

Search Engine Strategies for Mini-Sites

By Dan Thies

Search Engine Strategies for Mini-Sites

Dan Thies
dan@cannedhelp.com

Search Engine Optimization Fast Start <http://www.cannedbooks.com>

Search Engine Strategies for Mini-Sites

One of the most popular marketing concepts today is the "mini-site." A mini-site is essentially a one-page sales letter, linked to an order form, specifically designed to sell a single product or service. While mini-sites are very effective sales tools, it can be a major challenge to attract search engine referrals to a mini-site.

Conventional wisdom says that you have to buy your traffic through e-zine advertising, pay-per-click, and affiliate program commissions... but that's not the whole story. A high percentage of the sales of my new book have been from direct search engine referrals.

In fact, you can optimize a mini-site for search engines, although it may require some real HTML coding skills to get the job done.

In general, mini-sites lack the three things that search engines value the most: keywords, content, and linkage.

The Keyword Challenge

Because a mini-site is a sales letter, the choice of wording in headlines, and throughout the site, is dictated by the site's primary purpose - it's supposed to close the sale. Somehow, a balance has to be struck between effective selling copy and keyword placement. In a moment, I'll explain how this can be done.

The Content Gap

Most top-ranking sites carry significant content, optimized for a group of thematically related keywords. The structure of the site itself contributes to the overall search engine rankings and traffic, by reinforcing the theme. A mini-site is only one page, with a sales message. Don't worry, there are several ways

to bridge this gap.

The Missing Links

Unfortunately, a "links" section sort of defeats the purpose of a mini-site, which is designed to keep the visitor in one place until they've made their decision. So, link swaps are out of the question. Even affiliate programs usually don't help with link popularity because of the way affiliate links work. This, too, can be overcome.

WARNING: This is a bit more complex than the usual e-zine fare... you may have to read it twice to fully understand it.

Step One: Optimizing For Keywords

The first obstacle is the opening headline - you need it to be effective and attention-getting. The solution? If you can't change your headline, use an image instead of a regular H1 tag! With GIF or PNG compression, you should be able to bring even the biggest headline in at less than 1K - you can also use your keywords in the image's ALT property.

If you use an image for the headline, you'll want to use Javascript to make sure your headline image preloads before the rest of the page - if you don't, you'll lose sales... and don't try this at all if your hosting provider isn't up to snuff - the headline should load within 1 second on a typical 56K dialup connection.

Beyond the opening headline, it's easier to work keywords into your sub-headlines and copy. If necessary, use a style sheet (CSS) to reduce the font size of your heading tags - your subheadlines should be H1 and/or H2, and be as keyword-focused as possible. Pick at most 5-7 keywords and work them into your copy - ideally each keyword will appear 3-5 times, somewhere on the page. Work as many in as you can, as early as you can.

Finally, pick the most important keywords, and use them for your page title if you can - it may look a little goofy, but if your headline does its job nobody's reading the title bar anyway. Without keywords in your page title, your search engine rankings will suffer.

Step Two: Solving The Content Conundrum

Content doesn't necessarily improve your ranking for a single search term, but it does broaden the scope of your search engine positioning. Creating a single page of content for each of the 5-7 keywords you selected will definitely reinforce your site's theme... but how can you put all that content onto a 1-page site?

For starters, you can think about using informational pop-ups. When a visitor clicks on one of your keywords, your content page can open up in a new window. The HTML tag for this is: A

href="contentpage.html" target="_blank" - don't use a Javascript pop-up, because search engines can't index that. Use Javascript in the content page itself to resize the window as soon as it begins loading - that way, your visitor sees a little pop-up window and the search engine sees the content.

Of course, you might not even want that much linking and clicking. In this case, you can use your stylesheet to give hyperlinks the same color as the rest of your text, effectively hiding them. To hide them further, you can put the hyperlink tags around the period at the end of a sentence, or the space between two words.

Now, here's another way to kill two birds with one stone... my two-site two-step!

Step Three: Link Popularity

The traditional link swap is two websites pointing to each other... but there's no law that says you have to do it that way. The ideal way to create link popularity for your mini-site is to create a "partner" site, under another domain name, that carries content related to your keywords. You link to your mini-site from every page, and you now have a way to swap links.

Here's how it works: you ask the other website owner to link to your mini-site, in return for which you provide a link back via your "partner" site. Usually, they'd rather have a link from your partner site anyway, since it has more content on it.

I go even further when I can with a "content swap," where each site owner provides an article for the other site. Your article carries links to both your mini-site and your "partner" site. You then set up a link on your "partner" site pointing to this article. Because the article will have links to it from both sites, it's almost certain to be found and indexed by the search engines.

Nobody Said This Was Easy!

When it comes to search engine positioning, a mini-site presents a lot of challenges. Everyone wants their home page to rank 1st for all kinds of keywords, but in the new era of theme-based search engines, that's easier said than done... especially if your "website" consists of a single page. I hope this article inspires you to make your own mini-site an exception to the rule.

I wish you success...

Dan Thies has been helping his clients (and friends) promote their websites since 1996.

His latest book, "Search Engine Fast Start," is available at www.cannedbooks.com

[Get-Articles.com : 1000's of reprintable business and internet marketing-related articles.](#)

[Submit your article for reprint.](#)