

Should You Consider a Microsite?

By Mika Moser, bytes of knowledge

You may or may not have heard the buzz about microsites. You may not even know what microsites are; but in this day and age with so many ways to market your products or services, even the small to medium size business owner should consider the use of microsites as a part of an overall internet marketing strategy.

What Is A Microsite?

A microsite is a series of web pages that establishes a self contained online user experience. It can be an individual page (commonly known as a landing page) or a series of pages with their own navigation, interactive features and domain name. These pages should serve as a subset or extension to the main website and support the company brand. Also known as a minisite, a microsite can be used effectively for a variety of reasons, such as:

- To market a new product or service offering
- To serve as the landing area for a pay per click (PPC) marketing campaign
- To communicate a specific message to a niche target audience
- To promote a one time special event or contest
- To leverage a keyword group as part of an search engine optimization (SEO) program

Do You Need A Microsite?

One thing to keep in mind is that microsites have their time and place, and should only be used if it will complement your internet marketing strategy. So how do you know if your business will benefit from the use of a microsite? Let's start by asking the following questions:

1. What is the goal of the microsite? Are you trying to generate leads for a specific product or event? Do you need to speak directly to a specific target market? Are you considering an extensive PPC campaign? For example, this microsite (www.sneakpeekbrochures.com/cmhof/) by the Country Music Hall of Fall was created to further promote a new exhibit at the museum featuring the historic RCA Studio B. It links back to the main website but still gives visitors an avenue to further explore details about the tour.
2. Will the microsite have unique and interesting content that is not duplicated on your main site?
3. Will you be directly competing with your main website? Most specifically in terms of search engine optimization, are you are trying to rank on the search engines for the same terms as those on the main site? For example, this microsite (www.vpxsystem.com) by Black and Decker for their lithium battery product the VPX System was built to specifically showcase a product that may have become lost or minimized on the corporate website.
4. Will the site be used for a short or long term? Most microsites are best used for short term promotion; therefore the microsite should be timely and up to date. For instance, this microsite (www.bbq.cheaptickets.com) by CheapTickets.com is designed around a short term promotional campaign to help travelers find the very best in barbecue and travel deals this summer.
5. Do you have the resources to implement and properly maintain the microsite?

Once you've determined that there is a benefit to considering a microsite for your business, than there are several things you will need to consider when implementing a microsite.

The Site Should Have a Purpose

The microsite should not become a substitute for your main site. Rather, the microsite should have a specific and clear purpose for your online visitors. By creating effective calls to action on the site, you create a logical path for users to follow and thus one main goal for them to accomplish.



The Site Should Have an Effective URL

When considering the domain name for the microsite, make sure that it makes sense and accurately represents the product or services you are promoting. There are two ways to handle the domain name, you can register a separate domain name, such as www.newproduct.com, however be aware that a new domain will take some time to get recognized on the search engines. The other option is to create a subsection of your main website and therefore generating a URL such as www.mysite.com/newproduct.

The Site Should Have Compelling Content

As with your main website, the content on the microsite should portray a clear and concise message that further enhances your brand. However, the content on the microsite should be appealing and unique so that you aren't simply creating a duplicate website. Make sure that it speaks directly to your visitors and compels them to remain on the microsite and complete the path you anticipated for them.

The Site is Measurable

Since the microsite should have its own defined goals, you will want to measure the effectiveness of the site. Be sure to include tracking scripts to monitor the number of visitors and how many leads are generated. Without this information, your microsite simply becomes an online brochure with no way to determine its success.

As with any online marketing initiative, the microsite development should have a solid implementation strategy and should support your overall marketing goals. To ensure the success of a microsite, you should clearly define its goal, provide valuable information, and be easy for your visitors to use. By implementing an effective microsite, you've provided another arena to further enhance your brand, generate more leads and provide value to your customers.

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