

# Defining a Strategic MVP: Your Roadmap to Success

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# Overview

- What is an MVP?
- Why use an MVP?
- How to NOT define an MVP
- Define a Strategic MVP
- Conclusion



# What is an MVP?





“I’ve missed more than 9000 shots  
in my career. I’ve lost almost 300  
games. 26 times, I’ve been trusted  
to take the game winning shot  
and missed. I’ve failed over and  
over and over again in my life.  
And that is why I succeed.

– Michael Jordan  
Greatest of All Time

# What is an MVP?

- Most Valuable Player
- Build a team around MVP with other players supporting and supplementing
- Win championships

# What is an MVP?

- Minimum Viable Product
- Build a system extending core functionality
- Win customers and staff adulations

“Get a minimum viable product out there, test it out, see how customers respond.”

– Shira Godman  
CEO, Staples

# Traditional MVP

- Minimum Viable Product
- Product with just enough features to satisfy early customers and to provide feedback for future product development.

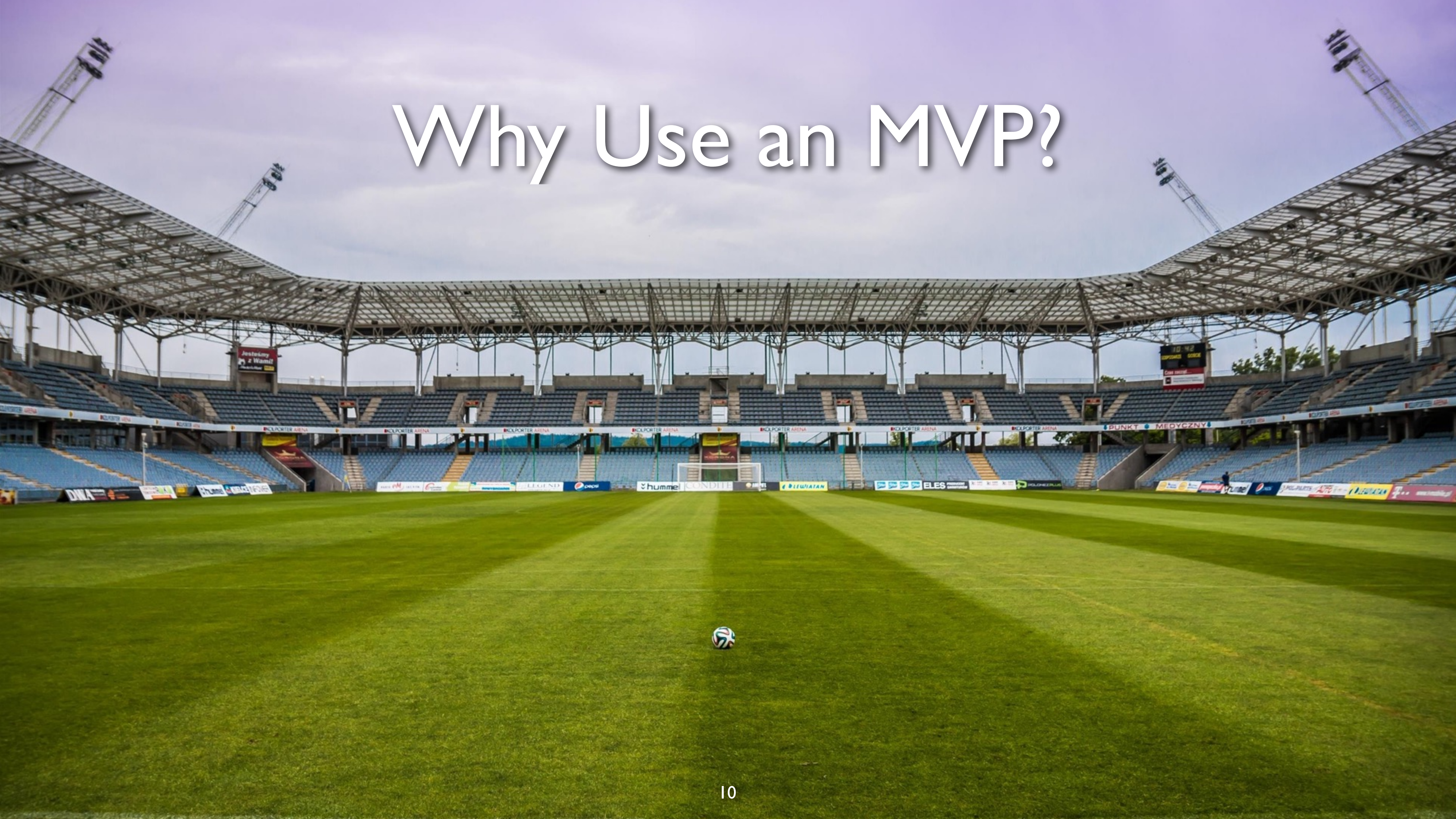


# MVP for web projects?

- MVP is common for SaaS websites
- What about informational websites?



# Why Use an MVP?





“Do not let what you can not do  
interfere with what you can do.”

— John Wooden  
6x Coach of the Year

# Why an MVP?

- Every project has at least one constraint
  - Knowledge
  - Money
  - Time (Man-hours/Calendar)



# MVP provides focus

- Minimum to achieve mission
- Project concentrates on most critical

“Always turn a negative situation  
into a positive situation.”

– Michael Jordan  
5x MVP



# Every project needs MVP

- Encourages focus on most important
- In worst case a plan to ship MVP is in place

# Limited Knowledge?

- What you know before you start a project
- What you learn during discovery
- Rarely know everything you “need”
- MVP allows focus during discovery



# Limited Money?

- Money for hardware, software, agencies
- Money for additional staff salaries
- MVPs inherently assume limited resources

# Limited Time?

- Calendar deadline
- Brook's Law (man-month myth)
- Staff time for MARCOM, management, etc.  
most not be overlooked

# MVP = “Good Enough”

- Focus on “good enough,” not perfect
- “Good enough” can ship
- Nothing is perfect, so perfect never ships
- Only products that ship can succeed



# Is an MVP right for you?

- Incomplete requirements?
- Limited information about your audience?
- Multiple priorities?
- Limited budget?
- Inflexible launch deadline?



# Define a Poor MVP





“There is a syndrome in sports  
called ‘paralysis by analysis.’”

– Arthur Ashe  
Ranked #1 in the World



# How to not define an MVP

- What the current site does
- What unrelated sites do
- What competitors do (maybe)
- What is the new hotness (maybe)
- Cut the complex features
- Cut the features you don't use

# But the current site...

- Websites evolve over their lifetime due to:
  - Changes in technology
  - Changes in business needs and priorities
  - Workflows based around tech limitations
  - Previous project constraints

# But the current site...

- Focusing on current site can lead to:
  - Not leveraging platform's capabilities
  - Technical debt for feature parity
  - Repeating same mistakes
  - Solving old problems instead of new ones



# But Facebook does...

- Websites that are not related to yours, provide different features to:
  - Serve different audiences
  - Solve different problems
  - Achieve their own mission

# But Facebook does...

- Focusing on unrelated websites can lead to:
  - Developing unwanted features
  - Technical debt from irrelevant features
  - Not solving your problems
  - Not successfully achieving your mission



# But competitor does...

- Your competitors may have:
  - Different audience
  - Different capabilities/offerings
  - Different business processes
  - Different mission

# But competitor does...

- Focusing on your competitor can lead to:
  - Content and features that are irrelevant to your website\*

\* Competitive research can suggest new ideas, if they are relevant to your organization



# We need video...

- Web design and development has fads. Who remembers these greatest hits?
  - Frames
  - Flash
  - Parallax scrolling (everywhere)
  - Autoplaying videos

# We need video...

- Focusing on fads can lead to:
  - Dated look & feel (next year? next week)
  - Poor ROI relative to organizational goals

# Let's cut the integration...

- Cutting complex features may seem smart.
- However, complex features can:
  - Improve user experience
  - Improve conversions
  - Reduce staff-related overhead



# Let's cut the integration...

- Before cutting complex features:
  - Will it disrupt user interaction
  - Consider the ROI if additional staff interactions will eat away any savings

# I never use the calendar...

- Seldom used features may be good candidates for removal. When determining utilization:
  - Remember, you are not your audience
  - Start from data, not gut feelings
  - Consider all of your audiences

# I never use the calendar...

- Removing popular features:
  - Can upset audiences
  - Can increase staff workload
  - Should be in service of the organization's goals\*

\* May upset your audience or add to staff workload



# But you just said...

- Wait a second. Some of that seemed contradictory
- We know
- That was how to NOT define an MVP. Let's talk about how to do so strategically



# Define a Strategic MVP





“I never worry about the problem. I  
worry about the solution.”

— Shaquille O’Neal  
MVP

# Define a Strategic MVP

- Websites are tools to solve problems
- Strategic MVP is defined using data
- Strategic MVP focuses on delivering a website that solves critical business problem
- To define a Strategic MVP, you need to define your organizations problems



# Start with Goals

- What are your organizational goals?
  - Start above the website
  - May have changed since the website was last redesigned\*

\* If these were considered at all...

# Identify Obstacles

- What is preventing your organization from achieving its goals?
- Again, start above the website
- Obstacles provide focus for solutions\*

\* If you cannot articulate obstacles, conduct research (e.g. surveys, etc.)



# Determine Solutions

- With a handle on your goals and obstacles, you have the information to start talking about website features and functionality
- For an MVP, only include features and functionality that you can tie to goals and obstacles\*

\* What is the minimum feature and functionality to solve the problem

# Metrics of Success

- Define measurable success criteria for each feature
- Without metrics of success, it will be impossible to iterate (and improve) once the MVP is deployed



# Prioritization

- With your features and functionality identified, work with stakeholders to prioritize 1 to ??
- We recommend against “must-haves” and “nice-to-haves”
- If everything is a priority, nothing is a priority

# Estimation

- With your features and functionality prioritized, work with your developers to create estimates for everything
- The more granular estimates, the better
- Estimate how far down the list you can get with the resources & constraints you have
- Don't forget to plan for QA, approvals, & ??

# The MVP

- Determine where the MVP ends and “nice-to-haves” begin
- Often the initial “MVP” will not line with available time and resources
- Reduce MVP to what is achievable, revising priority if appropriate
- Nice-to-haves follow MVP (pre/post launch)



# Now you have an MVP

- Your MVP should:
  - Meet business/organizational needs
  - Be achievable with available resources
  - Allow for unknowns

# But my MVP doesn't...

- Perfect is the enemy of good
- Once you have a live site, you can iterate based on metrics and user feedback
- If you really don't have the resources for the MVP, is the project premature?

# The math doesn't work

- Despite best efforts to reduce MVP, you lack either knowledge, money, staff time, or calendar time
- You either need more time and/or money
- Postpone or cancel project?



# Conclusion





“It ain’t over ’til it’s over.”

— Yogi Berra  
3x MVP



# Conclusion

- MVPs are a tool to launch “good enough” and iterate to improve
- Strategic MVPs align with organizational goals and provide a framework for defining “good enough”

“You’re the real MVP”

– Kevin Durant  
MVP



# Special thanks





David Minton  
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