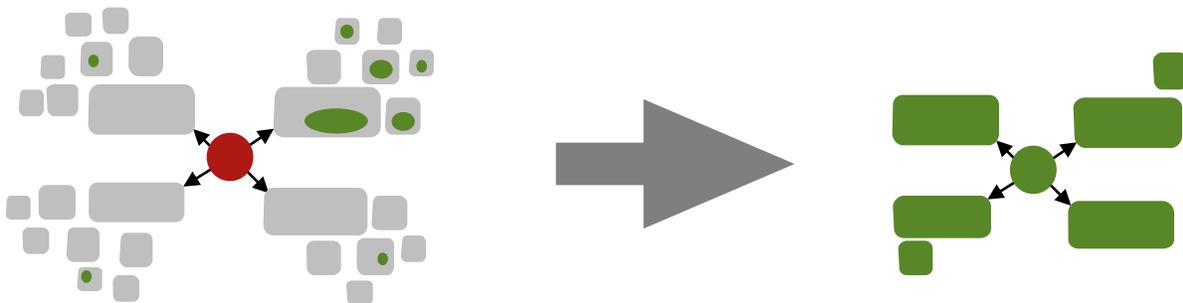
Now that we understand more about everything your website does, we're ready to learn about minisites.

What is a Minisite?

A minisite is a single-purpose website that focuses on one product or service of your company. It is optimized to deliver value around one idea.

A minisite has a **URL based around search terms** or an easy to remember phrase that leads to a **simple site** with tightly related **conversion goals**.

Essentially, a minisite is a view of your website. You gather up the parts important to a single audience and move them to a new site.



On the left is your website, where the green areas represent the information that would solve a problem for a particular audience. On the right is a minisite, where that information was gathered and put in one place.

Why?

Your website is designed for a lot of potential users. **Existing customers** use it to get support. **Job Seekers** will check out your careers page. **Web**

Searchers are trying to solve a specific problem. **Prospects** are trying to understand if they have found a trustworthy company. **Investors**, from VC to the public, are more interested in your results than your offerings.

Any one of these audiences can go around your site trying to find what they need by piecing it together. But by trying to serve all of these audiences, there might be an important one that can't get what they need.

Minisites let you pick one idea and build a site dedicated to just that. This way, the intended audience can find it, get value from it, gain trust in it, and be persuaded to engage with the company further. It doesn't replace your website, but instead acts as a conduit to it.

EXERCISE: Go back to your work on pages 2-4. Look at one of the audiences you identified that is not the main audience of your site (#4-7 are good choices). Put an asterisk next to one of them and then on page 2, put asterisks on the parts of your site that they might get useful information.

Minisite FAQs

Are you saying that it's bad that my site is doing so much?

Not really. It's natural that you'll have product areas, customer service, a careers page, an investor relations area, etc. It would be bad if it were disorganized, and users couldn't figure it out. But even with perfect organization, an unmotivated visitor might not invest in figuring it out.

So should I make a minisite for each audience I identified?

No. Audiences that know you and are motivated to use your site expect to engage with you on your website. For example, your current customers come to your site to get support and would be confused by having to go to another site.

Ok, will making a minisite for my top product help me sell more?

Probably not. **Minisites are not meant to replace your main website**, and your website should certainly be geared towards moving your top product.

Then what makes a good minisite?

Minisites work best for:

1. Audiences that don't know you yet
2. that will be coming via searches*
3. where you can immediately solve their problem.

*You can stretch this a bit, particularly to non-web mentions of your URL, like radio or print ads.

EXERCISE: Go to the audience you chose in the last exercise. Write down their biggest problem related to your business. What are they actively searching for?

Minisite Advantages

Minisites work well for new audiences coming from search because they are easier to find and use.

They have good SEO

Minisites should have a domain name based on your target keywords. **Since Google highly weights keyword matches to the URL, your minisite should rank well.** But SEO isn't just about ranking. A custom URL that matches the query gets bolded and will have a higher click-through rate.

Finally, minisites usually have far simpler designs and site structure. Both of these features make it easier for Google to understand and index your site.

The downside to SEO for minisites is that they usually start from a domain with very little age (a key Google statistic). If it's affordable, consider buying a domain with some age from a domain name market.

It's obvious what the site does

Your minisite will have fewer pages and a very obvious call to action. There will be little to distract the visitor from evaluating your offer.

You only need to optimize one thing

As you improve your minisite over time, you can focus on delivering the value that you set out to do. Your main site has many masters, and it's not easy to focus everyone on a single goal. Minisites are easier to manage, measure, and improve.

Minisite Alternatives

You might not need a minisite to get the effect you want. Consider these alternatives.

Better Site Structure

Your site may be trying to do a lot of different things, but a single page on it should not. It's ok to have pages that are meant to be used to browse around the site, but ultimately visitors should get to a page that is focused around a single idea. These focused pages make it easier to get higher rankings in Google, and it's easier for the user to understand what they can do on them.

Better Landing Pages

If you haven't tried optimizing your landing pages, then do that first. Even if you are planning a minisite, there's no harm in spending a few hours making your current site better.

1. Make sure the URL has your keywords in it.
2. Give the landing page the site's simplest navigation alternative.
3. Make sure it's obvious what you want the visitor to do.

Anything you learn about optimizing your landing pages will transfer to your minisite if you choose to make one.

Link Building

This merits an entire book of its own, but the surest way to rank higher in Google is to have more sites naturally and legitimately link to you. If you have partners, distributors, customers, vendors, and fans, then you have a list of sites that could link to yours. Be careful though, as many spammers use this technique and Google might not be able to tell the difference.

Directory Listings

If you are targeting keywords where sites like Yelp, Google Places, or TravelAdvisor rank high, there is little chance that you could get a minisite to rank better. Even if you are close, it's hard to beat them for click-throughs. You'll get more traction from optimizing your listing.

1. Make a landing page on your site specifically for the directory.
2. Get your listing changed to point to that URL.
3. Make an offer to users you now know are coming from that site.

4. Get your fans to review you in the directory

Press Coverage

If you have the kind of business that gets news coverage, you could use that to reach new audiences. I'm not talking about standard press releases (with product launches, for example), but real news of interest to your target market. These articles are more likely to rank and get links than your site.

Minisites+

Of course, nothing stops you from using these techniques in conjunction with a minisite. For example, if your CEO is a subject matter expert who frequently gets interviewed on a subject, a minisite with more information and **a memorable URL will be more effective than a deep link into your company website.**

Minisites are the next logical step after optimizing site structure and landing pages. If you still have trouble getting that area to rank or convert, moving it to a minisite could help.

Minisite Idea Generator

Think of a group of people with a similar problem and a way you could help them. Ideally, the group, the problem, and your value are related to your business.

Typical Minisites

A vertical segment of your market

Do you sell a general purpose software that is particularly useful to construction companies, for example? A minisite is easier to optimize to appeal to their busy executives. Think of what problems they might search for and help solve them.

EXERCISE: What are the vertical segments of your market?

An emerging market

Members of an emerging market might not find many sites catering to their needs. That offers an opportunity to tap into a growing community.

EXERCISE: Who is just discovering that your product category is right for them?

A seasonal event

Do you sell catering services to businesses? If so, minisites to cater parties for the biggest days of the year will garner a lot of search hits, which you'll

start seeing in the month or so leading up to it. What can you offer that gets you the deal when the time comes?

EXERCISE: Write down some big buying days.

A trade show

Does your target audience all attend a specific trade show each year? You could augment their attendance with a site directed at delivering them value while they are there. You could probably rank right under the official site.

Are you having a party? Are you a major sponsor? With the realization that most of the attendees will be searching for this event, how could you enhance the experience leading up to it? What could you send as a follow-up to the leads you gathered?

EXERCISE: What trade shows do your customers attend?

A specific use-case

Your products might be general purpose, but is there a use-case that keeps coming up with your customers? The minisite might be your first step to offering a more complete solution.

EXERCISE: What specific problems do your customers solve with your product?

A gallery of customer projects

This works well when your product is a tool for making something. Your customers will be providing the content. This is likely to get linked to and shared by your customers.

EXERCISE: What do your customers make?

An online magazine

This is a lot more work and only suitable if you are making a longer term and bigger investment. To get started, you can commission articles.

This is a good way of starting a cold-call campaign (“we’d like to cover you” or “do you want to submit an article” works better than — “we’re X and we’d like to do Y for you”)

EXERCISE: What role in an organization would you like to reach? What are they reading now?

Minisite Worksheets

Look back at pages 2-4 and use them to jog your memory as you fill this in. If you left some areas blank, now would be a good time to fill them in. If you didn't do the exercises, do them now.

In the first column, describe an audience that you want to target. In the second column, write down a problem they are eager to solve, and in the last column, brainstorm a solution. The solution doesn't need to be one of your products, but could be if visitors don't need much convincing. If your product requires some thought, it would be better to offer a free guide, a video course, or some other no-risk, easy-to-try solution.

Audience	Problem	Solution Offer

Validation

The next step is to validate that your audience really does have this problem.

A good way to start a minisite is by choosing a segment of your existing audience that you want to grow. If you are doing this, then you already have customers to talk to or to reach via an email campaign.

If this is a completely new audience, then you'll have to seek out members. There are lots of places online where like-minded people congregate: Linked-in, StackExchange, Twitter, custom forums, or the comment sections of publications. Look for evidence that your problem exists and if allowed by the site, try to make an offer.

You might also try a small AdWords spend. To start, this could be just a page on your site. It's also a good way to research search terms that you might want in your URL.

The point is that you should not be using a minisite to figure out if you have a good way to engage an audience. A minisite is better at helping you scale an idea that is already somewhat working. The other reason you are doing this is that your site and AdWords are a good way to do the search term research that will determine your URL.

On the next page, you'll find a validation worksheet, which you can make copies of and use to split up the work or for different audiences.

How to use the validation worksheet

Pick an audience that you think you have identified a problem and solution for. Next, find members of that audience who you can talk to. If you actually have the solution available (an e-book, a webinar, etc.) then see if they want it. Schedule a follow-up and get their feedback. If they don't want it or don't use it after accepting it, count that as not validated. If they accept it, agree they got value from it, and can give some feedback, then count that as validated.

Pay careful attention to how they describe the problem they have and write down words that they use.

Minisite Plan

If you have some success with your target audience and would like to try to optimize using a minisite, here's a general overview of what you need to do. At this point, you should already have a target audience that you have confirmed is using your simple solution.

1. **Create a digital delivery of your solution.** If you already have an e-book, video, or online-course, then you are done. If you delivered the solution in the validation phase with a conversation or live webinar, then you need to create some version of it that you can deliver to an email address.
2. **Choose a URL.** If you have done your homework, this should be easy. If you are targeting primarily through search, the most important thing is that your keywords are in it. Don't worry if you can't get the .com (.net, or anything else will be fine if the keyword match is exact). You can use extra words, but keep that minimal.

If you are going to use this in a print or spoken ad, then go for something memorable. Here, a .com could be essential. You might need to get the .net and common misspellings as well. Choose something with obvious spelling that is simple and memorable (not clever).

3. **Create a one-page site.** On this site give them a place to access the download by giving an email address. The design should be simple and use SEO best practices. You can add to this later if testing warrants it.
4. **Commit to continually improving this site.** You will need to work on improving the copy to get conversions, building links to improve your rankings, testing different versions (with A/B testing), and creating inbound campaigns like AdWords and Social Media, if appropriate.

Do you need help?

Do your best to get through the exercises, but if you need help, then feel free to reach out to me. Go to <http://greenwave-solutions.com> and schedule a chat.

Here are some of the ways I can help if you decide you'd like to have more dedicated help.

Research: If you can't seem to get started at all, there are probably good ideas buried in the search phrases people are already using. Whether you are using Google Analytics or just have access logs, I can help you find some ideas and get some idea of how well you're doing.

Customer Interviews: Another good way to uncover problems is by talking to customers. We'd want to identify ones that made a buying decision approximately 3 months ago.

Validation: The most daunting task above is validation. I can help make this more manageable.

e-book writing: You'll have to be an active participant, but I can take on the heavy lifting to get this part done.

Site building and hosting: I can build the minisite based on your SEO and conversion goals, and I can host the site if you'd like.

Link building: I can help plan and execute a strategy for getting organic links.

Testing and improvement: Once the site is up, it should be monitored for effectiveness. How high is the site ranking? How well does it convert? What are the results of an A/B test? You are unlikely to get this all right at the start, but if you work at it, you'll get there.