

ANSWER ENGINE

Optimization

*A Marketer's Playbook to
Winning in the Era of AI Search*



DAVE ANDERSON

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About the Author

Hello! I'm Dave Anderson, a marketing strategist with more than a decade of experience helping B2B SaaS and technology companies tell their stories and reach their audiences.

During that time, I've created search and content marketing strategies for a variety of leading brands.

But my real passion is helping people adapt to what's next.

At the beginning of 2024, I had a hunch: ChatGPT and similar AI platforms would displace traditional search engines like Google as our go-to source of information. That curiosity led me to dive headfirst into the emerging discipline of Answer Engine Optimization (AEO).

I consumed everything I could find on the topic and distilled what I learned into this book. I hope you find it helpful as you begin your own AEO journey and use the tactics to achieve great things in your career.

These are exciting times. I believe we're on the precipice of a new era in search marketing. Thanks for coming along and good luck!

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Introduction

Search engine optimization (SEO) has never been a static field. It has continually evolved from the early days of stuffing keywords into pages to today's era of AI-driven search.

In the beginning, marketers focused on manipulating on-page factors and accumulating backlinks to climb the rankings on search engines like AltaVista and early Google. As the years passed, search engines got smarter and introduced algorithms to combat spam and better understand user intent. That evolution pushed SEO toward quality content and relevance—improving the web experience for us all.

Today, we are on the verge of a new era in SEO driven by the rise of AI search. This emerging marketing field is often referred to as Answer Engine Optimization (AEO), Generative Engine Optimization (GEO), or AI Optimization (AIO) (we'll mostly use "Answer Engine Optimization (AEO)" or "AI search" throughout this book).

On the modern web, users are finding it faster and more efficient to answer questions using AI models, as opposed to wading through bottomless search results. AI search engines can compile information from across the web, present it all at once, and respond to follow-up queries from the user.

This new reality changes the game for marketers. In fact, you could go as far as to say that AI is one of the most monumental changes we've ever seen in the search industry. Instead of simply ranking web pages, AI tools like ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, and Perplexity directly answer user queries. This means the traditional metrics of success in SEO—getting on page one of Google, organic traffic, etc.—are being upended. Marketers must now make their content visible to AI assistants and ensure their brand is represented in AI-generated answers.

The impacts of AI are already being felt. [As of 2024, one in ten U.S. internet users starts online searches with generative AI](#). Since its late-2022 debut, ChatGPT has reached hundreds of millions of users, and traffic data shows ChatGPT and Google Gemini together capture 78% of all global traffic to AI search models.

In other words, two AI platforms now dominate the burgeoning AI search market. The next biggest players—Perplexity AI and Microsoft Copilot—account for most of the remainder (Semrush, 2024). This consolidation around a few key AI platforms presents a huge opportunity for marketers to optimize for these specific channels.

But it also raises pressing questions: How do we optimize for an algorithm that isn't ranking pages but rather reading our content and generating its own answers? How do we ensure our brand and content remain visible when Large Language Models (LLMs), not search algorithms, decide which pieces of our text to show? What new factors determine whether AI deems our content trustworthy and worth including?

This book will help SEO professionals, content marketers, and marketing executives navigate the transition to AI search. We assume you're already familiar with SEO fundamentals (things like keywords, backlinks, and meta tags) so we won't rehash the basics. Instead, we'll focus on what's changing and how to adapt your strategy. In the chapters that follow, we'll cover:

- **The evolution of SEO and AI's current impact:** We'll start by tracing how search engines worked in the pre-AI era and how we got to this point. Understanding the historical context—from the early keyword-centric tactics to modern semantic search—will clarify why AI search is a natural next step and how it changes some old SEO rules.
- **Why AI search is changing marketing:** We'll discuss specific ways in which AI search differs from traditional search. You'll learn why old ranking factors like backlinks or domain authority matter less to AI and why things like context, credibility, and structured data become even more critical.
- **What this means for marketers:** Throughout the book, we will use examples and case studies to illustrate how organizations can respond. From content strategy adjustments to technical SEO tweaks, we'll see what steps forward-thinking marketing teams are taking to remain visible in AI-generated results.
- **How to optimize for AI search engines:** The later chapters provide practical guidance on tailoring your content for AI consumption. This includes writing in an AI-friendly manner, structuring information so that AI models can easily extract

and reformat it, and ensuring your content is deemed authoritative and accurate by these new systems.

The tone throughout this book will be formal yet accessible. We aim to provide insights without drowning you in AI jargon. While we'll touch on some technical details (like structured data markup and LLM functionality) where relevant, the focus is on actionable guidance you can use. Think of this book as a roadmap. It will highlight the twists and turns that AI is bringing to the SEO landscape and equip you with strategies to optimize for the new world of search.

Before we dive in, keep in mind that AI search is a fast-evolving field. The principles and best practices outlined here are based on what we know as of now (and we'll cite research and examples along the way) but the outlook will certainly continue to shift. Use this book as a foundation for your AEO strategy and be prepared to stay agile and continue learning as AI search matures.

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Semrush. (2024). *New Report From .Trends & Statista Reveals How AI Search is Changing the Web*. Retrieved from [<https://www.semrush.com/blog/ai-search-report/>]

Chapter 1

An Introduction to AI Search

How Did Search Work Before AI?

To appreciate how AI search is different, it's important to cover how traditional search engines like Google and Bing operated before the recent AI revolution. Conventional search engines are incredibly sophisticated in their own right by relying on a fundamental approach—crawling, indexing, and ranking web pages based on relevance to a user's query and the authority of the pages.

When a user types in a query, the search engine breaks it down into keywords and attempts to match those keywords to text/metadata on the countless web pages in its index. Search algorithms look at factors like:

- **Keyword relevance:** Does the page contain the query terms (or synonyms) in important places (title, headings, body text)?
- **Page authority:** How many other websites link to this page and how reputable are those linking sites? (This is the essence of Google's PageRank algorithm where backlinks are seen as votes of confidence).
- **Content quality and freshness:** Is the content comprehensive and well-written? Is it up to date? (Google introduced numerous updates over the years, like Panda and Hummingbird, to favor higher-quality content).
- **User experience signals:** Does the site load quickly? Is it mobile-friendly? Do users engage with it or bounce back shortly after arriving?

The result of this process is the search engine results pages (SERPs) we all know so well. Ten blue links, supported by short descriptions (plus ads and other features), ranked in order.

Users scan titles and snippets, click one, and then possibly refine their search if they don't find a satisfactory answer. To sum it up, traditional search matches search terms to relevant webpage content and uses link-based authority signals to sort those webpages.

As an example, if someone searches for “best project management software,” Google looks for pages that have those words (and related terms) and ranks them partly by which pages have garnered the most inbound links (among other signals). A SaaS company in that space, say a project management platform, might invest in SEO by creating a comparison or “Top 10” article and building backlinks to it, hoping to appear near the top of those results.

But traditional search has its limitations. For one, it often struggles with understanding natural language beyond simple keywords. A query phrased as a question (“What software do project managers use for agile teams?”) might be broken into keywords (e.g., software, project managers, agile), and the engine might miss the nuanced intent. In recent years, Google has incorporated AI elements like RankBrain and BERT (machine-learning models for query understanding) to better grasp the meaning behind search terms. But even with these advances, the output is still a list of links for the user to investigate.

Another limitation is that search engines do not consolidate content. They only retrieve what exists on different sites. If a clear, concise answer is present on a webpage, Google might show a featured snippet at the top of the results. However, for more complex or multi-faceted questions, the search engine still just provides a list of links to click through, forcing the user to piece together information from different sources.

Before the emergence of generative AI, SEO best practices revolved around making your content visible and authoritative to search engine algorithms. That included doing keyword research, optimizing on-page elements, ensuring technical crawlability, and building authority through backlinks and useful content. The playing field was well understood by SEO professionals, even as Google made hundreds of minor algorithm tweaks each year.

The Emergence of AI Search

Over the last couple of years, generative AI and Large Language Models (LLMs) have arrived in a big way. When ChatGPT debuted in late 2022, it became apparent that the web as we know it was about to change.

Unlike a traditional search engine, AI doesn't just find relevant web pages. It generates an answer by synthesizing information from multiple sources. Let's briefly highlight a few milestones in the AI search era.

ChatGPT and conversational search

When ChatGPT was released, users could suddenly have a dialogue with AI that would answer questions, explain concepts, and solve problems in natural language. People quickly realized they could use ChatGPT instead of a search engine for certain tasks. For example, asking for a summary of a topic or advice on how to do something.

At launch, ChatGPT didn't have web search capabilities and its knowledge wasn't up-to-date, but it demonstrated what was possible. The key innovation was that it could produce a direct answer in a conversational manner, often in paragraph or bullet point form, without the user needing to click any external links.

Bing's integration of ChatGPT (Microsoft Copilot)

Microsoft moved quickly to integrate ChatGPT with Bing, launching Microsoft Copilot in early 2023 (initially named "Bing Chat"). This was a watershed moment. A traditional search engine was augmented with a generative AI and could have a dialogue about search results.

When a user asks Bing a complex query (e.g., "Create a Maui trip itinerary"), Copilot compiles information from multiple web pages and presents a written answer as if a human assistant had researched and summarized the topic.

Microsoft Bing

maui trip itinerary

ALL SEARCH COPILOT TRAVEL IMAGES VIDEOS MAPS MORE TOOLS

About 498,000 results

TravelShack Hawaii
https://travelshack.com › maui-activities › top-tours ▾

A Must Do on Maui - Best Road to Hana Tour, Maui

Sponsored Famous scenic drive along lush east coast of Maui to visit waterfalls & black sand beach. Fun Local Guides. Pickups: Kaanapali, Kihei, Lahaina, Wailea, Kahului

Here is a **5-day Maui itinerary**:

- Day 1:** Explore East Maui along the coast, including the famous Road to Hana.
- Day 2:** Sightseeing in West Maui, including Ka'anapali.
- Day 3:** Explore Haleakala National Park & Upcountry Maui, with hiking options.
- Day 4:** Enjoy the South Maui shoreline and beaches.
- Day 5:** Visit Central & North Maui attractions, including Waihee Ridge Trail and 'Iao Valley State Monument. [↪ 4](#)

[↪ 4 Sources](#)

5 Day Itinerary Suggestions & Resources | Maui Hawaii
<https://www.hawaii-guide.com ...>

Perfect 5-Day Maui Itinerary for Your First Trip (2024)
<https://www.wedreamoftravel.c...>

Tours and activities Sponsored ⓘ

Hana Tour
단독 투어 : 오아후섬, 마우이섬, 카와이섬, 빅아일랜드 코나, 빅...
tripadvisor.com • from **\$2199**
5hr
Bus & Minivan Tours

South Maui: Waterfall Tour W/ Kayak, Snorkel, And Hike
getyourguide.com • from **\$260**
5/5 ★★★★★ (17) • 7hr 30min
Nature & Panorama

Molokini Snorkel & South Maui Coast Tour
getyourguide.com • from **\$2835**
5hr
Activities

Related searches

- 2 day itinerary in maui
- 7 day itinerary for maui
- 3 day itinerary in maui
- 7 day maui itinerary template
- 5 nights in maui itinerary
- best hawaii itinerary 7 days

Even more, Copilot provides citations in its responses (superscript numbers that link to sources), combining AI answers with underlying web content. For example, instead of showing ten separate links for the trip itinerary query, Copilot in Bing might produce a day-by-day travel plan by pulling information from travel blogs, government tourism sites, and forums into a single answer supported by citations.

Google's response with Gemini and AI Overviews (AIOs)

Google, the search market leader, also developed a generative AI model (Google Bard, later rebranded as Google Gemini). In 2023, Google began testing AI Overviews (AIOs)—an experimental version of Google Search that provides AI-generated summaries at the top of the results. With AIOs, a user's query might trigger a synthesized answer consisting of key points, with traditional results shown below.

Google AIOs uses generative AI to provide concise information, address complex queries, and even assist with shopping by summarizing product details. For instance, a query like "best DSLR camera for wildlife photography under \$1000" might yield an AI summary

comparing a few cameras and drawing on data from different review sites, before listing the usual link results.

best DSLR camera for wildlife photography under \$1000

Search Labs | AI Overview

Learn more

For wildlife photography under \$1000, consider the Canon EOS Rebel T7 or Nikon D3300 for their affordability and good performance, or explore the Olympus OM-D E-M10 Mark IV for a more compact, feature-rich option.

Here's a more detailed breakdown:

Canon EOS Rebel T7:
This is a budget-friendly option with a 24.1-megapixel sensor and a good range of lenses available. It's a good choice for beginners or those on a tight budget.

Nikon D3300:
Another affordable DSLR with a 24.2-megapixel sensor, known for its ease of use and good image quality.

Olympus OM-D E-M10 Mark IV:
If you're looking for a more compact system with good image quality and features, the Olympus OM-D E-M10 Mark IV is a solid choice. It's a versatile camera that can handle a variety of shooting situations, including wildlife.

Other options:

- **Canon EOS R10:** A good option if you are looking for a camera under \$1000.
- **Nikon Z50II:** [Digital Photography Review](#) recommends this as a good performer.
- **Sony a6100:** [Digital Photography Review](#) recommends this as an affordable kit.

Key Features to Consider for Wildlife Photography:

Autofocus:
A fast and reliable autofocus system is crucial for capturing wildlife in motion.

Image Quality:
A good sensor and lens combination will help you capture sharp, detailed images.

Burst Rate:
A high burst rate allows you to capture a series of shots quickly, which is essential for capturing fleeting moments.

Battery Life:
Long battery life is important for extended shooting sessions.

Weather Sealing:
If you're shooting in harsh conditions, a weather-sealed camera body and lenses are a must.

Wildlife Photography - What Would I Choose on a \$1000 Budget?
Jan 21, 2022 — ... 5 TOP MISTAKES IN BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY I WISH I KNEW ABOUT WHEN I STARTE...
YouTube

What's the best camera for wildlife under \$1000? - Quora
Sep 22, 2018 — Cameras don't take pictures, photographers do. A better camera will not make you a better photographer,...
Quora

The Best cameras under \$1000 in 2025: Digital Photography Review
Jan 30, 2025 — Our recommendations: * Best camera under \$1000: Canon EOS R10. * The better performer: Nikon Z50II...
DPReview

Show all

Generative AI is experimental.

Export

Save

Google's approach has been cautious. They clearly label that AIOs are AI-generated and note they're experimental. But it's still a significant step toward AI-powered results on the world's most popular search engine.

Other AI search engines and assistants

Apart from big names, several new players have emerged purely focused on AI Q&A. Perplexity.ai is one such example. It's an AI search engine that takes your query, searches the web, and gives a concise answer with footnoted citations for each sentence. Users have likened Perplexity to a hybrid of Google and Wikipedia. You get a direct answer but also see exactly which sources support each part of that answer.

Other examples include You.com's AI chat and DuckDuckGo's instant answers powered by AI. Even Amazon has rolled out an AI search assistant for shopping and numerous SaaS applications (like Notion and Slack) integrated AI helpers to search within siloed data.

In all these cases, the common thread is that AI is changing the search experience from "find me a webpage that might have the answer" to "give me the answer directly." The AI models can interpret the nuance of queries better than before, thanks to advanced natural language processing.

To put it more succinctly, they can handle conversational or long-tail questions gracefully. Instead of a user trying different keywords to get the information they need, they can ask a question in plain English (or any language the model supports) and get a useful answer in one go. This has been described as moving from keyword search to semantic and conversational search.

It's important to note that these AI systems are trained on vast amounts of data, which includes the contents of millions of websites. So in a way, they carry an internalized version of the web's knowledge. This is why ChatGPT could previously answer questions without live access to the internet. It "learned" from web content that existed before 2021 (as of March 2023, ChatGPT now accesses the live internet).

For SEO practitioners, the emergence of AI search represents both an opportunity and a challenge. The opportunity is that, in theory, the best content—or more broadly, the most informative, relevant, and user-friendly content—will be what AI chooses to incorporate into its answers. If your site provides exactly what the user is looking for, an AI summarizer will hopefully pull from your content and potentially give you credit with a citation or mention.

The challenge, however, is that the user might never visit your site if AI provides everything they need in the answer box.

Why Is Optimizing for AI Search Different?

Optimizing for AI models requires a mindset shift. While many foundational SEO principles still apply, your tactics and priorities will differ. This is because the “audience” now includes AI algorithms that read and reinterpret your content, not index and rank it. Let’s explore the key differences that make Answer Engine Optimization (AEO) a new ballgame.

From ranking to referencing

Until recently, your goal was to rank as high as possible on SERPs—ideally #1 for your target keywords. This was obviously because a higher ranking translated to more visibility and clicks.

In AI search, there isn’t a traditional ranking to climb. Instead, the AI model might scan dozens, hundreds, or thousands of sources and then choose a few to reference (explicitly or implicitly) in its answer. Your content could be used even if it’s not the top result for a keyword, as long as AI finds it relevant and trustworthy.

For example, a well-written post on a niche blog might be summarized by AI for a specific query, even if that blog post would never be #1 on Google due to a lack of backlinks or a low domain authority. This means being one of the sources the AI “likes” is the new win, even if you’re not at the top of traditional results.

Contextual and semantic understanding vs. keywords

AI models operate on semantic understanding. They don’t look for exact keyword matches the way a conventional search algorithm might. Instead, they’re considering the context and meaning.

Because of this, optimizing content for AI is less about repeating a keyword phrase and more about comprehensively answering the implied question. If a user asks, “How can I improve my website’s SEO for voice search?” a traditional approach might be to have a page optimized for “improve SEO for voice search” and related terms.

An AEO-oriented approach is to ensure your content clearly answers that question and provides context (e.g., covering why voice search is different, listing specific tactics for voice search optimization). The AI model will parse the content deeply, possibly looking at entire paragraphs or sections to see if they contain the answer. It's akin to writing for a very attentive reader who will consume every bit of what you publish.

Multi-source answers

Traditional search ranks individual pages. But AI search often combines multiple sources. A single AI-generated answer to a complex query might draw from three different websites—one for a definition, one for a statistic, and another for an example or anecdote.

As an optimizer, you might not win with just one perfect page that covers everything. Instead, having specific pieces of content that answer specific sub-questions can make you part of the answer set.

Let's take the question, "What are the benefits and drawbacks of microservices architecture for a SaaS product?" AI might take the "benefits" from one blog (perhaps your company's engineering blog) and "drawbacks" from another source (maybe one of your competitors' blog posts).

Again, traditional SEO factors alone won't guarantee AI picks your content. It will pick whatever snippet best answers the user's question. In fact, AI models sometimes pull text from sites with lower authority if they directly answer the query. However, they tend to lean toward high-authority sites for very sensitive queries.

Less emphasis on backlinks

Backlinks have long been the foundation of SEO authority. While they remain important for traditional search (and indirectly help AI find your content via search indexes), AI-generated answers don't care about backlinks per se. Ultimately, the LLM isn't tallying links when formulating an answer. It's focusing on content quality and relevance.

A page with zero backlinks that contains a clear, well-structured explanation could be favored over a top-ranked page that has more fluff. For example, Perplexity AI will readily quote a lesser-known blog if it has a pertinent sentence, whereas Google might have buried that blog on page three of results due to low authority.

This isn't to say authority is meaningless. AI systems trained on the open web are likely influenced by reputable sources. Even more, Microsoft Copilot and Google Gemini use their search indexes as a starting point, both of which weigh backlinks.

However, once the AI is reading the content, a golden nugget of information on a small site can take precedence over a generic statement on a big site. [One study noted that affiliate-heavy content \(often produced by niche sites that Google tends to downrank\) can still surface in AI answers on platforms like Perplexity.](#) This is because AI is evaluating only the content and doesn't care about the affiliate links.

The role of structured data and metadata

In traditional SEO, structured data or schema markup helps you get rich snippets or appear in specific search result features. In AEO, structured data plays a slightly different but still important role.

AI doesn't directly use schema to evaluate content but it can feed knowledge graphs and provide context. For example, Google Gemini and Microsoft Copilot have been known to leverage structured data for certain facts.

- Google AIOS use structured data to identify key product attributes like brand, price, and reviews to ensure AI summaries of products are accurate.
- Microsoft Copilot uses Schema.org markup to enhance its knowledge with reliable facts about companies or people.

What this means for optimization is that including structured data on your site (for products, FAQs, how-tos, etc.) can make it easier for AI systems to pull precise information.

Let's say a SaaS company offers different price points. AI could directly extract "starting price: \$X/month" to answer a user's question about cost, rather than scraping outdated or inaccurate text. We'll delve into this more in a later chapter but the key takeaway is that structured data supports AI's contextual understanding.

AI's emphasis on factual accuracy and consensus

AI has a well-known issue with "hallucination," meaning they make up answers that sound plausible but are false. To mitigate this, models often prefer content that is factual, specific, and corroborated by multiple sources.

For AEO, this underscores the importance of accuracy. If your content contains a dubious claim or an outdated statistic, AI might omit it. But if your content aligns with what other high-quality sources are saying on the topic, AI is more likely to trust and use it. Being seen as a credible source through consistent content, expert authorship, and brand reputation matters.

This is challenging as “accuracy” is not a quantifiable metric like Moz Domain Authority but rather determined by AI on a case-by-case basis. That being said, content that reads as knowledgeable and unbiased tends to be favored.

User interaction and follow-up queries

Another difference is the interactive nature of AI search. Users can ask AI follow-up questions, whereas with Google, they’d have to type an entirely new query. This means content may be surfaced in a multi-turn context.

For instance, a user might ask AI, “What’s a good CRM for a mid-sized SaaS company?” The AI gives an answer, citing a few options, including your company. The user then asks, “How does [Your Company’s CRM] integrate with marketing automation?” If you have content (say, a support article) that provides that information, AI can pull it in.

Optimizing for AI requires anticipating not just the first question but also related follow-up questions. It’s similar to topic clustering when creating a comprehensive content strategy. By providing content that covers various angles of a topic, your site and brand will keep showing up as the user drills deeper.

All in all, optimizing for AI search is different because the target is no longer an algorithmic ranking system, it’s a reading, synthesizing intelligence. You have to consider what that intelligence values: clear answers, relevant context, credible sources, and structured information it can easily parse.

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CHAPTER 2

The AI Search Market: ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot, & Perplexity

From Google to Large Language Models (LLM)

The rise of AI platforms has introduced an entirely new approach to finding information. Instead of exploring the ten websites on a search results page, web users can now get direct answers from AI.

In this chapter, we'll explore the major AI search players, including OpenAI's ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, and Perplexity while examining how each generates responses and prioritizes information. We'll highlight key differences in how they present content (e.g., ChatGPT's conversational summaries vs. Perplexity's cited snippets) and discuss how brands can adapt their Answer Engine Optimization (AEO) strategy for each model.

The New Players in Search: Major AI Platforms

Just a few years ago, Google was far and away the leading search engine. But today, millions of people are turning to AI for answers.

[As of mid-2024, ChatGPT and Google Gemini together account for slightly more than three-quarters of global traffic to AI search platforms](#), with most of the remainder going to Perplexity AI and Microsoft Copilot. And adoption is rapidly growing. About 13 million Americans used AI as their primary search tool in 2023—a figure projected to soar to 90 million by 2027.

This anticipated growth means that marketing professionals must prepare now and start to understand the nuances of each of the four major AI providers on the market.

ChatGPT

Launched in late 2022, ChatGPT kicked off the AI craze. It provides answers based on its trained knowledge and, as of March 2023, has begun to fetch live web results. Previously,

it wouldn't cite sources or show links but rather combine its knowledge into a single answer, delivered in a human-like tone.

ChatGPT's conversational approach makes it extremely user-friendly and capable of nuanced, in-depth responses. But given that it was initially walled off from the open web, some of its knowledge tended to be outdated.

OpenAI has since introduced ChatGPT Search which allows it to pull in current information. It is now essentially a meta-search engine that queries its index and the web in real time and summarizes the results. Even in this mode, the presentation of information is conversational. Sources are either referenced via footnotes or are not explicitly shown to the user by default.

ChatGPT Search isn't flawless, however. [A Columbia Journalism Review analysis found that it will misattribute or blur publisher content](#). In one instance, the platform attributed an *Orlando Sentinel* quote to a *Time* magazine article, illustrating that its answers can mix up sources.

For brands, ChatGPT represents a new kind of search engine. Your content might be read and reused by AI but it won't always drive website traffic. Ensuring your core messaging is accurate and well-represented in the information ChatGPT pulls from is key since users won't always be provided a link to your website when it delivers an answer.

Google Gemini

Google entered AI search with its Bard platform (later rebranded as Gemini). Bard/Gemini launched in 2023 as a standalone AI chat product, similar to ChatGPT. With the rollout of Google's AI Overviews (AIOs), Google started presenting these AI answers at the top of search results.

Gemini is trained on Google's vast ecosystem of information. It can tap into Google Search, Google Knowledge Graph, YouTube, and more. In practice, Gemini provides conversational answers similar to ChatGPT but with direct access to real-time information from Google's index. It will also include suggested follow-up questions and sometimes share links.

A key difference noted by its users is that Gemini tends to stick to high-authority sources. [In one study, all the content used for sensitive topics like health or finance came from](#)

[highly trusted sites \(universities, governments, well-known publications\)](#), whereas other platforms were more willing to draw from smaller sites.

Gemini is effectively constrained by Google's ranking algorithms and quality guidelines that require it to prioritize credibility and safety. This means that while it can provide up-to-date answers (e.g., citing a news article from today), it often favors what it considers the most authoritative take on the topic. Google has also built in other safeguards. For example, Gemini might refuse to answer certain queries or provide general advice if asked about medical or political topics.

From an AEO perspective, content that already ranks well on Google or is deemed authoritative is more likely to be pulled into Gemini summaries. Ensuring your brand's content meets Google's quality standards (accurate, well-sourced, trustworthy) is ultimately critical for Gemini visibility.

Microsoft Copilot

Microsoft joined the AI party in early 2023 by integrating OpenAI's GPT-4 model with its Bing search engine. Microsoft Copilot (previously named Bing Chat) is available directly on the Bing search site, the Microsoft Edge browser sidebar, and within other Microsoft products.

It functions as a hybrid of traditional search and chatbot. The AI model answers questions in a conversational manner and displays footnotes with links to its sources. Behind the scenes, Copilot uses the Bing search index to retrieve relevant pages and then the LLM composes an answer with references.

The result for the user is an answer that feels like ChatGPT but with little numbers ¹² that correspond to sources you can click. For example, if you ask Bing, "What are the benefits of OKR software for startups?", it might produce a five-bullet point explanation and cite both a SaaS blog post and Gartner report via footnote. The presence of citations is a defining feature of Microsoft Copilot. It strives to always show the origins of information to increase user trust in its answers.

In terms of what content it displays, Copilot is influenced by Bing's ranking algorithms. It often pulls from sites that rank on page one of Bing for that query. However, it will sometimes pick out specific snippets that answer the question directly, even if that information comes from a mid-ranking result.

That means backlinks and traditional SEO signals play a role but to a lesser extent. Copilot might choose a sentence from a niche forum post if it directly addresses the question, something a traditional Bing search result might not highlight.

For brands, Copilot offers the opportunity to still generate website traffic, as its citations mean users can click through to your site.

Ensuring your content is optimized for Bing (which often overlaps with Google's SEO basics but with slightly less emphasis on backlinks) can help you secure those valuable citations in Copilot answers.

Perplexity AI

Among the new wave of AI platforms, Perplexity AI stands out as a tool explicitly designed to provide answers with source citations. It's an independent "answer engine" that launched in 2022 and has gained popularity among researchers and professionals for its transparent approach.

Ask Perplexity a question and it will return a concise answer with superscript numbers linking to source URLs for each fact. For example, a Perplexity response might say, "Open rates for marketing emails average around 21% but can vary by industry." Clicking the citation would then take you to the article or report where that statistic came from.

Additionally, Perplexity recommends follow-up questions that can help users dig deeper into a topic. This feature is similar to the "People also search for" section at the bottom of Google search results.

Under the hood, Perplexity performs a real-time web search (leveraging sources like Bing's index and others) and then uses a combination of AI models, including ChatGPT and Anthropic, to synthesize an answer.

Even more, it refreshes its knowledge on the fly. This makes it ideal for questions like, "What were the latest product announcements at TechCrunch Disrupt 2025?", where up-to-date info is required.

Another hallmark of Perplexity is its no-login-needed accessibility and straightforward usability. The interface looks like a search engine, but when you hit enter, you get a concise answer followed by a list of sources.

Perplexity prioritizes content quality and relevance above all else. While it typically favors high-authority domains, especially for topics requiring credibility or expertise, it's also willing to surface lesser-known sites if they provide a clear, direct answer to the user's question.

In this way, Perplexity balances trust with utility. Authoritative sources are often preferred but a smaller blog or niche site can still be featured if it contains the specific insight needed. For marketers, this means content that is well-structured, accurate, and applicable to a query can earn visibility regardless of domain authority.

How Do AI Models Generate Answers?

Understanding how the AI models we've explored produce results is crucial to formulating an AEO strategy. As we've previously covered, traditional search engines use web crawlers to index pages and algorithms to rank those pages for a query. AI models, on the other hand, generate an answer on the fly by analyzing content.

LLM “retrieval + generation”

Most AI search engines use a two-step process. They “retrieve” relevant information and then “generate” a synthesized answer.

The retrieval step might use a search index (Bing, Google, etc.) or a custom index (OpenAI has its own index for ChatGPT Search). The generation step is done by the AI model which reads the various retrieved texts and combines them into a cohesive response.

This means that contextual relevance is king. AI isn't just matching keywords, it's reading entire pieces of content to see if it answers the user's question. For example, if a user asks, “How do I implement SSO in a React app?”, AI will look for passages that describe the implementation steps. It might find an answer on a forum that contains the exact code snippet and opt to use that information because it's so precise.

Most of the time, AI prioritizes content quality and relevance to the query intent over traditional SEO signals. As we covered, Perplexity will happily quote a lesser-known site if it has a pertinent answer, whereas Google's organic results might have buried that site due to low domain authority.

We're not saying authority is meaningless for AI (the models have been trained on large datasets—often established search indexes—and may inherently trust well-known sources) but it's less of a factor. In general, once AI has a pool of content to pull from, the best answer wins.

Ranking without backlinks

Backlinks and keyword density also hold less sway in AI-generated results. An AI model doesn't know how many backlinks a page has (and, frankly, doesn't care). It values whether the content on the page can answer the question at hand. We're already seeing that pages with only a few or even no backlinks can surface in AI answers if they contain a clear, well-structured explanation.

A concise paragraph on a niche blog could be featured by AI over a top-ranked page that wanders off-topic or has too much fluff. From an AEO standpoint, this shifts focus toward on-page content quality and completeness. It's a bit of a return to early search days when having the exact answer on your page was often enough to rank.

Conversational presentation

Each AI platform presents answers in a different format. ChatGPT and Gemini give long-form textual answers, often in a friendly or explanatory tone. They also rephrase and merge information from multiple sources. For example, ChatGPT might take a definition from one site and an example from another and weave them together, with no indication that two sources were used.

This means redundant content across the web will be synthesized. If your blog post says the same thing as multiple other articles, AI might just mention that point without specifically sourcing you.

On the other hand, unique insights or clearly phrased answers stand out. If your content expresses an idea in a particularly compelling way, AI might latch onto it. Among marketing professionals, there's already talk of "being the source" for a distinctive fact or quote so that LLMs repeat your version.

Platforms like Microsoft Copilot and Perplexity present answers with inline citations which is advantageous for content publishers. Perplexity's model will often form a

sentence lifted directly (or lightly paraphrased) from a source and put a citation right after it.

In these cases, having content that succinctly answers a common question can make you the cited source. This is reminiscent of featured snippets on Google but the difference is that AI might splice together parts of sentences. Still, the takeaway is clear—bite-sized statements in your text are more likely to be used by LLMs.

Microsoft Copilot citations, appearing as footnotes, often link to the source page even if only one line was used. That means that being one of the references that Copilot pulls from can drive traffic. Ensuring that vital facts and answers in your content are near the top of the page or in a prominent, easy-to-understand format (like a bulleted list or a bolded summary) can increase the chance AI selects your text for citation.

Different strengths and focus areas

The four big AI platforms all have their own strengths which ultimately influence the type of content each one favors. ChatGPT is excellent for broad, explanatory answers or multi-step reasoning. It excels at tasks like comparing options, making creative suggestions, or summarizing a complex topic into simple terms. It might prefer content that provides a good narrative or step-by-step breakdown since it strives to assemble a helpful answer.

Google Gemini, with its integration into search, is best used for factual queries and the latest information. It will tap into Google News, forums, and videos so having content in various formats that is fresh and aligned with trending queries can be beneficial. For example, a company that quickly publishes a blog about a new regulation or technology might get picked up by Gemini.

Gemini also provides multiple perspectives (e.g., “According to Source A... However, another perspective from Source B...”). This suggests that having a unique take or differing answer could get you featured as an alternative view.

Perplexity and Copilot are often used for research-oriented queries (users who want the facts with citations). For those AI engines, content that includes concrete data, quotes from experts, or specific details is like gold. If your article titled “Top 5 SaaS Trends for 2025” includes a statistic like “SaaS companies saw a 40% increase in AI adoption in 2024,” Perplexity might directly quote that stat with the citation.

If your competitor's similar article has no specific numbers, AI will lean towards yours due to its richness of information. In short, content with evidence (numbers, names, dates, definitions, etc.) is favored when AI builds a fact-based answer.

AI Search Engines in Action

To illustrate these differences, consider this scenario: A user asks AI, "What are the challenges of implementing single sign-on (SSO) for a SaaS application?"

ChatGPT might produce a three-paragraph essay or multiple bullet points that mention general challenges (complexity, security concerns, user experience issues, etc.) in a conversational tone. It will only sometimes provide sources and it might not mention specific brands. If your company published a great whitepaper on this topic, ChatGPT's answer could very well incorporate points from it without the user knowing.

Google Gemini might give a shorter answer, perhaps bulleting a few key challenges. It might say, "Challenges include integration difficulties, scaling the identity provider, and balancing security with user convenience."

It could follow up with "Source: Acme Security Blog" as a small notation with a link to the website, especially if that content already ranks high on Google.

Microsoft Copilot might answer with bullet points and put footnote [1] after "integration difficulties" (linking to your blog) and footnote [2] after "scaling the identity provider" (linking to a Stack Overflow answer). A user who finds this answer helpful may click those footnotes to read more.

Perplexity would likely produce a concise paragraph or numbered list. In another tab, you'd see the sources it pulled each bit from. Perhaps a developer forum post and an article (maybe yours) on SSO best practices. It might also recommend additional follow-up questions to ask.

From an AEO standpoint, you could be cited if you had the best line on any one aspect of the answer.

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CHAPTER 3

Answer Engine Optimization (AEO) vs. Search Engine Optimization (SEO): Key Differences and Similarities

From Keywords and Links to Semantic Understanding

Traditional search engines have long used keyword matching and link-based signals to find and order webpages. When a user enters a query, the engine breaks it into keywords and retrieves pages containing those terms (or similar terms), then ranks those pages based on factors like relevance and backlinks. In this traditional search model, a page's authority and on-page keyword usage determine its position in search results.

AI-powered search retrieves, interprets, and presents information very differently, focusing on context and meaning rather than keywords and links.

Instead of acting like a librarian searching an index, AI behaves more like a research assistant that understands the topic. It uses Natural Language Understanding (NLU) to parse queries and content. This means AI can recognize entities (people, places, products, etc.), grasp the intent behind a question, and interpret context.

For example, if a user searches for “best CRM software 2025,” a traditional search engine looks for pages optimized for that exact phrase. That means that the software recommended to the user is going to be based entirely on what the best optimized pages say.

An AI model, however, will recognize that “CRM software” is the topic and might understand that specific entities, like Salesforce or HubSpot, are widely considered the top products on the market. It could then present contextual information about those entities (features, pricing, user reviews) from multiple sources, even if the content doesn't use the exact query phrasing.

This shift from keyword-based retrieval to entity-based, semantic search allows AI engines to provide nuanced responses that better address the user's true intent.

Link-based ranking vs. contextual relevance

Traditional search relies on algorithms like Google's PageRank. It uses the number and quality of backlinks to determine what pages are authoritative and rank them accordingly.

AI platforms don't rely on a link-driven approach. Instead, an AI component of a search engine, such as Google AI Overviews (AIOs) or Microsoft Copilot in Bing, generates a single answer compiled from various sources. In doing so, AI prioritizes content that is contextually relevant, accurate, and comprehensive over content that merely has a high link count.

AI retrieval techniques (RAG and knowledge graph integration)

Most AI models use Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) to gather the latest available information. With RAG, AI first uses a traditional search index to fetch relevant content or data points based on the user's query. It then feeds that information into the language model as context for answer generation. This approach helps AI provide up-to-date responses and reduces the chance of hallucinations (made-up facts).

For example, Copilot will perform a web search in real time, retrieve relevant results (e.g., news articles, forum posts, Wikipedia entries), and then compose an answer using all that information. The underlying idea is that while the AI model has learned vast knowledge from training data, it can be augmented with the latest information, combining the strengths of search engines and generative AI.

In addition to pulling in information from around the web, AI models integrate with knowledge graphs to improve understanding and accuracy. A knowledge graph is a structured database of factual information (the best example being Google's Knowledge Graph that interconnects people, places, companies, etc., based on their relationships). By tapping into these graphs, an AI model can retrieve trusted facts and contextual relationships that aren't directly stated in any single web source.

For instance, if you ask a traditional search engine a complex question like "How does the new EU data privacy law affect small e-commerce businesses?" it would likely return several articles about the law, ranked by authority, that are somewhat (but not completely) e-commerce focused.

AI search, on the other hand, would recognize entities in the query and use a knowledge graph to understand the context. “EU data privacy law” refers to GDPR and “small e-commerce businesses” is a specific business category.

The model could then retrieve specific provisions from the law text via a document search, cross-reference guidance from a government FAQ site, and check common impacts on small e-commerce businesses explained in relevant sources. The AI response would be a synthesized explanation with multiple citations that gives a point-by-point answer to the user’s question.

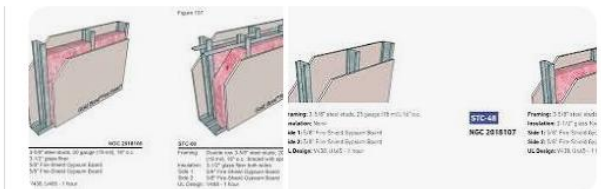
Let’s look at another example that highlights the difference between traditional and AI search. [An exercise conducted by the digital marketing agency Wray Ward](#) found that a blog article from a building materials company holds the featured snippet for the query “STC rating wall assembly” on Google.

What is an STC rating? Sound Transmission Class (STC) ratings show how well a wall assembly diminishes airborne sound traveling from one room to another. Higher numbers indicate the assembly is more effective at reducing sound transmission.

May 19, 2023

 National Gypsum® Company
<https://www.nationalgypsum.com> › NGConnects › Blog

 6 variables that affect STC ratings



 About featured snippets •  Feedback

In the AIO result for that same query, Google produces a multi-part answer. It defines STC (using that blog and other pages as sources) and then lists ways to improve a wall’s STC rating, all within the AI answer box at the top of the search results. The original blog is still cited (it appears as the first source link) but Gemini provides additional context from other sources. This demonstrates that an AI search doesn’t just pick one “best” page—it delivers a complete answer by merging information.

The screenshot shows a Google search for "STC rating wall assembly". The main results are AI-generated. The first result explains that the STC rating measures how well a wall assembly blocks airborne sound transmission, with higher ratings indicating better isolation. It mentions that 50 is the minimum requirement for unit-to-unit partitions in many building codes, and factors like mass, insulation, stud spacing, and decoupling techniques significantly impact STC ratings. Below this is an "Elaboration:" section with "STC Measurement:" explaining that STC is determined by laboratory testing of a wall assembly, measuring how much sound transmission loss occurs at various frequencies. Then, "Influence of Variables:" lists five factors: Mass (additional layers of gypsum board or soundproofing drywall increase the wall's mass, improving STC), Insulation (sound-absorbing insulation like fiberglass or mineral wool within the wall cavity significantly boosts STC), Stud Spacing (staggered or double stud walls, and the use of resilient channels, can improve STC), Material Choice (metal studs generally perform better than wood studs in terms of sound isolation), and Sealing (proper sealing of gaps and cracks is crucial for achieving the rated STC). To the right, a sidebar contains three related links: "6 variables that affect STC ratings" by National Gypsum Company, "STC Ratings for Various Wall Assemblies" with a note that insulation will noticeably affect ratings, and "Calculate Wall STC Ratings - Commercial Acoustics" which states that common STC ratings for international building code require 50 STC between adjacent walls. A "Show all" button is at the bottom of the sidebar.

For marketers, this means the playing field is somewhat leveled by AI, but also less predictable. It's no longer enough to simply be the most authoritative site on a topic. Your content also needs to provide the specific context or answers AI is likely to use.

What Traditional SEO Tactics No Longer Matter?

The rise of AI search is rewriting the rules of what optimizations actually drive visibility. Many traditional SEO tactics lose effectiveness when users favor AI platforms over search engines—and when the search engines themselves are presenting AI-generated results. Let's explore some formerly tried-and-true SEO tactics that matter far less for Answer Engine Optimization (AEO).

Backlink quantity as a standalone metric

In classic SEO, a large number of backlinks pointing to your page is a strong signal of authority (as we've covered, links are the foundation of Google's PageRank algorithm). For years, SEO professionals have come up with thoughtful ways to amass as many inbound links as possible.

However, AI cares far more about what a page says than how many other sites link to it. When an AI model is generating an answer, it doesn't see the backlink profile of a page—it sees the content. A page with ten thousand backlinks but thin content might rank well on a traditional SERP but won't be included in an AI answer if it doesn't provide novel information or context.

Let's consider the example of a high-authority travel blog with thousands of backlinks to its post optimized for the term “best beaches in Maui.” In reality, this blog probably exists to route traffic to its affiliate links and digital ads, not necessarily to help travelers plan their vacations. But because the page is so well optimized, it shows up on SERPs when people are researching Maui beaches.

In the modern era of AEO, AI might not be inclined to cite this popular content. Instead, it might prefer a more detailed post on Maui beaches because of its richness of information, even if that page has only a few inbound links.

Exact-match keywords and keyword density

Old-school SEO professionals tend to obsess over placing exact query keywords in titles, headings, and multiple times in the text. Some practitioners even tracked keyword density as a metric.

Modern search algorithms, even before AI, have moved away from exact-match requirements. Thanks to advancements like Google's Hummingbird and RankBrain, search algorithms have gotten better at understanding synonyms and intent.

But with the emergence of AI search, keyword stuffing has been rendered completely obsolete. Large Language Models (LLMs) interpret queries for meaning and will find an answer in text, whether or not it matches the user's precise wording.

What matters is semantic relevance. With the query, “How to fix a leaking faucet,” AI can draw from an article titled, “DIY Guide: Repairing a Dripping Tap” because it understands “dripping tap” is equivalent to “leaking faucet.” Having an exact match title offers no special advantage in an AI context.

That means SEO tactics like creating separate pages that target minor keyword variations (e.g., one page for “best running shoes” and another for “best jogging shoes”) are no longer effective. AI sees through the wording to the core intent.

Traditional PageRank factors (anchor text, link juice, etc.)

Other PageRank-focused tactics revolved around optimizing anchor text (the clickable text of a link) and sculpting internal link flow (links between pages on your site). For instance, having keyword-rich anchor text pointing to an important page was believed to signal relevance for that keyword and boost the page's authority.

These factors are less important in AEO. An AI answer might cite a source but it doesn't care what pages on your sites link to it or what the anchor text says.

It cares about the content on the page itself. Techniques like acquiring exact-match anchor text backlinks or using internal link structures to concentrate the algorithm on a specific page have little to no impact on whether your content gets used in an AI answer.

High domain authority trumping relevance

In the past, having a high-authority website (one with a strong backlink profile and long-standing trust) could propel even mediocre content to rank well. Smaller or newer sites have long struggled to outrank "the big guys" due to this authority gap.

AI search is changing that dynamic. Since an AI model selects text from across the web, it can choose a paragraph from a new startup's blog over a Fortune 500 company's site, if that content effectively answers the question.

For example, a well-known medical site might not appear in an AI answer for a specific health query if a lesser-known specialist's blog provides a clearer, more relevant explanation. While the high-authority site is still part of the model's dataset, the smaller site wins out because its content better addresses the user's question.

This is already translating into traffic changes on the web. [One study estimates that websites that dominate traditional SERPs could experience a decrease in organic traffic ranging anywhere from 18% to 64% due to Google AIOs.](#)

This is simply because users can get their answers from the AI summary at the top of the page without needing to explore any high-ranking sites. The takeaway? Domain prestige is no longer a free pass to search visibility.

Exact match domains and minor technical tricks

Legacy tactics like buying exact-match domain names (e.g., carinsurancequotes.com for “car insurance quotes” queries) or adding multiple tags and irrelevant keywords on a page have been declining in effectiveness for years. And now with AI, they matter even less.

Similarly, subtle on-page SEO tricks like hiding extra keywords in the HTML have zero impact on AEO. AI models can’t be fooled by hidden text or code-level tweaks. They effectively read the page as a human would. In fact, such tricks could be counterproductive if they make content less readable or less trustworthy.

To recap, AI search moves the focus away from the signals about content (links, keywords, URLs, headers, etc.) to the content itself. Traditional SEO tactics that aim to game the ranking algorithm without improving actual content quality are either neutralized or greatly devalued in AEO.

As a result, marketing professionals should deprioritize things like mass link-building campaigns, exact-match keyword targeting, and other old ranking hacks. Instead, their strategies must evolve to align with what AI is looking for—informational value and clarity.

What Traditional SEO Tactics Still Matter?

While many longstanding SEO tactics are now irrelevant, others will continue to play a role in the era of AEO. In fact, many core principles are even more important now because they help AI understand and trust your content.

AI platforms may use new methods to respond to queries but they still value high-quality information. Let’s explore the traditional SEO tactics that marketing teams should continue to use moving forward.

Content depth and comprehensiveness

AI loves in-depth, well-structured content. Since it will often cherry-pick snippets from different parts of a page to form an answer, completely covering a topic in one place increases your chances of being used.

If your content thoroughly answers not only the main question but also related follow-up questions, AI might use your page for multiple aspects of a response. High-quality, long-

form content that is logically organized (with clear sections, descriptive headings, and summary boxes) provides more fodder for AI to work with.

That means that quality beats quantity of content. A single authoritative page on a topic is more valuable than five thin pages targeting slight keyword variations. Google's E-E-A-T guidelines (Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness) still apply, meaning that content that demonstrates knowledge will be favored by AI models.

A good practice is to audit your content. Does it fully answer the who/what/when/where/why/how of the topic? Are there gaps a user (or AI) might need to fill from elsewhere? By beefing up content to be truly comprehensive, you increase its usefulness to an AI model.

Clarity, structure, and readability

The way you structure your content matters more than ever because AI models prefer sites that are easy to parse. Using clear headings and subheadings (H2s and H3s), bullet points or numbered lists, and tables for data helps AI identify relevant information more easily.

For example, if a page contains a neatly formatted table comparing different products, AI might use it to summarize what each one offers. Likewise, an FAQ section or a summary box at the end of a blog post can be used to concisely answer a specific question.

Ensuring your content is well-organized and skimmable benefits not only human readers but also AI models.

You should also use proper grammar and straightforward language, as AI is effectively “reading” your text and needs to understand what you’re trying to convey.

Think of it this way. To earn a spot in an AI-generated answer, your content has to successfully teach the AI model something.

Factual accuracy and evidence

AI models are trained to avoid incorrect information and often cross-check facts across sources. As a result, content that is factually accurate, up-to-date, and supported by evidence has a higher chance of being trusted by AI.

That means it's worth including statistics, dates, names, and references in your content—and ensuring each one is 100% correct.

Accurate information is really an area where you can be valuable to AI. If your content provides concrete evidence, like results of a study or an official datapoint, it becomes attractive for an AI answer.

The reasoning is that such content comes across as more authoritative and specific. Imagine two articles about the benefits of solar panels. One says, “Solar energy can reduce electricity bills significantly,” and another says, “Solar energy can reduce electricity bills by 50% on average in the first year” (along with a source for that figure). An AI model will gravitate to the second statement because it's more detailed and even provides a reference that it can verify.

Furthermore, being accurate protects your brand. While there is no concrete evidence yet, it's logical to assume that AI models might penalize or avoid sources known to be misleading. So the traditional SEO principle of “don't publish fluff, publish facts” still applies for AEO.

Structured data and semantic markup

Structured data—or schema markup—has been an SEO best practice for years. And today, it helps both search engines and AI interpret content.

By adding schema to your pages to mark up information like products, reviews, FAQs, organizational structure, and more, you make your content machine-readable in a detailed way.

Schema helps AI models extract specific facts or answers. For example, marking up an FAQ section with **<FAQPage>** schema or a how-to guide with **<HowTo>** schema means AI can instantly recognize question-answer pairs or step-by-step instructions without having to infer them from on-page text.

Search engines already rely on structured data to generate rich results and answer boxes, and it will likely continue to be important for AEO.

Looking ahead, content that feeds Google’s Knowledge Graph or other knowledge bases via structured data is better positioned to be used in AI answers. For instance, if your product pages use schema to tag features, pricing, and target use cases, an AI answer to “What’s the difference between Product A and Product B?” can directly surface your information with confidence.

Structured data essentially provides AI with a cheat sheet to your content’s key points. From a marketing perspective, organizations that build a content knowledge graph (linking their entities and pages via schema) help AI infer facts about their brand and provide more accurate answers to potential customers.

Brand authority and trust

While we noted that domain authority alone has little impact on AEO, overall brand recognition and trustworthiness heavily influence AI visibility.

AI models are fine-tuned to prefer reputable sources in order to avoid disinformation. They often use filters or human-in-the-loop feedback that focus on trusted domains (e.g., government sites, established publishers, etc.), especially when answering sensitive queries.

For instance, if a user asks about cancer treatment options, AI models are more likely to cite sources like Mayo Clinic or the American Cancer Society than a lesser-known health blog. These trusted sources have a long track record of accuracy and expertise, which makes them a safer choice for AI models aiming to deliver reliable information.

That said, AI models don’t always default to the largest brands. A small startup’s blog post can still be cited over content from a Fortune 500 company, if the smaller site provides more detailed, helpful, or timely information. The key is aligning your content with user intent and ensuring it delivers clear, trustworthy answers to specific queries.

This means that establishing your brand as an authority in your niche remains crucial. You should continue with marketing efforts that boost your credibility, such as having subject-matter experts author your content, collecting positive user reviews, generating

brand mentions in recognized publications, and maintaining a consistent track record of accuracy and relevance in your content.

Technical SEO fundamentals

Even the most advanced AI model can't use your content if it can't discover it in the first place. Crawling, indexing, site speed, mobile-friendliness, and security (HTTPS) are still foundational in AEO.

Technical SEO continues to matter because AI platforms draw largely from the same indexes of the web that were built by traditional search engines. If your site has poor crawlability (e.g., broken links, missing sitemaps, disallowed sections), your content will likely not be indexed by either search engines or AI models.

Likewise, if your website is slow or has unreliable hosting, it might be difficult to access your content in real time which impacts the live retrieval approach LLMs use. Ensure your site is well structured (logical URL hierarchy, clean navigation) and uses proper HTML semantics.

Another aspect of technical SEO that is still important is keeping content crawlable without heavy reliance on client-side scripts. [Research has found that AI systems sometimes miss JavaScript-injected content or structured data](#). Where possible, serve important content in raw HTML or use server-side rendering for SPAs to ensure nothing is lost.

Technical terminology aside, all the behind-the-scenes SEO work that makes your site accessible and understandable to algorithms remains vital for AEO.

User intent focus and relevance

Understanding and aligning with user intent has become a major theme of modern SEO. And it continues to be highly relevant for AI search. If your content is off-base for what users—and thus AI—are seeking for a given query, it won't be included in responses.

Make sure each piece of content you produce has a clear intent alignment. That means knowing what questions it needs to answer and what information it needs to provide. Doing so will naturally increase its chances of being chosen by AI for a relevant query.

For instance, a page that clearly outlines “How to troubleshoot a Wi-Fi router” in step-by-step format is far more likely to be used by AI than a generic article on “home internet tips” where the relevant information is buried.

This ties back to content planning and structure. While broad, comprehensive content has its place, sometimes it’s worth creating a specific FAQ or how-to article.

From a high level, top-performing content in an AI world still starts with top-performing content for users. The difference is in consumption. Content is read by AI and relayed to the user, rather than the user reading it directly on your site.

That means optimizing for AEO is largely about making your content so good and so clear that AI cannot ignore it. If you can do that, both traditional search engine algorithms and AI models will recognize the value you provide to web users.

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CHAPTER 4

Zero-Click Searches & The Importance of Brand Mentions

The Decline of Clicks and Rise of Mentions

AI is changing how we consume information. Instead of navigating conventional search results, people now get complete answers from AI without ever visiting a website.

This phenomenon—known as “zero-click search”—poses a new challenge for marketing professionals. If users no longer need to click through to your site to get answers, what value do you even get from search?

In this chapter, we’ll explore how AI-generated answers reduce click-throughs and what strategies you can use to keep your brand top-of-mind as zero-click searches become more prominent.

How is Zero-Click Search Impacting Traditional SEO Metrics?

In May 2024, Google rolled out its AI Overviews (AIOs) feature (initially named Search Generative Experience). AIOs appear at the top of search results and use Google’s Gemini model to provide complete answers to the user’s search query.

Because people now have little need to explore the traditional search results, sites have naturally experienced a significant drop in organic traffic.

- [Amsive reports](#) that click-through rates (CTRs) decline by 15.49% on average when AIOs are on the page.
- For every 1,000 searches, only about 360 leave the Google ecosystem, [according to SparkToro](#).
- SparkToro also found that 58.5% of Google searches resulted in zero clicks in 2024.

However, Google isn’t the only culprit. ChatGPT is the most used AI platform and it also provides complete answers, often with no source links. For instance, a user can get a

recipe or instructions directly from ChatGPT instead of visiting a top-ranked cooking blog or how-to site.

However, it's important to note that not all searches are equally impacted. The zero-click effect is most common for straightforward informational queries where a quick answer suffices. For example, questions like "What's the capital of France?" or "How do I reset my router?" can be fully answered in a short AI response.

Queries that indicate buying intent will still lead users to click source links (and this is frankly the type of traffic marketers care about). If someone asks a question like "What are the best project management tools for a growing marketing agency?" AI might list a few options with short descriptions—and an interested user would likely navigate to the companies' websites to continue their research.

That said, the overall trend is clear. AI is causing a drop in organic traffic. This is alarming for businesses that invested heavily in SEO and have long enjoyed a steady stream of website visitors from Google and other search engines.

How is AI Contributing to the Zero-Click Search Trend?

Zero-click searches are not entirely new. Featured snippets, knowledge panels, and quick answers on traditional SERPs have been siphoning traffic for years.

However, AI summarization is accelerating this trend.

Marketers must now focus on getting their brands featured in AI-generated answers. But this challenge is made more difficult by the fact that each of the four major AI search platforms contributes to the zero-click trend in its own way:

- **ChatGPT** delivers conversational answers sourced from its training data or live web lookup, usually without showing any URLs. Unless a user explicitly asks for sources or ChatGPT is in a special browsing mode that provides citations, there is no direct path to click through to the source of information.
- **Google AIOs** integrates AI answers into the familiar Google search results page. Even though AIOs rely on the Google index, they typically provide limited attribution when answering questions. Usually, three sources are highlighted to

the right, with an option to “Show all,” but this section is far less prominent than the links in traditional SERPs.

- **Microsoft Copilot** displays footnote numbers that link to each source of information in its answers. It encourages click-throughs to some extent but users won’t visit any sites if they receive a sufficient response.
- **Perplexity** provides in-line citations and lists reference links below the answer. It’s the most citation-heavy of the four platforms, but again, if the summary fully addresses the query, users do not need to click a link.

Across all these platforms, the common theme is that the answer itself has become the endpoint for many queries. The search experience is complete once the user gets the information they’re seeking, which now occurs directly in the AI interface in most cases.

How Do you Optimize for ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, and Perplexity?

In the last chapter, I provided a general overview of how to structure and present content for AI. Let’s now get more granular and explore how to optimize for each platform, individually.

ChatGPT

You can’t directly control how ChatGPT cites sources but you can influence what content it sees and uses.

Start by contributing accurate, well-written content to the third-party sites it frequently references, like Wikipedia, public forums like Reddit, and review directories. These sources are often part of ChatGPT’s training data and regularly appear when it does provide citations.

Additionally, keep your own website crawlable and up to date. ChatGPT is increasingly pulling from live sites when it browses the web and clear formatting, fast load times, and visible page content (that’s not hidden behind JavaScript) make your content accessible.

If incorrect claims about your brand or product show up in its responses, don’t ignore them. You can submit feedback through ChatGPT’s thumbs-down feature, although that likely has minimal impact. A more proactive approach is to correct the record in the

public spaces that LLMs are likely to ingest. Think Wikipedia edits, outdated blog posts, or unclear information on your website or third-party review directories.

Google Gemini and AIOs

For Google Gemini and AIOs, visibility still starts with strong traditional SEO. Pages that rank well organically are more likely to be included in Google's AI-generated summaries. That calls for prioritizing comprehensive coverage of topics and robust on-page optimization.

But Gemini also pulls specific snippets into its summaries, so format your content with that in mind. Use clear headings, well-structured bullet points, and concise definitions or takeaways that can easily be lifted into the answer box.

The little things still matter, too. Craft sharp titles and ensure you're using compelling thumbnails for any content likely to surface in Google's source cards. These visual elements can improve your click-through rate when users want to learn more beyond the summary.

Like with featured snippets, you're not just optimizing to appear. You're optimizing to stand out in a compressed (and in this case, multi-source) format.

Microsoft Copilot

Bing's core ranking factors still apply for Microsoft Copilot—content relevance, freshness, and clear structure. Make sure your content is updated regularly, well-formatted, and submitted to Bing Webmaster Tools to ensure proper indexing.

Copilot frequently provides bullet-point or list-style responses, especially for “how-to” and comparison or product recommendation queries. Lean into that format. Structure your content with clearly labeled sections, numbered steps, and concise points that Copilot can summarize in answers.

Multimedia also plays a role. Bing has long integrated rich media into its results and Copilot may surface images or videos if they add to the response. Use high-quality visuals with descriptive alt text and titles to increase the chances your media is included alongside the answer.

Overall, the opportunity with Copilot isn't just to be referenced, it's to become the default answer. That means keeping your content tightly aligned to the target query and formatting it for summarization.

Perplexity

Perplexity favors content that directly answers specific questions with clarity and authority. Because it cites sources inline—frequently linking to 3–6 pages per response—there's an opportunity to surface even if your site isn't well-known, as long as your content is informative and well-structured.

Focus on producing content that addresses niche or technical queries with clear takeaways. Answers should be concise but comprehensive. Rich enough to be worth quoting, but not buried in fluff. Unique insights, proprietary data, and clear examples can make your page a preferred citation.

Unlike platforms that summarize without attribution, Perplexity always links to the source next to each fact. That means it matters how your content appears. Use professional branding, accurate page titles, and clear meta descriptions. These are shown directly in the highlighted citations and can influence whether a user clicks through to your site.

How Can You Get AI to Mention Your Brand?

As we covered, appearing in AI answers offers significant branding benefits, even when users don't visit your site. Being part of the answer means your brand is contributing to the information they consume, which enhances trust and boosts your reputation.

Consider the psychology of the searcher. If AI repeatedly cites your content or mentions your product, the user begins to form a positive association with your brand. Even if the immediate session doesn't send a click your way, the traffic or conversion can occur later via a different channel.

You also want your brand to be accurately represented in AI answers. We're trusting AI to convey relevant information on our behalf but it does have a tendency to get some details wrong.

While you cannot directly control AI's output, you can manage your digital presence by ensuring that information about your brand across the web is up-to-date and consistent. In addition to your company website and blog, AI ingests information from press releases, review sites, Wikipedia, GitHub, Reddit, and other external sources. The more accurate and consistent the available info, the less likely AI is to hallucinate or spread misinformation about your brand.

What Are Some Strategies to Get Brand Mentions in AI Answers?

As zero-click search becomes the norm, marketers must take steps to get their brands mentioned by AI.

It's an aspirational goal and, like broader brand-building, requires a multi-faceted strategy.

Overall, the objective is to become a prominent voice in your industry and there are many small steps you can take to elevate how your brand is perceived by both AI and your target audience.

Publish original research and insights

One of the most effective ways to get AI to highlight your brand is to become one of its go-to sources of original information. AI platforms often use quantifiable facts to support their answers and they tend to cite the sources behind that data.

When you publish research under your company's name (say, a survey that found that 70% of consumers prefer chat support), that stat may become well-known in your niche. Ideally, it will be repeatedly referenced by other websites and publications that AI pulls from and always attributed to your brand.

When someone asks AI a relevant query, your stat is readily available to quantify the benefits of chat support. It might say, "According to a 2025 survey by ExampleCorp, 70% of consumers prefer chat support."

Over time, AI models and human audiences will begin to associate your name with authoritative insights. The impact compounds with every mention and solidifies your brand as a leading voice in the space.

Get cited by authoritative sources

In traditional SEO, the benefit of getting mentioned by a popular website is the quality link you receive. With Answer Engine Optimization (AEO), the benefit is the text-based mention itself and the context around it, as it signals credibility to AI.

For example, if your CEO appears in a respected publication offering an insightful take on a trend, that quote could show up in AI responses. Or if a whitepaper you published is cited by an industry blog or mentioned in a government report, that connection might feed into a model's training data and surface later in relevant queries.

This is classic PR and thought leadership—getting your brand and talking points featured in the right places. However, the benefit is no longer readers seeing your name in these places or a quality inbound link. It's AI relaying your messaging and brand name to users who are increasingly turning to these platforms for information.

Be present on AI's most used sources

Another way to boost brand recognition in AI answers is to be active on the knowledge sources that AI models commonly reference.

Chief among these is Wikipedia, which accounts for about 7% of all ChatGPT citations as of June 2025, [according to Profound's Josh Blyskal](#).

If your company or product is notable enough, creating a detailed Wikipedia page can increase your visibility in AI responses. For example, if a user asks, "Who owns Stripe?" or "What does Zapier do?", an AI model is likely to quote or paraphrase from the first few sentences of those companies' Wikipedia pages. It views this content as a high-authority snapshot, especially for standard, entity-focused queries.

Blyskal also reports that Reddit is ChatGPT's second most cited domain (with a 5.9% citation rate), up significantly since the two companies entered a partnership last year. I'm going to create a comprehensive resource on Reddit marketing but here are a few quick tips:

- **Participate rather than promote:** Focus on being a helpful community member. Answer questions and share insights before ever mentioning your brand.
- **Mention your brand organically:** Reference your product only when it's relevant, like responding to questions specifically asking for vendor recommendations.

- **Have a thought leader represent your company:** Reddit communities are apprehensive of brands. Have an ambassador or subject matter expert engage on your company's behalf.
- **Find the right subreddits:** Use Reddit search, Google "site:reddit.com," subreddit directories, and competitor mentions to identify the communities where your target audience hangs out.
- **Follow subreddit rules:** Every subreddit has its own guidelines. Read them carefully and respect posting limits and content restrictions to avoid being banned.
- **Avoid common pitfalls:** Don't spam, astroturf, use bots, or sound overly corporate. Authentic engagement is a must on Reddit.

Apart from Wikipedia and Reddit, ensure your brand has a presence on other sites that are relevant to your industry or niche (think review sites like G2, StackExchange, GitHub, Quora, etc). Many AI platforms use these sites to verify facts and context or find information to include in responses.

By actively promoting your brand around the web, you increase the number of credible touchpoints that AI models can draw from and improve your chances of naturally being surfaced in relevant answers.

Monitor AI outputs for opportunities

Pay close attention to how AI platforms respond to queries relevant to your business. If they consistently generate answers that omit your brand, even when you have relevant content, that's a sign you need to adjust your approach.

For instance, if AI models frequently present your competitors' brand information but not yours, it's time to audit your strategy. Are those competitors publishing more content on the topic? Are they structuring their product pages or resources in a way that's easier for AI to summarize? Do they have a stronger brand presence around the web?

You may be able to close the gap by creating content that is formatted for AI consumption. Remember that AI favors content that's organized, neutral, and built to clearly answer questions. Use that to your advantage.

A word of caution

Like in traditional SEO, attempting any shortcuts for AEO is a fool's errand.

Stuffing your brand name into content or using deceptive tactics like hidden text won't just cause search engine penalties. It may also trigger filters in AI models that are designed to ignore overly promotional or manipulative content.

AI mentions will come from genuine relevance and authority. If your insights are valuable, your research is compelling, and your brand is part of meaningful conversations, the citations will happen.

What AEO Metrics Should Marketers Track?

With the rise of zero-click search, monitoring traditional metrics like keyword rankings and organic traffic is insufficient. A better approach to measuring success includes tracking brand visibility within AI answers, user engagement after exposure, and other indicators of how AI search impacts your marketing efforts.

I want to give a shoutout to Duane Forrester, who has compiled [the most comprehensive resource on AEO KPIs I've seen](#). [You can follow his Substack where he shares advanced insights on AI search](#).

Brand mentions in AI answers

Brand mentions in AI responses are the most important driver of AEO success. Each mention puts your name in front of potential buyers who are actively searching for a solution like yours.

For instance, if a user asks a buying-intent query (e.g., "What are project management tools for startups?") and your company is mentioned, that's the best possible outcome for a zero-click search. There is a high likelihood they'll navigate to your site or keep your brand in mind as they continue their research.

Established SEO platforms (like Semrush, BridgeEdge, and Ahrefs) and a variety of new platforms built specifically for AEO provide marketing teams with the capability to track brand mentions in AI answers.

Answer placement and prominence

The positioning of your brand within AI answers influences user perception. Being listed first or prominently featured suggests you're the top choice.

For example, when you ask ChatGPT to recommend sales enablement software, it highlights seven products across different categories—but presents HubSpot Sales Hub first, as the best all-around solution. As users scroll down, the other products feel like secondary options.

While getting mentioned at all in AI responses is a big win, placement matters, too. It's similar to ranking on page one of Google versus being the top result.

What's the top sales enablement software for a startup?

The best sales enablement software for a startup depends on your team size, sales motion (inbound vs. outbound), and budget—but here are top options that balance power, usability, and startup-friendliness:

◆ **Top Pick for Most Startups**

HubSpot Sales Hub

- ✓ Great all-in-one CRM + sales enablement
- ✓ Email templates, sequences, lead tracking, and playbooks
- ✓ Excellent UI, easy onboarding
- ⚠ Can get pricey as you scale

Sentiment and accuracy of mentions

You naturally want AI to present your brand positively and accurately to potential customers. Monitor AI mentions and address misinformation by updating or correcting inaccurate content on the sources that influence responses.

Routine sentiment audits and factual reviews ensure your brand is represented correctly in AI answers. This can be as simple as asking AI specific questions about your company and identifying areas where revisions are needed.

Source citations and attribution

When AI platforms cite your content, it shows that you're a trusted and relevant source of information. These citations often come with clickable links (especially in Perplexity and Copilot) so they can drive traffic even as zero-click searches become more common.

Original research, thought leadership, and well-structured explainers are most likely to be cited, making them key assets in any AEO strategy. Tracking citation volume over time can help you assess which content types are gaining traction with AI and where to focus your efforts moving forward.

Citation frequency

Your brand's citation frequency shows how often your content is referenced in AI responses compared to your competitors. An increasing citation rate indicates models view your brand as a go-to source in your niche, resulting in greater exposure to potential buyers.

Monitoring this metric helps refine your content strategy and expand coverage on high-performing topics.

Query expansion rate

The conversational nature of AI search means there are countless ways a user can phrase a question. Query expansion rate indicates whether your brand is being referenced or cited for different variations and related queries.

A rising expansion rate suggests your content is addressing a broader range of topics and becoming a trusted source for models.

You can use this data to identify new opportunities for content development and ultimately increase the number of touchpoints where users encounter your brand.

User engagement metrics

When users do click through from AI responses, metrics like bounce rate, time on site, and pages per session show whether your web content meets expectations and holds

their attention. These engagement metrics help you determine if your site builds on the information presented by AI and encourages users to explore further.

Analyzing this data reveals what keeps users engaged and where they drop off, helping you optimize your on-site content and boost conversions.

Conversion quality from AI traffic

AI responses may drive less overall traffic than traditional search but the visitors they do send tend to convert at a higher rate. These are users who felt compelled to click through or visit your site directly—even after their initial question was answered—indicating strong interest in your offering.

Tracking and attributing conversions from AI-sourced traffic helps you measure the true ROI of your AEO efforts. Over time, this metric (combined with the others we've highlighted) can inform which topics or formats generate high-quality leads.

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CHAPTER 5

How to Identify AI Queries to Target

How is AI Search Changing Keyword Research?

Traditional keyword research entails finding the specific phrases your target audience types into search engines. For the past few decades, marketers have used different tools to discover keywords with high search volume, then created web pages and content that includes those exact terms.

However, AI platforms are less concerned with exact keyword matches and more focused on the meaning behind the query. In other words, the model prioritizes user intent and context over the specific phrasing of the search.

One major change from conventional search to AI is the nature of queries themselves. Users interacting with AI tend to use natural, conversational language, often phrasing searches as full questions or requests—a departure from the concise “Googling” we’ve been accustomed to.

For example, a traditional Google query might be “Best budget running shoes 2025,” whereas the same user on an AI platform might ask, “What are the best running shoes I can buy on a tight budget this year?” The intent is identical (finding affordable running shoes) but the AI query is longer and more nuanced.

Another key difference is that AI search can interpret and clarify intent in ways traditional search engines cannot. If a user’s question is ambiguous or broad, a Large Language Model (LLM) might ask a follow-up question or make an accurate assumption based on context.

In contrast, a traditional search engine would simply provide a wide range of results. The user would then have to click through to different sites or start over with a more refined search query.

For example, if you ask ChatGPT, “How do I improve my website?”, it may encourage you to refine your query (e.g., “Improving your website can mean many things...”) or just

provide a multi-faceted answer. A search engine faced with the same query would likely return a mix of SEO tips, design tutorials, and website optimization articles.

Most importantly, AI search changes what it means to “rank” for a query. In traditional SEO, you aim to rank #1 for a keyword by optimizing for query terms and building authority signals. In Answer Engine Optimization (AEO), getting your content featured in an AI-generated answer in any capacity is the new win.

For instance, an AI platform might pull information from multiple sources to answer a single question. It’s not looking for one page that perfectly matches the query phrase. Instead, it’s piecing together information from different sites that together answer the user’s query. In effect, AI is performing the aggregation and ranking internally before presenting the user with content to explore.

The internalization of search has big implications for keyword research. **Instead of obsessing over ranking for relevant keywords, marketers now need to think in terms of topics and semantic clusters.**

This means that traditional keyword research, which yields a list of specific search terms to target, must evolve into intent research—understanding the various ways a user might ask a question and what they actually want to know.

Keyword lists are still useful but they should be grouped by intent. For example, the keywords “buy running shoes online,” “best price running shoes,” and “cheap running shoes free shipping” all signal a similar intent (the user is trying to buy affordable running shoes online). That means rather than creating separate pages for each slight variation, an intent-focused approach is to create one comprehensive resource that addresses the core need in detail (affordable running shoe advice).

Search marketing has been moving in this direction for some time. Modern search engines like Google have incorporated semantic understanding (using algorithms like RankBrain and BERT) and started to reward content that addresses user intent rather than just repeating keywords.

AI search takes this to the next level. Exact-match keywords are far less important now. What matters is whether your content provides a satisfying and contextually relevant answer.

To adapt, marketing professionals must adjust their mindset and metrics. Instead of measuring success solely by SERP rankings, we must focus on visibility within AI answers. That means tracking if and how often your brand or content is mentioned by AI platforms. It also requires optimizing for longer, question-like query variations.

For example, you previously might have optimized a page for the keyword “Accounting software small business.” You should now ensure that the page explicitly answers a question like, “What’s the best accounting software for small businesses?” The content will likely remain similar but phrasing it in a question-and-answer format caters to AI models that field conversational queries.

The takeaway is that AI search changes what queries we target by forcing us to think beyond 3-5 word search terms. Every query is now part of a larger conversation users are having with AI. Our job as marketers is to understand their intent within that conversation and provide content that directly addresses it.

How to Identify AI Queries to Target?

If intent is the new focus in search marketing, the challenge is figuring out the exact questions your audience is asking AI. This requires a new research approach since we can’t rely on traditional keyword planners to tell us what people punch into ChatGPT and similar platforms.

Analyze AI outputs for common questions

A logical starting point is to directly ask AI platforms what questions potential buyers have.

What are the top questions businesses ask when evaluating project management software?

When evaluating project management software, businesses typically focus on functionality, usability, scalability, and ROI. Here are the top questions they often ask:

Features and Capabilities

- Does it support the methodologies we use (e.g., Agile, Waterfall, Scrum, Kanban)?
- Can it handle multiple projects and cross-functional teams?
- Does it include built-in task management, time tracking, and resource allocation tools?
- Can we customize workflows, templates, and dashboards?

Security and Compliance

- How is our data secured, and is the platform compliant with relevant standards (e.g., SOC 2, GDPR)?
- Does it offer role-based permissions and audit trails?

Integration and Compatibility

- Does it integrate with our existing tools (Slack, Jira, Salesforce, Google Workspace, etc.)?
- Is there an API or support for custom integrations?

Scalability and Performance

- Will it scale as our team or project complexity grows?
- Is the system cloud-based, on-premises, or hybrid—and how reliable is uptime?

Collaboration and Usability

- Is the interface intuitive for both technical and non-technical users?
- Does it support real-time collaboration and communication features?
- How does it handle notifications and task dependencies?

Pricing and ROI

- What's the pricing model (per user, flat fee, tiered)?
- Are there any hidden costs (training, integrations, upgrades)?
- What ROI or productivity improvements can we expect?

For example, if you run a SaaS company offering project management software, you might prompt ChatGPT with “What are the top questions businesses ask when evaluating project management tools?” You’ll get questions like:

- “Does it support Agile, Waterfall, or Scrum methodologies?”
- “How is our data secured and is it compliant with standards like SOC 2 or GDPR?”
- “Does it integrate with tools like Slack, Jira, or Google Workspace?”
- “Will it scale with our team’s needs and how reliable is uptime?”
- “What’s the ROI, and are there hidden costs like training or upgrades?”

By using LLMs to uncover the natural-language queries your audience is asking, you can reverse-engineer buyer intent based on the AI’s understanding of common user interests.

You can then create content that answers these questions, increasing your chances of being cited by AI platforms and making your site more informative to prospective customers.

Review suggested follow-up questions

Another useful exercise is to analyze the follow-up questions AI platforms offer after an initial response. Perplexity and Microsoft Copilot are especially useful for this, as they consistently provide a list of related questions for every prompt. Other platforms, like ChatGPT and Google Gemini, occasionally recommend ways to expand your research but don’t offer the same level of follow-up detail.

These suggestions are similar to Google’s “People Also Search For” feature but they reflect the conversational nature of AI interactions.

How does project management software improve team productivity

Answer Sources · 16 Tasks

Benefit	How It Improves Productivity
Centralized Information	Reduces time spent searching for data; keeps everyone aligned
Enhanced Collaboration	Streamlines communication; prevents information silos
Automation	Eliminates manual tasks; speeds up routine processes
Time & Resource Management	Ensures timely completion; optimizes workload distribution
Accountability & Transparency	Increases ownership; enables real-time progress tracking
Continuous Improvement	Data-driven insights for refining workflows and boosting results

By leveraging these features, organizations can significantly reduce inefficiencies, minimize delays, and empower teams to focus on high-impact work, leading to consistently better project outcomes and higher overall productivity ¹ ³ ⁵.

Share Export Rewrite

🔗 👍 🗨️ 📄 ...

Related

How does automation in project management software boost my team's efficiency	+
In what ways can real-time tracking improve my project outcomes	+
How does centralized communication reduce delays for me and my team	+
Why does resource allocation in software help me meet deadlines better	+
How can data analytics from the software influence my decision-making	+

For example, if you ask, “How does project management software improve team productivity?” Perplexity recommends related follow-up questions like:

- “How does automation in project management software boost my team's efficiency?”
- “In what ways can real-time tracking improve my project outcomes?”
- “How does centralized communication reduce delays for me and my team?”

- “Why does resource allocation in software help me meet deadlines better?”
- “How can data analytics from the software influence my decision-making?”

These follow-up questions are informed by what people commonly ask and the different ways the model can build on its initial response. When used strategically, these suggestions can help you comprehensively cover a topic and build interlinked content clusters that inform AI models.

Conduct competitive analysis in AI answers

Another effective tactic is to conduct competitive analysis within AI results. Search for different query variations and see what sources are cited, just as you’d analyze what sites rank on Google results.

Perplexity and Copilot—and increasingly ChatGPT and Google Gemini—provide multiple citations or source links within a single response, so look out for brands and specific content that are repeatedly referenced.

How do CFOs evaluate budgeting software

Answer Sources - 16 Tasks

1  **Prophix**
prophix.com/blog/21-best-b...

Top 21 Business Budgeting Software for CFOs - Prophix

Assess 21 top budgeting platforms that can elevate your financial leadership, streamline planning, improve accuracy, and achieve financial excellence.



2  **Abacum.io Software**
abacum.ai/blog/cfo-budge...

CFO Budget Planning: Smarter Forecasting Strategies | Abacum

Learn other CFO budget planning strategies to align financial goals with business strategy. Learn key methods, avoid common pitfalls, and improve execution.



3  **docuphase**
docuphase.com/blog/cfos-guid...

A CFO's Guide to Effective Annual Budget Planning and Management

4  **Full Scale**
fullscale.io/blog/cfo-guide...

A CFO's Guide to Predictable Development Spending with Sample ...

Transform your development spending with our proven budget framework and sample template. Optimize costs, improve predictability, and maximize ROI.



5  **Drivetrain**
drivetrain.ai/post/cfo-best-...

CFO best practices for more strategic business budgeting - Drivetrain

Tired of static plans and last-minute reforecasting? Learn the best practices successful finance leaders follow to plan with precision and flexibility.



For instance, if you ask Perplexity, “How do CFOs evaluate budgeting software?” it’s going to cite a handful of sites. Study the ones that appear and evaluate:

- What queries are they covering?
- How is their content structured?
- Are they focused on product comparisons, feature summaries, or educational content?

- And, importantly, what types of content does AI seem to prioritize (e.g., detailed guides, quick-reference answers, or something else entirely)?

This kind of insight directly informs your content strategy and helps you gain a competitive edge at AEO. It allows you to better understand the types of sources models prefer for your target queries and identify opportunities to create content to stand out.

Expand research beyond AI

Beyond using AI for research, it's important to look at conversational search trends more broadly. Many SEO tools and analytics platforms now provide data on question-focused queries. For instance, Google Search Console shows long-tail query data (likely from voice searches) that can hint at conversational usage.

Additionally, community forums like Reddit and Quora are great for discovering how real people phrase their questions. These sites often contain full-sentence, natural-language queries that are similar to what someone might ask an AI platform. Compiling such questions helps you map out the landscape of user intent in your niche.

Explore internal data sources

Finally, leverage any available data your company has, such as website chatbot or site search logs. The questions users ask might mirror how they phrase queries on a general AI platform and reveal what information they want to know about your brand.

And of course, there is Google Analytics. If your site gets visitors from Copilot on Bing or Google AI Overviews (AIOs), you can glean (to some extent) what queries led them there. For example, if you notice traffic coming from Bing with unusually long query strings, it's likely from conversational AI searches, although it won't be specifically noted.

Summary: A Step-by-Step AI Query Research Checklist

In traditional SEO, keyword research is a rather straightforward process. Semrush, Ahrefs, and similar solutions output a list of search terms and you target the ones that are most relevant with the highest search volumes.

AEO query research is not a perfect science. Since we provided multiple ways to discover what people are asking about and how they're phrasing their questions, let's conclude by recapping the different tactics:

- **Analyze AI outputs:** Start with a broad query and review AI-generated answers to understand what questions users commonly ask.
- **Note suggested questions:** Review the follow-up queries recommended by Perplexity and Copilot.
- **Perform competitive analysis:** Investigate cited and referenced sources to learn which content AI prioritizes for specific queries.
- **Monitor search trends:** See what long-tail, conversational queries are bringing visitors to your site via traditional search.
- **Explore community forums:** Discover natural-language queries that users pose on platforms such as Reddit and Quora.
- **Analyze AI-driven traffic:** Identify queries from AI-generated search traffic using Google Analytics (GA4).
- **Leverage internal logs:** Analyze data from your own site's chatbot and internal search logs for query insights.
- **Reverse engineer AI responses:** Study responses and their referenced sources to look for informational gaps and understand what type of content AI prioritizes.

As we transition from SEO to AEO, we can no longer rely solely on keyword research tools to guide our efforts. Instead, we have to piece together information from multiple sources to understand how users are conversing with AI to get the information they need. Investing time in query research will help you build a comprehensive AEO strategy and, ultimately, create and structure content that surfaces in AI responses.

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CHAPTER 6

How to Write & Format Content for AEO

How Do You Create Content That AI Cites and References?

As more companies prioritize Answer Engine Optimization (AEO), search marketing becomes less about creating pages that rank and more about providing information that AI models can use and trust.

The goal is now to ensure your content is not only visible to AI but also chosen by AI. In other words, optimizing for AI search is about making your content machine-friendly (so AI can parse it) and authority-rich (so AI wants to use it).

How Can You Create Content That is Credible to AI?

No matter how well-crafted your content is, AI won't use it if it doesn't trust it. AI models are explicitly designed to avoid unreliable or misleading information. They have alignment mechanisms—reinforced by human feedback and safety filters—that steer them toward verified, reputable sources.

From a marketing standpoint, you must create content that AI considers credible, accurate, and safe.

Ensure factual accuracy

Start by ensuring your content is factually sound and up to date. AI cross-checks new information against its training data and what other sources say. If you present a dubious claim or an outlier statistic that isn't confirmed elsewhere, AI won't be compelled to feature it.

This doesn't mean you can't have a unique take or share original research (either can be very valuable, as we'll discuss). You just have to present alternative information in a credible way by using data to support your claim and clearly explaining your research methodology.

Meet content quality standards

AI models have content guidelines and guardrails that shape the type of information they are willing to surface. These standards are designed to promote accuracy and trust in their outputs and prevent them from sharing:

- extremist opinions
- overly promotional language
- content that appears spammy or manipulative

If your content is clickbaity or reads like a sales pitch, AI might classify it as low-quality. To avoid this:

- use an impartial tone or clearly state your perspective
- write with grammatical correctness
- match your style to the subject matter

Following any specific guidelines your type of content is supposed to adhere to, like Google's quality rater guidelines or academic writing standards, will also help AI have a credible view of your brand.

Avoid triggering safety filters

AI models will filter out sites containing certain topics or language. Their safety standards are designed to block content containing:

- hate speech
- disinformation
- overly controversial claims

This likely isn't an issue for most legitimate businesses but it's worth noting. The old marketing tactic of creating sensational or inflammatory content for clicks could backfire in AEO.

Integrate trust signals into your content

Trust signals help AI evaluate the reliability of your site. We'll cover this more later, but in general, aim to:

- Display author credentials

- Use data or sources to support your claims
- Ensure your site is well-designed and free of malicious ads or pop-ups (which AI associates with low-credibility sites)

Big picture, the goal is to establish your site as a reliable source of information within your industry or niche. Strive to create content that is factually accurate, aligns with the mainstream consensus, and includes the quality signals AI values.

How Can You Create Content that is Authoritative to AI?

As AEO overtakes SEO, authority is no longer about how well-known your site is or the number of backlinks it has. Rather, the concept of “authoritative content” is more holistic and information-centric. There are several factors that make content a go-to source when AI is answering a user query.

In-depth and detailed

Authoritative content thoroughly addresses the overall topic and related subtopics. AI loves in-depth content because it likely touches on the user's specific query at some point while including supplemental information it can use to build on its initial response.

For example, a guide titled “Complete Beginner’s Guide to Organic Gardening” that spans seed selection, soil preparation, pest control, and seasonal tips is very much authoritative. It could be used to answer a broad question (“How do I start an organic garden?”) and a specific follow-up question (“How do I organically handle pests on tomato plants?”) because it contains both answers.

But remember that detailed content also must be clear. A 5,000-word rambling piece is not authoritative just because it’s long. It needs structure (clear sections, headings, and a summary or table of contents) so AI can pinpoint the relevant parts.

Expertise and accuracy

Content written by subject matter experts—or at the very least, content demonstrating expert knowledge—is recognized as authoritative by AI. Authority comes across in the level of detail, accuracy of terminology, and inclusion of relevant, factual information.

Consider an article detailing a new medical treatment that references clinical trial results and uses an academic tone. Such content signals subject-matter expertise to AI.

Even if your brand isn't widely known, authority can still be established through thoughtful writing. Be sure to clearly define terms, provide context and rationale behind facts, and meticulously avoid errors or oversimplifications.

If you have subject matter experts on your team, encourage them to author or thoroughly review your content. While AI might not directly recognize an author's credentials (such as the fact that they have an advanced degree), their expertise will come across in the knowledge they share.

However, if the AI model's training data includes your website or other authoritative sources featuring your experts, it can associate their names and professional reputations with the content, further elevating its perceived credibility.

Always remember that AI has been extensively trained on high-quality content from around the web. This breadth of information enables it to discern whether your content genuinely reflects expertise or was written by someone lacking a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

Trustworthiness and reputation

While domain authority isn't a huge factor in AEO, AI does weigh the source of the content. This is where off-page signals and your brand's reputation intertwine with on-page content. If your site or author is well-regarded (in the real world or as reflected by mentions on other sites), AI is more likely to treat your content as authoritative (we'll discuss brand mentions more in a future chapter).

From a content creation standpoint, you can bolster trustworthiness by being transparent and objective. Acknowledge counterpoints or limitations where relevant. After all, exploring a topic from all angles demonstrates expertise.

Additionally, consistently review existing content to ensure it's up to date. Include a "last updated" date on your articles to signal freshness to both AI and users, and note the year when citing data (e.g., "As of 2025"). Keeping content current is especially important for building authority on time-sensitive matters.

Alignment with E-E-A-T principles

Google's Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness (E-E-A-T) framework likely factors into AI's evaluation of authority. There is a lot to cover on E-E-A-T that we'll get to in a future chapter but be aware that many of its tenets overlap with what we've just outlined:

- Content is written by someone with knowledge/experience
- Content is presented in a way that exudes authority
- Content is detailed and trustworthy

When an AI platform strives to give a user an accurate answer, it will lean toward sources with these characteristics. When reviewing your content, ask yourself if it meets all four points in Google's quality standards. If it does, you're likely in good shape for AEO.

Ultimately, high-quality content is authoritative content. It's genuinely useful, accurate, and comprehensive. And because it meets these guidelines, AI models find it useful when responding to user queries.

How Do You Format Content for AEO?

Now that we know what AI values from a content perspective, let's get practical. How should you write and format your content to maximize the chances that AI presents it to a user when responding to their query?

Answer the user's question directly and up front

Every piece of content you produce should respond to a specific user query, and you should answer their question as directly as possible, ideally at the top of the content. Start by phrasing the page title as a question, like "What is Quantum Computing?", and include a concise summary that answers it clearly in the first few sentences.

That way, when someone asks AI to define quantum computing, your page has a ready-made sentence that it can lift or paraphrase.

Both AI models and readers appreciate when you get to the point. We're not saying you should oversimplify or limit your content, especially since detail-rich information is also important for AEO. It just means you should answer the question right away, then go deeper into the topic.

Use clear, structured formatting

AI prefers easy-to-follow content that is logically organized. To make writing accessible to models, you should:

- Include a table of contents at the beginning of your article. This provides AI with an overview of your content structure.
- Segment your articles into sections using heading tags (H2s and H3s). Each section should cover a specific subtopic or follow-up question that users ask AI.
- Use question-style subheadings, such as “How can you reduce onboarding time?” This format helps AI match user queries to precise sections in your content.
- Highlight information in bulleted or numbered lists when appropriate. Specific facts or steps in this format are easy for AI to scan and extract.
- Present data in both HTML tables and on-page text (e.g., “In 2025, X increased to 5%, while Y remained at 3%, as indicated in the table above.”). This dual format allows AI to reference either the structured format or the written summary.

By optimally presenting your content, you help AI easily interpret the information and increase the likelihood it gets referenced in responses.

Write in a straightforward and neutral style

An AI-friendly writing style is simple, direct, and unambiguous. It’s important to avoid long, complex sentences that might confuse AI models or human readers. Instead, break down complicated ideas into concise sentences (or bullet points, as we just covered).

Additionally, consistently use official names and titles throughout your content. For instance, repeatedly refer to legislation by its formal name, like “the Affordable Care Act (ACA),” rather than switching between informal phrases like “this legislation” or “healthcare reform.” Official names and titles help AI connect every piece of your content to its core theme—in this case, the Affordable Care Act—and directly reuse specific parts in responses. Similarly, be sure to clearly define acronyms at least once in your text so AI has context when encountering abbreviated terms.

Lastly, a straightforward writing style helps AI correctly interpret your content’s intent. Avoid sarcasm, irony, complex terms, and confusing phrasing such as negatives or double

negatives (e.g., “I don’t disagree” or “not uncommon”). Instead, use clear language that enhances readability and leaves little room for misinterpretation.

Naturally incorporate relevant keywords and synonyms

We’ve already covered that repeating keywords in content isn’t effective in AEO. That said, it’s still important to include precise terms or phrases that are likely part of AI prompts.

For example, explicitly stating “One way to improve the onboarding experience for new employees is to implement a mentorship program” is better than a vague statement like, “One way to improve the process is to implement a mentorship program,” as the first example directly addresses a potential user query (“How can I improve the onboarding experience for new employees?”).

Additionally, using synonyms or closely related terms ensures you cover various ways a query might be phrased and helps AI recognize the core theme without sacrificing readability.

For instance, using variations like “employee onboarding,” “new hire orientation,” and “training programs” in the same piece gives AI multiple entry points to surface your content when users are searching with different wording.

Again, AI is sophisticated enough to understand context without relying on exact keyword matches. Prioritize thorough and clear answers while naturally including the different terms your target audience is searching for.

Prioritize factual accuracy and consistency

Make sure every statistic and fact in your content is verified, current, and properly attributed. Always double-check numbers, clearly state the year (e.g., “As of 2024...”), and link to the original source when possible (or a generally authoritative source for widely-referenced facts).

Furthermore, present data and claims with appropriate nuance. Acknowledge uncertainty or contrasting opinions rather than making absolute statements. Taking these additional steps enhances your content’s reliability and increases the likelihood of AI inclusion.

In fields like finance, healthcare, or law, factual accuracy is especially critical. AI is selective about sources in these sensitive areas and tends to only use trusted sites and publications as references.

List FAQs and summary bullet points

Adding an FAQ section at the end of your content helps AI match user queries to precise answers. Write the questions in a natural-language format, such as “How long does the onboarding process typically take?” or “What’s the average cost of implementing a mentorship program?”, as this mirrors how users phrase their queries to AI (**Tip: Perplexity provides follow-up questions you can target after its initial response**).

Be sure to mark up this section with FAQPage schema. This reinforces to AI that the content is question-answer pairs it can reference.

Similarly, including a bullet point summary at the end of the page gives AI a concise list of standalone facts to work with. This list should highlight the core takeaways or datapoints you want AI to recognize and cite.

Together, FAQs and summary bullet points emphasize important information and offer AI bite-sized content that it can pull from when it needs to provide a to-the-point answer.

Include an author bio

An author bio provides trust signals that help AI evaluate the credibility of your content. When AI models consider what sources to use, they favor content written by individuals with relevant expertise, credentials, and overall authority on the topic.

Include a short bio at the end of your article that highlights the author’s qualifications and experience. A simple line like “Jane Doe is a licensed nutritionist with 10 years of experience helping clients lead healthy lifestyles” can significantly boost credibility.

To further enhance trust, use Person schema to mark up the author bio and link to their Wikipedia page, LinkedIn, or other external profiles. This helps the AI model understand who they are and associate them as an expert on the topic at hand.

Summary: Structuring Content for AEO

The way you structure a page helps AI models navigate the content and pinpoint relevant information to cite. Here's a quick checklist to follow when optimizing your content for AI search:

- **Title tag & headline:** Phrase both as the primary natural-language question you're targeting (e.g., "What is Answer Engine Optimization?") to align the content to the user query.
- **Direct answer:** Provide a 1–3 sentence answer to the primary query you're targeting at the top of the page.
- **Last updated date:** Include the date the content was last revised to signal freshness to AI.
- **Table of contents:** Use a TOC with anchors to outline the content and guide AI models to specific sections.
- **Follow-up questions as H2s and H3s:** Phrase subsection headings as specific natural-language questions users ask AI.
- **Data visuals and tables:** Present data in HTML tables with descriptive text to emphasize key facts.
- **Outbound links:** Cite original or authoritative sources for data and facts to reinforce the credibility of your content.
- **FAQs section:** Include a block of common follow-up questions with short answers to comprehensively cover different queries on a topic.
- **Summary:** Provide a concise bullet point list of key takeaways to help AI identify and cite the main points.
- **Author bios with credentials:** Include author names, credentials, and links to external profiles (like LinkedIn) to establish authority on the topic.
- **Structured data and schema:** Use schema (e.g., FAQPage, Person) to help AI understand your content's structure.

CHAPTER 7

The Types of Content That Perform Best for AEO

What Content Surfaces in AI Answers?

For years, one of the main purposes of marketing content was to drive website traffic. We'd write blog posts and landing pages with targeted keywords and hope they appeared on page one of Google.

But that strategy isn't as fruitful as it once was. People are increasingly using ChatGPT and other AI platforms to find information. And even when they do Google something, AI Overviews (AIOs) provide a concise answer to their question in a section that dominates the top half of the page.

The new goal for marketers is to create content for Answer Engine Optimization (AEO), not SEO. That means providing AI models with the information needed to answer users' queries—and in return—earning a citation or brand mention.

In this chapter, we'll explore the different types of content that support an AEO strategy and provide a pathway for surfacing in AI answers. For each one, I explain the type of query it matches, provide formatting tips, and include relevant Schema markup to incorporate.

FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)

FAQ-style content perfectly aligns with how users prompt AI and how AI responds. When someone asks a specific question, models often look for web content with similar phrasing that is accompanied by a concise answer.

What are best practices for creating FAQ content for AI?

Properly structuring your question-and-answer pairs increases the chances of being cited in AI answers. For example, a question like "What is usage-based pricing?" followed by a direct answer such as "Usage-based pricing is a billing model where customers are charged based on how much they use a product or service" is easy for AI to identify and extract.

- Answer high-intent questions that respond to the type of queries your audience asks AI.
- Use a basic Q&A format. Write each question with straightforward, natural-language phrasing.
- Include brief, factual answers beneath each question—ideally 1-3 sentences long.
- Provide only a direct answer. You can add nuance, context, or examples in the supporting body copy.
- Write answers in a neutral, authoritative tone that mirrors how a knowledgeable person would respond.
- Use FAQPage Schema markup to help AI identify the page as a collection of question-answer pairs.

Product Pages

Product pages contain the exact facts AI models look for when answering buying-intent questions like “What marketing automation platforms offer SMS features?” or “How much does [Company Name] cost?”

To answer these questions and capitalize on the interest from potential buyers, product pages should include core features, use cases, pricing, integrations, and other relevant information—all in a well-organized format.

What are best practices for creating product pages for AI?

AI models rely on product pages to pull accurate, brand-provided answers about your offering. Clearly formatting this content helps ensure your product shows up correctly in summaries, comparisons, and recommendations generated by AI.

- Structure pages with clearly labeled sections, ideally using question-based headers, to help AI identify and cite specific information.
- Use bullet points to list features and benefits so AI can easily extract them.
- Be explicit with key facts. Use standalone statements like “Supports up to 50 team members per workspace” rather than burying important details in body copy.

- Avoid marketing jargon and clearly articulate functionality and differentiators (e.g., “Integrates natively with Slack, Google Drive, and Salesforce. No third-party connectors needed”).
- Include pricing, plan tiers, and usage caps in simple language. Providing pricing on your site ensures AI retrieves the correct information when prospects ask about cost.
- Highlight customer ratings and reviews from third-party sites and mark them up with Schema.
- Include an FAQ section that addresses common questions potential buyers have. This content can surface in specific queries users ask about your product.
- Apply Product, Software Application, Price, and FAQ Schema to tag relevant content on the page.

Comparison Pages

When potential buyers ask AI to compare products or solutions, models look for accurate information that highlights key differences. You can create comparison pages that show how your product stacks up against competitors in terms of features, pricing, support, and integrations, positively influencing their perception during the evaluation stage.

What are best practices for creating comparison pages for AI?

Comparison pages shape how AI presents your product in side-by-side assessments. Optimally presenting information helps models pull brand-favorable insights when users ask which solution is better.

- Be objective. AI models are more likely to trust and cite content that acknowledges trade-offs between products and presents a balanced view.
- Include a short summary of each product at the top of the page to help AI understand what each one does.
- Use a consistent format to highlight differences on every comparison page. HTML tables and bullet points work best.

- In tables, include columns for each product and rows for key criteria like features, pricing, security, support, and other categories that are relevant to potential buyers.
- Keep descriptions short, factual, and easy to scan.
- Repeat your product name and competitor's name to help AI match specific sections to user queries.
- Link to deeper product or support pages so AI can pull additional context if needed.
- Add Product and other relevant schema where applicable to help AI interpret key information.

Lists & Rankings

Lists and rankings help answer common AI prompts like “What are the top customer support chatbot solutions?” AI models frequently pull from this type of content to provide curated recommendations to potential customers.

What are best practices for creating lists and ranking content for AI?

Vendor roundups and ranked lists are go-to formats for helping your product surface in AI answers to research-focused queries. Summarizing specific features, benefits, and drawbacks helps AI respond to “best solutions” and “top tools” prompts.

- Position your product as the top choice but avoid overly promotional language. AI models favor balanced assessments and are more likely to cite rankings that present all options fairly.
- Include a short introductory section before the list to provide context on what the content covers.
- Give each product entry a 1-3 sentence overview that summarizes exactly what it does.
- Use numbered or bulleted formatting for each product. Including or HTML tags is ideal.

- Include sub-bullets that cover key details like features, pricing, and use cases, in addition to overall strengths and weaknesses.
- Focus each bullet point on product differentiators. Mention standout features, ideal use cases, or pricing tiers that set it apart from the others on the list.
- Don't shy away from noting limitations. Briefly mentioning drawbacks (e.g., higher pricing, fewer integrations) shows objectivity and increases the chance of citation.
- Apply Item List Schema where relevant, though well-structured HTML lists are often sufficient.

Use Case & Industry Pages

Use case and industry-focused content answers contextual questions like “Which employee engagement platform supports distributed workforces?” or “What bookkeeping software is best for restaurants?” AI models rely on this information to respond to prompts tied to real-world scenarios.

What are best practices for creating use case and industry pages for AI?

Use case and industry pages give AI the details it needs to deliver answers that connect your product to specific problems and needs. When crafted effectively, this content can surface in discovery and evaluation-focused queries.

- Create standalone pages that focus on specific use cases and industries (e.g., “What project management platform supports hybrid team collaboration?” or “What payroll software works best for healthcare providers?”).
- Include subsections, with headings phrased as natural-language questions, that cover features or benefits applicable to the use case or industry.
- Acknowledge specific challenges and how your product addresses them in each subsection, ideally with metrics or concrete outcomes.
- Include mini cases and data points from real customers. This could potentially boost Experience, Expertise, Authority, and Trust (E-E-A-T) signals, which AI values when assessing content to cite.

- Maintain a solution-oriented tone. Be clear and helpful, without being overly promotional.
- Add a brief FAQ section at the end with answers to follow-up questions related to the use case or industry.
- Use Solution, FAQ, and other relevant Schema markup to help AI interpret the content's structure and purpose.

Research Reports & Original Data

AI prioritizes sources that support claims with real data. Publishing original research, benchmarks, or survey results enhances your brand's credibility and authority, increasing the likelihood of being cited for factual insights.

What are best practices for creating research reports and original data for AI?

Data-driven resources are one of the most valuable forms of content for AEO. When the findings are compelling and supported by a transparent methodology, they become a go-to source when AI models need quantifiable metrics to support answers.

- Start with an executive summary or key findings section that provides the main takeaways upfront, ideally in a bullet point format.
- Describe your research methodology. Explain when and how the raw data was collected and who exactly provided it.
- Highlight important stats in HTML tables and use bold text or call-out boxes.
- Explain what the data means, not just what it shows. This helps AI models elaborate on the numbers and figures.
- Include the publication year in the title (e.g., "2025 AI Marketing Trends Report") and date-stamp all data points in the text.
- Update the findings at least once a year. AI models prioritize fresh content, especially when providing data.
- Publish the report directly on your website. AI can't access content that is locked behind lead generation forms.

- Write in an analytical, research-report style. Don't promote your product or include brand messaging.
- Apply Dataset, Report, and other relevant Schema markup to help AI recognize the page as a data source.

Thought Leadership Articles

Thought leadership content answers broad questions like “Where is the SaaS industry heading?” or “What AI trends will impact marketing in 2025?” AI models prioritize sources that demonstrate E-E-A-T, especially when responding to queries that call for expert insights.

What are best practices for creating thought leadership content for AI?

Thought-leadership content positions the prominent people in your company as credible voices in the space. As AI comes to identify them as industry thought leaders, it will tap into their content when it needs an expert perspective or forward-looking commentary.

- Start with a clear introduction that states the thesis or central question that will be answered.
- Present each major idea or prediction in its own paragraph or section to make it easy for AI to summarize.
- Support key points with real-world examples or personal anecdotes to provide E-E-A-T signals.
- Reference your company's original research when relevant. This reinforces credibility and provides AI with data to support claims.
- Attribute and link to the original source of any external data or ideas you include.
- Write in a professional, conversational tone to match how AI presents high-level insights.
- Include a bio that highlights the author's expertise and links to their LinkedIn, Wikipedia page, or other external profile.
- Apply Article, Blog Posting, and Author Schema to signify the content type and author credentials to AI.

How-To Guides & Tutorials

How-to content provides AI with the step-by-step instructions needed to walk users through a specific process. “How do I...” or “What’s the best way to...” are some of the most common formats people use when prompting AI.

What are best practices for creating how-to guides and tutorials for AI?

Well-organized tutorials make it easy for AI to find actionable steps and provide a helpful response. Whether it’s educational (e.g., “How to calculate churn rate in SaaS”) or product-specific (e.g., “How to integrate [Product Name] API with Salesforce”), this content type is one of the most reliable ways to surface in procedural answers.

- Start with a short introduction that states what the guide will help the user accomplish.
- Include a summary or quick-answer box at the top that outlines the process in 2-3 sentences.
- Include a list of prerequisites or materials the user will need (if applicable).
- Break down the process into logical steps using numbered lists (1, 2, 3...) or bullet points.
- Keep each step focused on a single action or idea.
- Use simple phrasing. The content should be easy for your audience to understand.
- Start each step with a verb like “Click” or “Navigate to” to emphasize action.
- Add screenshots or diagrams with descriptive captions to provide visual instructions when possible.
- Add How To Schema to indicate to AI that your page contains step-by-step instructions.

Troubleshooting Guides

Similar to how-to guides and tutorials, troubleshooting guides answer common questions users ask AI. However, the purpose of this content is to solve problems for existing customers, not to educate prospective buyers. Their queries often focus on challenges

like “Why am I getting Error 502 in [Product Name]?” or “How do I resolve permission denied errors when inviting teammates?”

What are best practices for creating troubleshooting guides for AI?

Troubleshooting guides should cover solutions to product issues like workflow errors, failed integrations, permission errors, or account setup problems. Optimally formatting this content helps AI models quickly surface support content that comes directly from your brand.

- Focus each guide on a specific issue or question your customers have. Connect with your support team to identify recurring problems.
- Start with a short explanation of the problem and what it typically means to help AI connect your content to the user query.
- Use titles that match real user queries and are phrased as natural-language questions.
- Keep the content focused on the issue at hand. AI needs to provide customers with a quick and helpful solution.
- Present the solution using a numbered list (for step-by-step instructions) or bullet points (for alternate fixes or different options).
- Segment the guide into “Issue,” “Solution,” and “Additional Info” sections to make the content easy to parse.
- Add an FAQ section at the bottom to cover similar issues or follow-up steps if the problem persists.
- Link to related help docs or other deep-dive resources when relevant.
- Apply Tech Article or How To Schema to help models recognize the page as technical support content.

Glossaries & Definitions

Glossary content answers the “What is...” questions users often ask AI when trying to understand technical or industry-specific terms. AI models look for accurate and concise definitions they can use directly in responses.

What are best practices for creating glossaries and definitions for AI?

You can create glossaries to define complex terms related to your business (think “SAML,” “churn rate,” or proprietary product features). This content helps AI provide users with quick answers and positions your brand as a trusted source of information within your niche.

- Phrase each entry as a natural-language question (e.g., “What is churn rate?”) and follow it with a concise, 1-2 sentence answer.
- Lead with the core definition in the first sentence, then provide context or elaboration in the second (e.g., “Churn rate is the percentage of customers who stop using a product over a given period. It’s commonly used to measure customer retention in subscription-based businesses.”)
- Use clear terminology and strive to provide the user with a satisfactory definition. Avoid jargon, circular definitions, or overly complex phrasing.
- Define acronyms on first use and explain their relevance or function (e.g., “What is SAML?”—“SAML (Security Assertion Markup Language) is a protocol used to securely exchange authentication data between parties.”)
- Organize glossary entries alphabetically. Either on a single page that includes an index at the top (with anchor links to specific definitions) or as individual pages that each have their own URL.
- Use dfn tags in HTML to indicate definitions or apply FAQ Schema if using a Q&A format.

Explainers for Complex Topics

AI models frequently get queries like “What is lead scoring?” or “Explain how API rate limiting works” when users are trying to understand complex or technical concepts. While glossaries provide brief explanations and FAQs offer quick answers to specific questions, explainer articles go deeper, giving readers a full understanding of a topic from the ground up.

What are best practices for creating complex topic explainers for AI?

Explainer articles provide the opportunity to surface when AI provides detailed answers. By comprehensively covering a specific topic, you help models extract just the right level of detail depending on the query.

- Open with a clear definition or a 1-2 sentence overview of the topic. This content can potentially be the direct answer AI uses.
- Logically structure the content. Something like “Definition” → “Why it Matters” → “How it Works” → “Examples” → “Key Takeaways.”
- Use subheadings phrased as natural-language questions so each section can be used for specific queries.
- Include analogies or real-world examples to make abstract ideas more understandable. These, too, can surface in AI answers.
- Use bullet points for lists, frameworks, or core concepts to improve scannability.
- Include transitional cues like “In simple terms...” or “To put it another way...” to flag plain-language explanations.
- Write in an educational, informational tone. Come across as helpful, not overly technical or academic.
- Add a brief FAQ at the end to provide snippet-style answers to follow-up questions.

Case Studies & Customer Stories

Case studies and customer stories help AI answer prompts like “Can you give me an example of a SaaS company that has reduced churn by X%?” or “What results do fintech companies get from using [Product Name]?”

This content provides real-world proof of value and boosts E-E-A-T signals, making it ideal for citation in outcome-focused responses.

What are best practices for creating case studies and customer stories for AI?

Case studies are impactful for AEO because they support your messaging with tangible examples. AI models can extract credible anecdotes to use when answering questions that require real-world evidence.

- Start with a brief overview of the customer (e.g., industry, company size, location) and the challenges they faced. This gives AI the context it needs to understand the outcomes that follow.
- Include specific, quantifiable metrics (e.g., “Reduced churn by 28%” or “Achieved a 3X ROI in the first 90 days”).
- Prominently present metrics in standalone paragraphs with bold text and in well-structured HTML tables.
- Include impactful quotes. Short, insightful statements may be cited by AI.
- Share the product benefits the customer experienced but avoid overly promotional language.
- Summarize the customer's key wins in a bullet-point format. These could potentially surface in bite-sized AI answers.

Give Your Brand Multiple Opportunities to be a Trusted Source for AI Answers

AEO is all about making your content trustworthy, understandable, and reusable to AI. By aligning with how AI answers questions, you increase the odds your brand shows up at every stage of the buyer journey.

Visibility in AI responses isn't random. It favors the brands that build for it.

CHAPTER 8

The Role of E-E-A-T in AEO

Introducing Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness (E-E-A-T)

In previous chapters, I've alluded to the importance of Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness (E-E-A-T). It's now time to explore this concept in detail, as it should be your core framework when producing any content for Answer Engine Optimization (AEO).

The idea was first introduced by Google in 2022 and has since become the standard by which content quality is judged—first by search engine algorithms and now by AI.

With AI models striving to provide accurate and reliable answers to users' queries, hitting the mark on all four tenets of E-E-A-T increases the likelihood your content will be featured in responses.

What is E-E-A-T and How Does it Impact AEO?

When AI is faced with a question, it collects information from multiple sources and distills the best pieces into a concise response. Our goal as search marketers is to produce valuable content that the model deems worthy of inclusion in its output, hopefully accompanied by a citation or brand mention.

As AI evaluates content, it uses E-E-A-T as an overarching filter for quality and favors sources that excel in each area.

Experience

First-hand, personal experience with the subject. Content backed by case studies, real examples, or hands-on insights tends to be preferred by AI models.

For example, a blog post on cybersecurity written by someone who solved a real data breach, with step-by-step instructions on how they did it, shows experience that AI values.

Expertise

Subject-matter knowledge and qualifications. AI models prefer sources written or reviewed by individuals with clear, verifiable backgrounds on the topic. Including author bylines, bios, and credentials on the page and within the text helps signal this expertise.

For instance, an article on heart health authored by a cardiologist, with their expertise made clear, is the type of content AI is willing to cite in a response.

Authoritativeness

Reputation and recognition in the field. Brands or authors that are widely cited, linked to, or officially recognized (in knowledge graphs and across the open web) carry authority.

Take a climate report from a respected research institute. Such content is more likely to be pulled into an AI answer than an unknown blog, even if both pieces have similar information.

Trustworthiness

Accuracy, transparency, and reliability. AI strongly prefers content that is factually correct and verifiable. This means content should cite reliable sources for claims, be free of biases or misinformation, and make its intent clear (e.g., is the content informational, editorial, or promotional?)

For example, an AI model answering a medical query will highlight content that includes clinical studies or official health organization data and clear disclaimers, rather than an article with unsubstantiated opinions.

As indicated above, the common thread across E-E-A-T is credibility. AI models depend on the signals we provide, both in our content and through metadata, to assess whether we demonstrate genuine experience, verified expertise, established authority, and overall trustworthiness.

Summary: What is E-E-A-T and how does it impact AEO?

- AI pulls from many sources and prioritizes content it deems credible and high quality

- E-E-A-T—Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness—acts as a framework for evaluating content
- First-hand experience (e.g., examples and case studies) signals credibility to AI
- Including bylines and bios helps AI understand who created the content
- Brands and individuals with strong reputations are more likely to be cited
- Factual accuracy is essential to building trust with AI systems
- Clearly stating the purpose of content helps AI assess intent and reliability
- Metadata and structured data help reinforce E-E-A-T signals behind the scenes
- Demonstrating credibility across all four E-E-A-T factors increases your chances of inclusion in AI answers

How Do Different AI Platforms Evaluate E-E-A-T?

The four major AI platforms all share the goal of delivering accurate answers, which leads them to prefer content with strong E-E-A-T signals. However, each one differs slightly in how it gathers information and evaluates content, requiring marketers to fine-tune their approach for each model.

The role of E-E-A-T in ChatGPT optimization

ChatGPT generates answers using a mix of its knowledge database and live web access. Because it was initially trained on vast segments of the internet, content that has been widely cited has a significant influence on its default answers.

That means if your site or data were referenced in many reputable places (news articles, academic papers, Wikipedia, etc.), the model likely “learned” from that information and views it as high quality.

However, ChatGPT does not always mention or cite sources in its responses. It won’t directly tell the user “this answer comes from this site” unless it’s prompted to or displaying results from a live web search. Instead, it combines information from its internal knowledge to present answers that reflect widely accepted facts.

This puts the onus on us as professional marketers to ensure our content aligns with the broader consensus and maintains a high standard of quality. If it diverges too far from what credible sources say, ChatGPT won't use it.

But if the content demonstrates subject matter expertise and reflects what the consensus agrees on, it has a better chance of being included in the pool of information ChatGPT pulls from.

Ultimately, the goal is to be part of ChatGPT's trusted knowledge ecosystem. This can be achieved by having your content cited by others, maintaining accuracy, and reinforcing well-established information with clarity and authority.

The role of E-E-A-T in Google AI Overviews and Gemini optimization

Google's AI Overviews (AIOs)—powered by its Gemini model—pull directly from Google's live web index. As a result, content must already meet Google's standards to be considered in AI responses.

That's where E-E-A-T comes in. Pages that demonstrate experience, expertise, authority, and trust are more likely to rank well, and those same signals influence whether they're selected for AI summaries.

When a user asks a question, Gemini often synthesizes content from several authoritative sites to generate a cohesive answer. For example, a question like, "How do electric cars work?" might pull information from both a leading engineering site and a major EV brand, both of which are sources Google already recognizes as valuable.

For sensitive queries, like those related to health or finance, the bar is even higher. Google uses a mix of human reviewers and AI models to ensure content meets strict E-E-A-T standards and highlights only top-quality sources.

The key for marketers is to follow Google's E-E-A-T standards to a tee. Pages with clear authorship, reputable citations, and high editorial standards have a better shot at appearing in AIOs and Gemini responses.

The role of E-E-A-T in Microsoft Copilot and Bing optimization

Microsoft Copilot combines the GPT-4 model with Bing's live search index. When a user submits a query, it performs a real-time Bing search and uses those results to generate a conversational answer.

That means Copilot uses Bing's ranking standards. While Microsoft speaks less explicitly about E-E-A-T, it favors relevant topics and fresh content while prioritizing pages with established credibility, similar to Google.

The difference is that Copilot places added emphasis on structured data and metadata. [If your site uses Schema markup](#) and includes clear author or publication details, the algorithm can better interpret and evaluate your content.

The Copilot interface also provides citations. It prefers content it can confidently quote or summarize and typically includes footnotes linking to trusted sources. That makes well-sourced, clearly written content more likely to be included.

To successfully be cited by Copilot, focus on E-E-A-T fundamentals, comprehensive markup, and well-structured content. Establish author with bylines and bios, add Schema for articles and authorship, and write in short, self-contained sections that are easy to quote.

The role of E-E-A-T in Perplexity AI optimization

Perplexity AI provides concise answers with multiple citations. It performs a real-time web search for every query, using its own index and Bing's search API to retrieve relevant content.

Because Perplexity supports its responses with visible sources, E-E-A-T plays a major role in what it selects. The platform wants users to be confident in its answers so it prefers authoritative, trustworthy sites.

For example, a question about climate change may surface results from NASA or leading science journals—sources that indicate accuracy and authority. Ultimately, Perplexity's reputation as a business depends on linking to reliable source material.

Content freshness matters, too. Since Perplexity runs a live search for each query, new content can appear in results as soon as it's indexed. Even if your site lacks strong domain authority, a timely, well-written article can still be included, provided it demonstrates E-E-A-T.

To optimize for Perplexity, focus on establishing your brand as a go-to source of information within your niche. Continuously creating content that is accurate, clear, and trustworthy increases the likelihood you get cited.

And because citations link directly to your site, succeeding on Perplexity can drive meaningful referral traffic.

What Are Strategies for Improving E-E-A-T for AEO?

I'd be remiss not to point out that the E-E-A-T concept is easy to understand in theory but difficult to apply in practice. After all, every marketer inherently understands that content needs to be high-quality and informative.

But beyond simply writing good content, what does it take to truly optimize for E-E-A-T? Let's explore some actionable strategies to strengthen your E-E-A-T signals and improve your content's chances of being featured by AI platforms.

Showcase author experience and credentials

Clearly indicate who is behind the content and why they are qualified to provide the information. Include author bylines with full names and titles, along with bios that specify their qualifications (e.g., "Jane Doe, Licensed Nutritionist with over a decade of clinical experience in dietary planning").

This establishes both experience and expertise. But you can even go deeper and mention firsthand insights in the content itself ("Based on my work with over one hundred clients...").

From a technical standpoint, use structured data (like Schema.org's "Person" and "Article" markup) to tag the author and their credentials. This enables AI to better understand who the author is and their domain of expertise, helping it build out the knowledge graph it draws from when generating responses.

Create transparent and objective content

Trustworthiness is earned through transparency. Always cite the sources for any data, quotes, or claims that aren't common knowledge.

When featuring your own data, explain your research methodology. If you conducted a study or survey, describe how you did it (e.g., "We surveyed 500 small business owners across five industries using an online questionnaire") and openly discuss any limitations or potential biases (e.g., results may not apply to larger companies).

For opinion pieces or reviews, disclose any personal involvement or conflicts of interest (e.g., “We received a review unit from the manufacturer”).

Also, make the timeliness of your information clear by including the initial publication date and any revision dates on articles. If you reference facts that could change over time, specify the point in time they reflect (e.g., “as of 2025…”).

This level of transparency signals that you’re striving to be an unbiased and timely source of information. AI models interpret these signals as markers of credibility and are more likely to treat your content and brand as a reliable source to feature in responses.

Cite and link to authoritative sources

Strengthen your content by referencing credible external sources. If you mention a statistic, link to the official report or organization that published it. If you discuss a concept, consider linking to a foundational study or a well-regarded resource that clearly explains it.

These outbound citations serve two purposes. First, they demonstrate that you’ve done your research, establishing expertise and trustworthiness with the AI model. Secondly, they associate your content with high-authority entities.

Citing authoritative sources makes your content more credible by extension. It signals to AI that your content belongs in the same informational tier as the trusted domains you reference, helping your site become an established resource for future responses.

You should always ensure your citations are relevant, add context, and come from high-quality sources (e.g., government sites, academic journals, industry leaders). This enhances the quality of your content and elevates your E-E-A-T status with AI models.

Demonstrate authoritativeness in your niche

Building brand authority is a long-term commitment. This effort requires continuously creating informative content on your site and strengthening your brand’s reputation across the web.

When it comes to content, strive to build detailed resources on all your key topics. Cover subtopics thoroughly and logically interlink different articles. This shows AI models that you have a broad and well-developed understanding of your subject matter and detailed information it can use in responses.

Beyond your own site, seek quality backlinks and mentions from trusted websites in your field. While AI doesn't treat a backlink itself as a sign of authority, the brand mention on its own indicates credibility. If multiple reputable sources reference your content, that strengthens your reputation with the AI model.

You should also work toward establishing a presence in AI's knowledge graph. This also takes time and effort but you can start by getting your organization listed on Wikipedia and using Schema markup to associate your content with recognized entities.

Reinforce E-E-A-T with structured data

Let's explore Schema's role in E-E-A-T in more detail. Structured data markup builds on your on-page content by signaling each of the four components in a way that AI models can easily interpret.

Start by marking up your content using appropriate Schema types. Use the "author" property to specify the creator's name and credentials (along with an on-page byline and bio, as we previously mentioned).

Pair this with "Person" Schema that includes "sameAs" links to the author's LinkedIn profile, personal website, or Wikipedia page to help AI understand who they are and what they're known for.

For brand-level credibility, use "Organization" Schema to provide foundational details like your company's name, founding date, logo, and affiliations. Combine this with "WebSite" Schema and verify ownership through Google Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools to help AI form a comprehensive understanding of your organization.

Structured data serves as a machine-readable summary of the information you want AI to know. Models rely on these details to validate facts, link identities, and, ultimately, determine when to reference your organization and subject matter experts on a given topic.

While structured data alone doesn't guarantee inclusion in AI responses, it reinforces your E-E-A-T signals. By clearly indicating the thought-leadership of your authors and your organization's standing within your field, you help AI models better evaluate your content's credibility and relevance.

Keep content accurate and up to date

Since AI models have to provide accurate responses, they prefer content that consists of current information. Keep an inventory of primary pages and regularly review them for outdated claims or stale data.

When you update a page, include a visible revision date. For example, an article marked “Updated June 2025” would likely be favored over a similar piece from 2019, even if both have comparable E-E-A-T signals. Search platforms like Google and Bing consider freshness as part of the content evaluation process (and, as we covered, leverage their traditional ranking systems for AI responses).

Accuracy is also directly tied to trust. Double-check statistics, sources, and factual claims. If AI models detect inconsistent or conflicting information across your site, they may deprioritize your content. On the other hand, content that is consistently correct builds a strong reputation over time.

A good practice is to set aside a few days every six months or so to audit your top-performing pages. Even a handful of minor updates could potentially have a significant impact on how AI views your brand.

Summary: How do you improve E-E-A-T for AEO?

- Add bylines and bios that explain who wrote the content
- Include author credentials to highlight subject-matter expertise
- Use Schema markup to tag authors and signal their identity to AI
- Cite reputable sources to support facts, data, and claims
- Add publish and revision dates to show content is current
- Reference foundational studies or authoritative publications in your field
- Organize content around core topics with strong internal linking
- Build a presence in the AI knowledge graph through structured metadata
- Earn brand mentions from credible third-party sites
- Mark up your organization with “Organization” and “WebSite” Schema
- Add “sameAs” links to author bios that connect to trusted profiles

- Review top-performing pages on a regular basis
- Update outdated claims, statistics, and links to maintain accuracy

Position your brand as a trusted source for AI answers

Strong E-E-A-T places your content in the pool of go-to resources that AI systems draw upon. It helps you send every possible signal—textual, technical, and contextual—that “this content is written by a knowledgeable, reliable source and can be trusted.” And that’s exactly what AI search models are looking for when they decide how to answer user questions.

CHAPTER 9

Leveraging Structured Data and Entities for AEO

Using Schema to Communicate with AI Models

As marketing teams begin to focus on Answer Engine Optimization (AEO), simply having great content isn't enough. AI models also rely on code-based cues and recognized entities to understand and surface information.

Structured data (like Schema.org markup) and entity metadata serve as the “language” through which websites communicate facts directly to AI. When used effectively, search marketers can ensure their content is truly understood by models.

What Schema Markup Should You Use for AEO?

Schema markup is a standardized format for classifying specific content on a webpage. It uses terminology from Schema.org (often via JSON-LD scripts) to label elements such as articles, products, events, reviews, organizations, and more within the code.

In traditional SEO, schema markup is known for enabling rich results (like star ratings or recipe cards in SERPs). In modern AEO, it plays a bigger role.

Schema directs AI to key details within your content and on your website. By adding the right markup, you're essentially speaking in a language that AI systems natively understand, rather than expecting them to infer meaning from standard, unstructured on-page text.

Google's AI Overviews (AIOs) rely heavily on structured data to categorize information and decide what to present in AI summaries. Implementing the appropriate schema can be the deciding factor between your content being included in a summary or omitted altogether.

Let's explore some common Schema markup types that should be part of your AEO strategy:

- **Organization (name, logo, url, contactPoint, sameAs):** Clearly associates content with your brand by specifying important company information and external profiles.
- **Article, BlogPosting (headline, author, datePublished, dateModified, image):** Provides clear context about articles and blog posts, including key publication details.
- **Person (name, jobTitle, affiliation, sameAs):** Clarifies the identity and expertise of content creators or individuals referenced (e.g., your internal thought leaders).
- **FAQPage (mainEntity):** Explicitly identifies sections structured as question-and-answer pairs.
- **HowTo (step, supply, tool, totalTime):** Defines step-by-step instructions, enabling AI to accurately present detailed processes.
- **Recipe (recipeIngredient, recipeInstructions, cookTime, nutrition):** Highlights cooking-specific details so AI can surface recipes in conversational answers.
- **Product (name, offers, price, availability, aggregateRating):** Describes key product attributes to assist with shopping queries.
- **Review, AggregateRating (ratingValue, reviewCount, bestRating, worstRating):** Conveys review and rating data that helps AI summarize sentiment and compare products or services.
- **Event (name, startDate, endDate, location):** Provides detailed event information for accurate AI responses.
- **LocalBusiness (name, address, openingHours, telephone, AEO):** Shares precise business details to support location-based AI responses.
- **VideoObject (name, description, uploadDate, thumbnailUrl, duration):** Clearly describes video content to improve visibility in AI-driven multimedia responses.
- **BreadcrumbList (itemListElement):** Clarifies your site's navigational structure, helping AI contextualize content across webpages.

- **Course (courseCode, coursePrerequisites, educationalCredentialAwarded, provider):** Explicitly defines educational content for queries related to training and online learning.
- **JobPosting (title, hiringOrganization, jobLocation, employmentType, baseSalary):** Highlights employment opportunities and makes them discoverable in AI-generated job search results.
- **SoftwareApplication (name, operatingSystem, applicationCategory, downloadUrl):** Clearly describes software products or apps for inclusion in vendor recommendations.
- **PodcastEpisode, PodcastSeries (name, description, episodeNumber, series):** Structures podcast metadata, helping AI surface relevant audio content.
- **MedicalCondition, Drug, MedicalProcedure (name, symptoms, treatment, dosageForm, procedureType):** Provides precise health-related information to accurately support medical queries.
- **QAPage (mainEntity):** Explicitly signals to AI that a page is structured around a single question with community answers (e.g., forums).

How Do You Include Structured Data in AEO Content?

When an AI model “reads” web content—whether it’s Google using its Multitask Unified Model (MUM) to better understand queries for AIOs or Bing’s infrastructure retrieving content to be interpreted by ChatGPT and Copilot—having structured data is like having signposts that highlight your content’s most important information.

First and foremost, structured data feeds factual information directly into AI. Unlike a traditional search snippet that just shows a few highlighted words, an AI answer often needs to provide an exact fact (e.g., a price or date). If your page includes that fact as plain text, the model has to comprehend what’s written and make a judgment call if it’s the answer.

But if you’ve also marked it up (e.g., using “priceCurrency” and “price” in a Product schema or “startDate” in an Event schema), AI can understand that fact with high confidence from the structured data.

Google's AIOs has already shown instances of pulling in product specs and details from schema markup when generating product summaries. Likewise, Microsoft Copilot (on Bing and within the Edge browser) uses structured information for quick answers about companies or people. [Microsoft has even confirmed that its AI model incorporates Schema.org markup.](#)

In a previous chapter, we've covered how FAQ and how-to content directly answers the questions users pose to AI. By using "FAQPage" schema, you help AI models identify question-answer pairs and use that information when answering a user's query. That way, the AI model doesn't have to analyze your prose to figure out that a certain sentence is a question and the following paragraph is its answer. It's explicitly flagged by the Schema.

The same goes for how-to content. A properly marked-up how-to article (with steps, tools, durations) enables AI to deliver a step-by-step solution and potentially credit your site in its response. In contrast, an unstructured article might be excluded since it requires AI to work much harder to extract the steps.

Structured data also improves AI recognition in a broader sense by matching your content to more queries. Let's say you specify that an article is about artificial intelligence in healthcare via schema ("about: AI in Healthcare" with links to relevant entities). By doing so, you're also increasing the chance that your article surfaces in a variety of AI + healthcare queries, even when the exact phrasing differs. This is because the model isn't relying on specific wording but rather recognizing the content's core entity/topic.

Entity-based recognition is particularly beneficial for long-tail queries or conversational questions that can be phrased in a variety of ways. Essentially, schema markup serves as expanded keywords, helping AI associate synonyms or related terms with your content.

For example, tagging a blog post with "diabetes" for "MedicalCondition" schema tells AI that the post is about diabetes even if it focuses on blood sugar issues. A response to a user query like, "What are the effects of diabetes?" could use your content since AI associates the detailed information (blood sugar issues) with the broad topic (diabetes).

To maximize the benefits of Schema, here are some tips for including it in your content:

- **Use the most specific schema types available:** Don't just settle for the generic "Article" schema if your content calls for a more specific subtype (e.g.,

“NewsArticle” for news content, “TechArticle” for technical documentation, “VideoObject” for videos, etc.). The more specific the type, the more context you give AI.

- **Include key properties and attributes:** Fill out all the important fields in your schema. For a product, that means “price,” “availability,” “brand,” “sku,” etc. For an article, ensure you have a “headline,” “description,” “author,” “datePublished,” and ideally an “about” or “keywords” field. Comprehensive schema equates to comprehensive understanding.
- **Keep schema updated and accurate:** AI models continuously learn from your structured data so update Schema as things change (e.g., a product going out of stock or an event date changing). Use automation feeds to keep data fresh and prevent AI from incorrectly citing your information. Bing’s team suggests using rapid indexing tools, like IndexNow, to quickly feed updates to LLMs.
- **Leverage identifiers for entities:** When possible, use identifiers like “@id” or “sameAs” to link to well-known sources. If you have a “Person” schema for an author, using these markups to link to their LinkedIn profile or Wikipedia page helps AI expand its knowledge graph for them as an entity.
- **Validate and test your structured data:** Use Google’s Rich Results Test or Schema markup validator tools to ensure your JSON-LD or microdata has no issues. While AI might be tolerant of minor errors, broken markup could prevent it from understanding what you intend it to. Clean schema, on the other hand, is definitely being ingested by algorithms.
- **Combine schema with quality content:** AI parses raw text along with your schema. If both are optimized, the chances of your content being cited are even greater. For example, presenting a statistic in an HTML table, calling it out within on-page text, and using markup like “FactCheck” or “Dataset” schema emphasizes its relevance to the model.
- **Monitor AI search results:** Keep an eye on how your content is appearing in the AI platforms you’re optimizing for. If you notice they are pulling incorrect info or missing something important that is on your page, that’s a cue to improve (or possibly expand) your structured data.

What Metadata Helps With AEO?

Metadata that benefits AEO extends beyond Schema markup and encompasses all signals embedded in your content. This includes HTML meta tags (titles and descriptions) and semantic HTML structure (headings, lists, tables) that organize information.

For example, consistently including your company name in page titles reinforces brand association for AI models (e.g., “2025 Marketing Trends | ExampleCorp Study”).

Additionally, crafting detailed meta descriptions provides concise summaries that AI models can use when generating snippets or short answers. Meta descriptions could even help with brand recognition if your company name is included, [something that is especially beneficial as zero-click searches become more common](#).

Header tags and structured content hierarchy also contribute to AI optimization. Logical headings (H2s and H3s), bullet points, and clearly formatted tables help AI parse content and identify relevant information.

Beyond Schema.org and on-page optimization, other metadata can also positively impact AEO. Open Graph tags and Twitter Card metadata, while primarily designed for social platforms, label content with key information like image, title, and description. Some AI platforms use these tags when generating previews or interpreting on-page content.

Public-facing knowledge sources like Google Business Profile and Wikipedia also act as supporting metadata by reinforcing brand identity and providing AI models with reliable external context about your organization.

Additionally, technical metadata like XML sitemaps, which include last modified dates, and content feeds, such as RSS or Atom, signal content updates and ensure AI models have access to the most current information.

While these complementary elements aren’t schema markup per se, they contribute to an ecosystem of structured signals that make your content easily understandable to AI algorithms. Together, all this metadata serves as a clarifying layer for AI. Adding these tags is a low-effort, high-impact strategy that goes a long way in getting your content included in AI answers.

Summary: Metadata for AEO

- Include your company name in page titles to reinforce brand recognition in AI answers.
- Write detailed meta descriptions that summarize content and include your brand name when possible.
- Use header tags, bullet points, and tables to help AI understand your content structure.
- Add Open Graph and Twitter Card metadata to label content with titles, images, and descriptions.
- Maintain external sources like Google Business Profile and Wikipedia to strengthen brand identity.
- Keep XML sitemaps and content feeds updated so AI models can access the latest content.
- Use metadata along with Schema markup to improve AI's comprehension of your content.

What Role Do Entities (People, Brands, and Topics) Play in AEO?

Back in 2012, Google coined the phrase “things, not strings,” as they began to prioritize real-world entities and their relationships over basic keyword strings. More than a decade later, this principle continues to ring true as search marketing moves toward AEO.

AI search is built on the premise of entities—people, places, organizations, concepts, or any other item that has a distinct meaning and can be described with attributes. Models seek to understand the entities mentioned in content—and the relationships between them—so they can provide users with detailed, accurate responses.

That means the people, brands, and topics mentioned on your site aren't just words to AI, they are nodes in an interconnected system of information, commonly referred to as a “knowledge graph.”

For example, Google’s Knowledge Graph contains hundreds of billions of facts about different entities, including well-known people, companies, products, landmarks, events, and even abstract concepts.

When a user enters a query, AI will parse it for known entities. For instance, if someone searches for “What impact did the Inflation Reduction Act have on solar panel adoption?”, AI understands that “Inflation Reduction Act” refers to specific 2022 U.S. legislation and “solar panel adoption” is part of the broader renewable energy domain.

By mapping the query to these known entities, it can connect the question to a wealth of related information, like laws that include clean energy incentives, implementation timelines, consumer behavior, and adoption rates for solar panels. The result is an information-rich response that answers the user’s question in detail.

This entity-focused approach applies to all sorts of searches. Consider a query like, “What’s the legal precedent for parody in U.S. copyright law?” Even if a particular case (say, *Campbell v. Acuff-Rose Music, Inc.*) isn’t explicitly part of the query, an AI system likely knows that it’s the key precedent associated with parody and fair use. It can then discover content that involves that case and related legal principles by drawing on its vast, interconnected knowledge graph.

In essence, AI is so sophisticated that it can connect the dots between the query and the entities that logically answer or relate to it. This has profound implications for AEO. Your content has a real chance of being surfaced, even if it doesn’t contain any of the terms used in the query. It only needs to reference the core entities and convey information that is contextually relevant to what the user wants to know.

Let’s go deeper and explore people, brands/organizations, and topics—the primary entities that search marketers should focus on.

People

AI recognizes individuals as entities with certain attributes. If your content cites a person, especially a notable figure or author, that connection can add context and authority in AI responses.

For instance, including a bio for an article author (and marking it up with “Person” schema) helps AI associate credibility or expertise with the content, especially if that person is already part of its broader knowledge graph.

Similarly, citing an expert within the content and explaining their qualifications helps AI connect that individual’s identity to the subject matter, potentially enhancing E-E-A-T by bringing authority to the topic.

Brands & organizations

Your brand itself is an entity. Ensuring that your website highlights key information about your organization (via “Organization” schema and supporting metadata) can solidify your presence in the knowledge graph.

Whenever your brand is mentioned, AI can connect that mention to the established entity (your company) and collect relevant information to share in responses.

For instance, if your company has an informative study you hope will surface in AI responses, being a recognized entity helps make that happen. AI will view your company as an established source within your industry and be more inclined to present data from the study for relevant queries.

You can also build out your brand entity by linking to official profiles. Using the “sameAs” property in “Organization” schema to point to your Wikipedia page, LinkedIn profile, or other well-known sources will tell AI that all those profiles represent the same entity, helping it form a deeper understanding of your brand.

Topics & concepts

Not every topic is a proper noun. However, many abstract concepts exist within knowledge graphs, and AI often connects these topics to related entities and categories.

When you write about a niche concept, consider whether it ties into other entities or a broader category. You can make that connection explicit by referencing well-known concepts and using schema properties like “about.”

For example, an article about a new marketing tactic (say, AI optimization) could include an “about” property linking to a more established concept on Wikipedia (like SEO). This way, even an emerging topic gets anchored to something the AI model recognizes, helping it build out its knowledge graph using your information.

A powerful capability of AI is how it infers relationships between entities. Search engines have spent years building relational databases (who is part of which organization, which products a brand offers, what events are associated with which places, and so on). When your content includes multiple entities, AI pays attention to how they’re connected.

If you publish blog posts that frequently mention your brand alongside a specific type of product or industry, you’re educating AI on your offering and the type of customers you serve. Over time, that helps establish your authority on relevant topics within your niche.

In fact, marketing teams that deliberately build their own “content knowledge graph” by linking topics, subtopics, and entities make it easy for AI systems to understand facts about their brand and expertise.

How Do You Highlight Entities in AEO Content?

From a practical AEO standpoint, connecting entities requires being explicit and consistent. Here are some tips for helping AI models clearly understand the people, organizations, and concepts mentioned in your content:

- Use the full names of people and organizations once or twice before switching to pronouns or abbreviations so AI doesn't have to make assumptions.
- Provide context for lesser-known entities on first mention (e.g., “ObscureTech, a fintech startup,...”).
- Link to known profiles or references for important entities (e.g., official websites, LinkedIn profiles, Wikipedia pages) to contribute to AI’s knowledge graph.
- Aim to get your brand and key authors listed on Wikipedia or industry databases, as AI actively draws on these sources when building its knowledge graph.

- Use straightforward language and clearly name people, brands, and topics so AI can accurately understand and cite your content.

Expanding on the last bullet point, be aware when a particular entity may be ambiguous. Many words can refer to multiple things (e.g., “Apple” the company vs. apple the fruit, “Mercury” the planet vs. the element).

AI uses context—such as surrounding text, schema markup, and knowledge graph data—to determine which entity is intended. You can support this process through clear writing. If your article is about the planet Mercury, mentioning related entities like “solar system” or “NASA’s Messenger probe” helps signal to AI that you’re referring to astronomy, not chemistry.

You can also use the “about” or “mentions” properties in Schema markup to link to the Mercury Wikipedia entry. Doing so helps ensure that AI accurately interprets your content and associates it with the correct entity.

Support Great AEO Content With Schema and Structured Data

Structured data and entity optimization are among the most effective components of an AEO strategy, simply because they clearly convey the information you want AI to know. As a result, your content becomes more usable by AI models and more likely to surface in answers, summaries, and citations for the queries your target audience is asking.

References

Search Engine Land (2025). *Microsoft Bing/Copilot use schema for its LLMs*. Retrieved from [<https://searchengineland.com/microsoft-bing-copilot-use-schema-for-its-llms-453455>]

CHAPTER 10

The Impact of Images in Answer Engine Optimization (AEO)

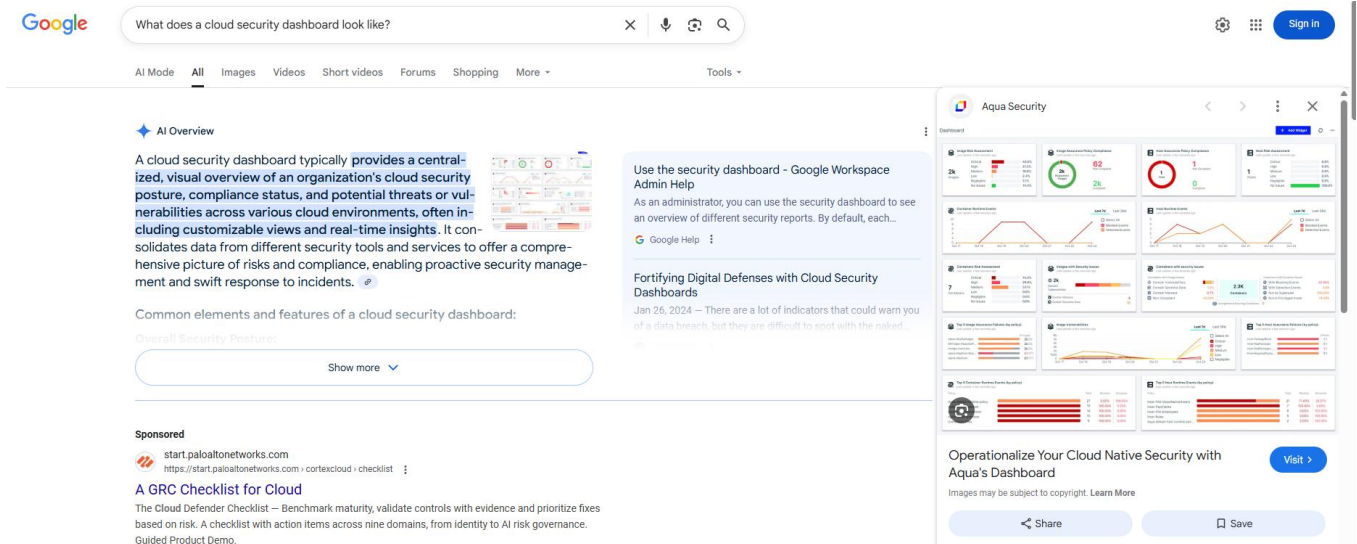
Can AI Understand Images?

AI's ability to interpret images has come a long way due to advancements in "computer vision"—a functionality that enables models to see and analyze visual assets in a way that mimics human perception. That means AI can read text, recognize brand logos, and identify objects and settings within images.

That said, AI models are not yet sophisticated enough to fully comprehend everything that is conveyed in an image. They still rely on alt text, captions, file names, and on-page copy for context. Back in 2024, Google's John Mueller used the following example to explain the limitations of computer vision:

"A photo of a beach might be a relaxing poster, it might be the beach from a hotel, it could be the site of a chemical spill." He went on to explain that AI needs unambiguous, text-based cues to fully understand that an image is more than just "a photo of a beach."

Let's bring this back to Answer Engine Optimization (AEO) now. If AI can understand images (provided they have supporting contextual information), your visual assets can shape the information models use and, in some cases, be featured prominently in answers.



Consider the example of a software company that specializes in cloud security. Their annotated product screenshots or architecture diagrams could be valuable to AI models when answering questions like “What does a secure cloud dashboard look like?” or “How does cloud data encryption work?”

From an AEO strategy perspective, there is an opportunity to optimize images on your site and create visual content around the web, specifically on Instagram, in hopes of showing up in AI answers.

How Do You Optimize On-Site Images for AEO?

I’ve previously covered how the details included in Google AI Overviews (AIOs) are pulled from Google’s vast ecosystems of information. And naturally, that includes Google Image Search.

Google has indexed over 100 billion images from around the web and, through the computer vision functionality of its Gemini model, has begun using them to enhance answers to queries.

Gemini not only learns from images but also includes them in AI answers, along with citations that link to the web page where the image is hosted.

In the cases of ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot, both models draw from Bing’s extensive image index to inform and enrich their answers (although ChatGPT features images less frequently than other models).

All in all, search marketing teams need to think beyond on-page text when prioritizing AEO. By also optimizing images on your site, you give your brand another opportunity to surface in AI answers.

Use relevant and unique images

AI models are likely to use images that support on-page content and enhance the text-based answers they provide.

- Avoid generic stock photos that don't add context or additional information to the page.
- Use custom visuals like charts, product screenshots, or branded infographics that reinforce your messaging.
- Align each image with the specific topic or takeaways presented on the page (e.g., a diagram that provides a visual overview of a process presented in the content).
- Create and optimize graphics that could attract backlinks/brand mentions on external sites.

Add context in captions and surrounding text

Descriptive on-page text near an image gives AI a direct explanation of what is being conveyed, helping models confidently use the information in answers.

- Add captions beneath the image that summarize what it's showing.
- Reference the image in the body copy to highlight its meaning (e.g., "As shown in Figure 1, the adoption of AI in healthcare has grown 5X...").
- Use supporting text (captions and body copy) to explain how the image relates to the surrounding content and user's question.

Include specific alt text

Just as in SEO, alt text gives AI models a direct cue about what is being conveyed in an image, increasing the likelihood it influences answers.

- Include alt text that is a concise yet descriptive overview of the image.

- Explain what an image is showing in a way that aligns with user queries (e.g., “Acme Cloud Security software dashboard showing threat alerts”).
- Unlike in SEO, don’t worry about including relevant keywords in alt text. The objective of AEO is to surface in answers for a wide range of questions, not to rank for specific search terms.

Give images descriptive file names

In addition to alt text, descriptive file names help AI models understand what an image depicts and when it might be relevant to specific questions.

- Avoid generic or auto-generated file names like “image1.png.”
- Rename images with relevant filenames that describe the content (e.g., “acme-cloud-security-dashboard.png”).
- Keep filenames concise but clear, mirroring the way someone might describe the image out loud.
- Use hyphens to separate words. This format makes it easy for AI models to interpret the filename meaning.

Prioritize image quality and format

AI models favor content that enhances user experience, which means quality images are a must for AEO.

- Avoid blurry or pixelated visuals that can’t be used in AI answers due to poor quality.
- Use high-resolution images that render clearly on all screen sizes.
- Optimize images for fast load times using modern formats like WebP or compressed JPEGs.

Use structured data and sitemaps

Schema markup and sitemaps give AI models extra context about your images, increasing the chances that minor details show up in answers.

- Implement ImageObject Schema to define what your images represent (e.g., "@type": "ImageObject", "imageUrl": "acme-cloud-security-dashboard.png", "caption": "Acme Cloud Security dashboard").
- Reference images in your sitemap (either by adding them to your general sitemap or creating a dedicated image sitemap) to help AI models discover your visual assets.
- Use relevant Schema to highlight key on-page details (e.g., price, availability, product).

Does Instagram Influence Answer Engine Optimization (AEO)?

Google Image Search isn't the only visual assets channel that could impact AEO.

Instagram is far and away the most popular site for images on the internet, and it's poised to also play a role in AI answers.

For its entire existence, Instagram has been walled off from search engines. However, that changed in July 2025 when posts from Business and Creator accounts became accessible to crawlers.

We don't yet know how this development will impact AEO. But given that Google Gemini uses the Google search index and ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot use Bing's index, it stands to reason that Instagram content will soon influence AI answers.

Drive engagement to boost content credibility

AI models will likely consider likes, comments, and shares when evaluating Instagram posts to use in answers so strive to create compelling content that resonates with your audience.

- Post content in a variety of formats. For example, swipe-through carousels for tips, Reels for quick demos, stories for real-time updates, and "lives" for in-depth discussions or AMAs with your team.
- Use question-based captions to invite comments and reactions (e.g., "What's your biggest challenge when onboarding new hires?").

- Tag relevant collaborators, partners, or brands to expand reach and boost engagement.
- Maintain a consistent posting cadence to build a following. (**Tip:** Repurpose content for Instagram and plan posts in a social media calendar).
- Respond to comments to build strong relationships with your audience and elevate your profile with the Instagram algorithm.

Create Instagram profiles that are optimized for E-E-A-T

In addition to your company's Instagram profile, create profiles for your executives and subject matter experts to establish Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness (E-E-A-T) and boost entity signals.

- Create usernames that reference your brand and the individual's role (e.g., @acme_ceo).
- Write bios that highlight the individual's job title, credentials, and areas of expertise.
- Add a link to your website to connect profiles with your brand.
- Use the same profile photos that are featured on other social platforms and sites around the web (your company logo for your branded profile and headshots for individuals).
- Keep profiles active by posting relevant content that helps AI models recognize them as authoritative sources of information.

Include captions to connect images to answers

Just like with on-site images, Instagram captions provide AI with text-based cues that explain what an image is showing, helping models connect it to relevant questions.

- Write captions that clearly and concisely describe the visual content (e.g., "Introducing our latest 5G semiconductor for faster IoT connectivity").
- Create captions that answer questions your target audience is likely to ask AI (e.g., "What's the newest 5G chip for IoT?").

- Avoid vague or promotional language. Focus on meaningful descriptions that help AI understand the image's relevance to specific topics.

Use subtitles and on-screen text in Instagram Reels

When posting Reels (short Instagram videos), include subtitles and text overlaid on the video to help AI understand what is being conveyed.

- Include concise yet descriptive overlaid text that highlights the core topic and takeaways (e.g., "How to Streamline Your SOC 2 Audit," "Step 1: Centralize Vendor Risk Data").
- Use titles that align with the questions your target audience is likely to ask AI (e.g., "How do I prepare for a SOC 2 audit?").
- Keep text concise and readable. Basic visual cues build on the video content and make it easy for AI to use the information in answers.

I'll cover the role of video content in AEO in more detail in the next chapter.

Add custom alt text to Instagram images

Instagram lets you set custom alt text. As we covered, taking the time to write to-the-point descriptions in this field gives AI additional context about the image.

- Write alt text that includes specific, descriptive details about the image (e.g., "Acme Corp CEO presenting cloud security strategy at tech summit").
- Use natural phrasing that aligns with the kinds of queries users might ask (e.g., "What are some examples of cloud security strategy?").
- Don't rely on Instagram's default alt text. Custom descriptions will likely improve your chances of being accurately featured in AI answers.

Use hashtags to reinforce topic relevance

Hashtags may act as metadata that helps AI models categorize and associate your Instagram content with specific subject areas.

- Include a mix of branded and community hashtags (e.g., #AcmeCloudSecurity, #DataEncryption) to boost entity signals and connect your company to specific topics.

- Use consistent hashtags to help models recognize recurring themes and strengthen associations between your brand and key topics.
- Avoid broad hashtags (e.g., #technews). Instead, include hashtags that align with your niche and the content of the post.

Make Visual Content Part of Your AEO Strategy

Images are yet another content type that can help your company show up when your potential customers are prompting AI. Take the time to optimize your on-site images and consider building out your Instagram presence so you give AI models valuable visual content that conveys your brand messaging.

CHAPTER 11

Creating YouTube Videos That Can Influence AI Answers

Can AI Understand Video Content and Use it in Responses?

Only a few years ago, search engine crawlers relied on text transcripts to understand and index video content. But in the age of AI, ChatGPT and Google Gemini can extract spoken words directly from videos and perform frame-by-frame analysis to identify objects, scenes, and on-screen text.

Due to these advancements, both platforms are increasingly incorporating video content into their responses. YouTube is the world's second-largest search engine behind only Google, and its billions of videos contain a wealth of information that people are looking to AI to provide.

In fact, video content from YouTube is already being featured prominently in AI answers.

- ChatGPT often includes embedded YouTube videos directly in responses to instructional questions.
- Google AI Overviews (AIOs) embed and reference YouTube videos in answers for a wide range of query types, and include linked citations in multiple places.
- Perplexity doesn't embed videos in answers but does reference and cite YouTube content.



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Search Labs | AI Overview

To change the background in Photoshop, you'll first need to select your subject and then either replace the existing background with a new image or color, or remove the background entirely. The process typically involves using selection tools, refining the selection, creating a mask, and then replacing or modifying the background.



Here's a more detailed breakdown:

1. Select your subject:

- Use the Select Subject or Remove Background tool in Photoshop to automatically select your main subject.
- Alternatively, use tools like the Quick Selection tool or Object Selection tool to manually create a selection.
- If necessary, refine your selection using the Refine Edge Brush or other selection tools to clean up edges and ensure a precise selection.

2. Create a mask:

- Once the subject is selected, create a layer mask based on your selection.
- This mask will isolate your subject, allowing you to modify or replace the background without affecting it.

How to Change a Background in Photoshop

Aug 18, 2023 — Use Select Subject or Remove Background ... To start, choose any of several...

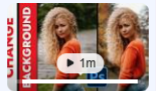
PCMag Australia



Change Photo Background in One Minute - Photoshop Tutorial

May 15, 2023 — how to change photo...

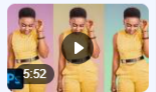
YouTube · PSDESIRE



How to Change Background Color in Photoshop

Mar 17, 2022 — hey there welcome to...

YouTube · PHLEARN



How To Change Background Color in Photoshop [For ...

Feb 28, 2022 — to change the...

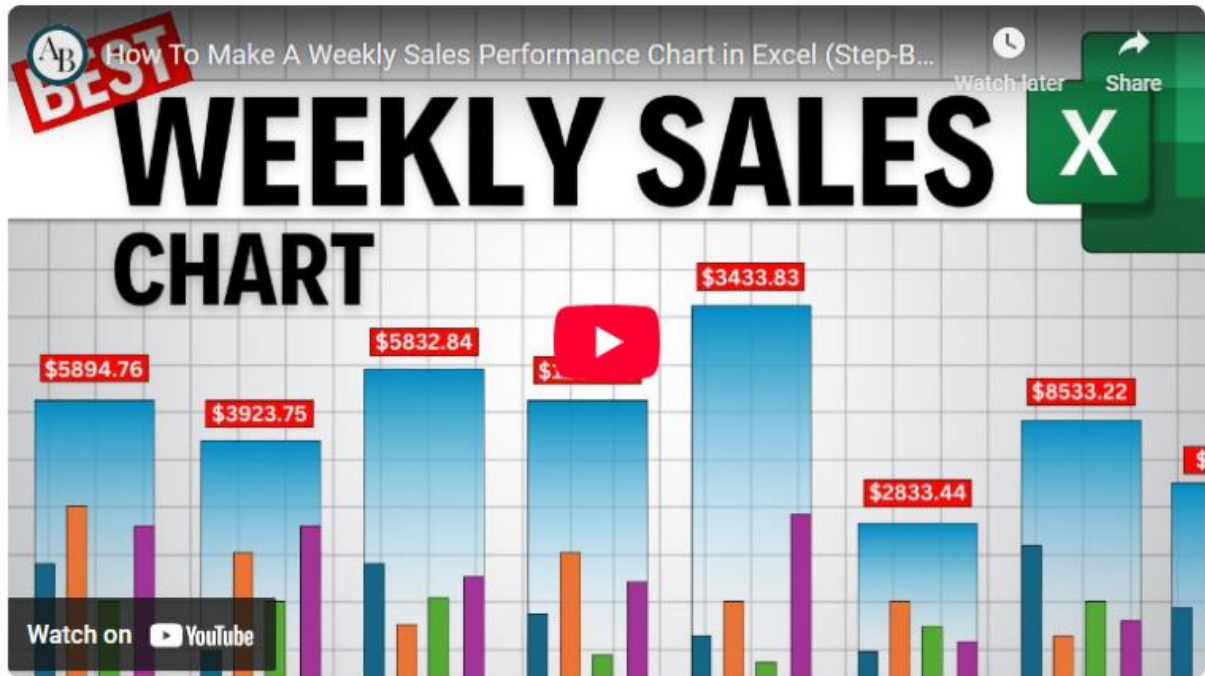
YouTube · Photoshop Training Channel



how do I create a sales report using Excel?

Learn Visually

If you'd like a visual walkthrough, check out this beginner-friendly YouTube guide on making sales charts:



It demonstrates constructing data tables, inserting charts, and formatting them clearly.

Just how often does YouTube content appear in AI answers? [Profound analyzed over 10 million citations](#) across major AI platforms and found that YouTube is the second most cited domain in both Google AIOs and Perplexity, behind only Reddit. That means search marketing teams must make video a major part of their Answer Engine Optimization (AEO) strategies.

What Role Does YouTube Play in Answer Engine Optimization (AEO)?

Throughout this book, I've covered how to structure your website content for AEO. But in many ways, YouTube is your home-away-from-home when it comes to elevating your brand in AI answers. While other external sources like Reddit and Wikipedia also play a

significant role in AEO, there are limitations to the marketing messaging you can share on those sites.

However, your company's YouTube page is all yours. All you have to do is follow YouTube's rules (which isn't difficult for most B2B brands) and focus on video content (a format that offers numerous exciting opportunities for engaging your target audience).

What Types of YouTube Videos Show Up In AI Answers?

Let's explore the different types of YouTube video content you can create to support your AEO strategy. If you read "*Chapter 7: The Types of Content That Perform Best for AEO*," you'll likely notice there is a lot of crossover in this section. However, the bullet point tips will help you create engaging video content, rather than the written content Chapter 7 focuses on.

Educational YouTube Content

Educational videos can expose your brand to your target audience. When potential customers turn to AI for basic information, your YouTube content can be included in answers that help them overcome common challenges and get better at their jobs.

Explain concepts to position your brand as a go-to source of information

Explainer videos break down detailed concepts in a clear way. This type of content is ideal for answering queries like "What is [term]?" or "How does [concept] work?", especially if the response requires a detailed explanation that is comprehensively covered in your video.

- Use question-style titles to reflect how users phrase prompts (e.g., "What is lead nurturing in B2B marketing?").
- Structure the video in a logical progression. Define the concept, explain its importance, and walk through key components or use cases.
- Complement narration with visual aids like diagrams, screen recordings, or on-screen definitions to help AI models extract key takeaways.

Create "top tips" guides to share actionable advice

Tip-list videos offer step-by-step advice in a list format. Covering topics like “Top 5 Customer Onboarding Best Practices” or “10 Tips to Improve Project Management for Remote Teams” matches the kinds of queries users pose to AI.

- Cover one tip at a time while using on-screen numbers and text to make each takeaway easy to follow.
- Keep explanations concise and actionable. Include short examples or context when needed, especially for technical tips.
- Organize tips in a logical succession. This helps AI models understand the sequence and use relevant parts of the video for different queries.

Offer clarification videos to correct common misconceptions

Clarification videos correct inaccurate yet commonly-held beliefs with expert insights, real-world evidence, or perhaps your marketing messaging (think titles like “Is Zero-Trust Security Really Worth It?”). You can even go as far as to create “hot take”-style videos, as this type of content is great for driving YouTube engagement.

- Introduce the misconception, explain why it’s commonly believed, and then present accurate information.
- Use on-screen text to label each misconception and corresponding correction. This enables AI models to recognize the format and content for possible citation.
- Sprinkle in your brand messaging if it makes sense. You can touch on how your product resolves the prevalent issue and offers a better approach.

Product-Focused YouTube Content

Product videos give prospects insight into your solution’s capabilities while enabling customers to maximize its value. When users ask AI for step-by-step instructions or product-specific guidance, your YouTube videos can appear in answers that show exactly what your solution can do.

Build step-by-step product tutorials to answer task-based queries

Tutorial videos walk users (most often your existing customers) through how to complete specific tasks using your product. Titles such as “How to Generate a Quarterly

Report in [Product Name]” provide step-by-step instructions, aiding in customer retention and product adoption.

- Break videos into a logical sequence of steps that covers the process from start to finish.
- Use chapters or timestamps to mark each step. This makes it easy for AI models to use chunks in answers to specific queries (e.g., “How do I invite collaborators to quarterly reports in [Product Name]?”).
- Use on-screen labels, cursor highlights, or callout boxes to show exactly what to do at each stage.
- Keep instructions simple and focused on a specific process. Create separate videos for different workflows, if needed.

Create troubleshooting videos to solve user pain points

Troubleshooting videos address common issues your customers encounter and provide step-by-step solutions. Focusing on topics like “How to Invite Collaborators in [Product Name]” or “How to Resolve [Product Name] Integration Errors with Salesforce” makes it easy for your users to find the simple fixes they need via AI.

- Focus on the issues your power users have the most. Ask your support team what questions are most common.
- Start each video by clearly stating the issue, then walk through the resolution in a descriptive yet easy-to-follow manner.
- Use screen recordings, cursor highlights, and on-screen labels to help AI convert the solution workflow into answers.
- Keep videos short and actionable. Aim for 2–3 minutes so models can pinpoint the specific instructions they need for answers.

Record product tutorials that blend workflow and strategy

Workshop-style product tutorials show how current and prospective customers can use your solution to accomplish their objectives. Videos like “Optimizing Remote Team Productivity with [Product Name]” can surface in answers to both strategic (“How do I

optimize remote team productivity?") and product-focused prompts ("What solutions can help me optimize remote team productivity?").

- Start by addressing the common challenge your product resolves. Touch on why these problems occur and the negative impacts they have on operations.
- Transition into a walkthrough that demonstrates how your product solves these challenges. Show real workflows or use cases that present your product as the ideal solution.
- Use a structured format. Break the video into chapters to separate the strategic discussion from the hands-on portion so AI can extract information from relevant sections.

Produce advanced integration guides for technical users

Integration videos cover how to sync your product with other solutions in your potential or current customers' tech stack. For example, videos like "How to Integrate [Product Name] with Salesforce" or "Migrating Data from Legacy Systems to [Product Name]" address the types of queries that come from IT managers or system administrators.

- Format videos as detailed walk-throughs. Highlight prerequisites, configuration steps, and common pitfalls while using on-screen prompts and annotations.
- Use chapters or timestamps to divide the video into logical segments (e.g, setup, authentication, data mapping, and testing). Again, this helps AI use specific sections for specific queries.
- Be mindful of the pacing. These videos should thoroughly describe the integration process while avoiding information that a technically-minded audience already knows.

Thought-Leadership YouTube Content

Thought-leadership videos strengthen your brand's Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness (E-E-A-T) by putting credible voices front and center. Whether you feature internal experts, respected industry leaders, or original research, this type of content helps AI models recognize your authority and include your video content in answers that require reputable insights or data.

Conduct panel discussions to showcase topical expertise

Panel-style videos bring together internal leaders, industry experts, and power users to discuss important trends and challenges. Titles like “The Future of AI in Customer Support: Insights from 3 CEOs” convey credibility and provide content models can use for questions like “How will AI impact customer support?”.

- Choose a timely, high-level topic and assemble a panel with diverse perspectives. Ask them open-ended questions that spark discussion and reveal their personal insights.
- Keep the conversation structured but conversational. Use prompts to guide the dialogue and touch on key themes while allowing space for spontaneous commentary.
- Use lower-thirds visual aids to highlight the speakers’ names and credentials and concisely summarize their talking points.
- Include timestamps or chapters to segment the discussion by theme or question.

Record thought-leader interviews to boost credibility

One-on-one interviews with respected industry figures, company executives, or successful customers provide expert insights on relevant subjects. For example, “Best Practices in Cybersecurity for 2025: Interview with [Expert Name]” elevates your E-E-A-T profile and provides insights AI can use to enhance answers.

- Focus the interview on a specific trend, challenge, or subject area. Use open-ended questions to draw out actionable insights or frameworks for success.
- Highlight the guest’s credentials visually and verbally. Introduce them with on-screen text and mention their relevance to the topic early in the video.
- Break the conversation into thematic sections using chapters or timestamps. This helps AI models tap into standalone insights.

Highlight takeaways and datapoints from original research

If your company produces surveys, reports, or benchmark studies, YouTube is a complementary channel for showcasing the findings. Videos like “2025 SaaS Marketing

Benchmarks: 5 Takeaways from [Company Name's] Research” build your authority with AI models and provide datapoints they can include in answers.

- Highlight stats in charts, graphs, or animated visuals. Pair each data point with a concise explanation of what it means for your audience.
- Present trends or key takeaways based on the stats. Use on-screen text to summarize the insights and the implications of the findings.

Keep the video tightly structured. Cover each datapoint in an organized sequence to make it easy for AI to pinpoint takeaways.

Create an industry news series to share timely perspectives

Covering industry news in a recurring series helps your company build a YouTube following and positions your brand as a leading voice in your niche. Timely content like “This Week in FinTech: Our Take on [Major News]” has a high chance of surfacing in current event-centric answers.

- Keep each episode focused on one major news item. Explain what happened, who it affects, and why it matters to the audience.
- Offer practical takeaways. Go beyond the headline and share how the audience should react to the news.
- Use a consistent format that includes a branded intro, on-screen headlines, and section breaks to make it easy for AI to parse the content.
- Follow a consistent publishing schedule. Stay committed to posting a timely video weekly or biweekly so your audience grows over time and you elevate your authority with AI models.

Customer-Focused YouTube Content

Case study and testimonial videos showcase the real-world value of your solution through the voices of satisfied customers. When users ask AI about expected results, ROI, or proven strategies, these videos can appear in answers with measurable impacts and authentic experiences.

Create customer testimonial videos to build trust and showcase results

Short testimonial videos featuring real customers demonstrate the tangible results of using your product. Titles like “How [Customer Name] Cut Server Costs by 50% with [Product Name]” present outcomes of using your product that can aid in answers to evaluation stage queries.

- Keep videos in the 1-2 minute range. Focus on a few key results that are significant and relevant to your audience.
- Let customers describe their experience in their own words. Authentic quotes offer social proof that supports your marketing messaging.
- Use on-screen text to highlight metrics or soundbites (e.g., “Reduced support ticket volume by 40%”) to make takeaways easy to identify and extract.

Produce full case study videos to cover the transformational impact of your product

Detailed case study videos tell the complete story of a customer’s journey. Using a format such as “How [Customer Name] Achieved 2X Faster Customer Adoption with [Company Name]” helps AI answer questions like “What ROI can I expect from [Product Name]?” or “What are strategies for speeding up customer adoption?”.

- Structure the video around a clear narrative arc: The challenge the customer faced, why they chose your solution, how implementation went, and what outcomes were achieved.
- Include both qualitative insights and quantitative results. Use on-screen visuals to summarize the customer’s experience and present key metrics.
- Use timestamps or section titles to mark each part of the story (e.g., Challenge, Evaluating Solutions, Implementing [Product Name], End Results with [Product Name]).

Product Comparison YouTube Content

Comparison and decision-guidance videos help potential buyers evaluate their options and make informed choices. AI models can use this content for queries like “How does [Your Product] compare to [Competitor’s Product]?” or “What should I consider when evaluating [Product Category] software?”.

Develop product comparison videos to influence evaluation-stage queries

Comparison videos break down the differences between your product and a competitor. A format as simple as “[Your Product] vs. [Competitor’s Product]: Feature-by-Feature Comparison” covers the specific information potential buyers are looking for when weighing their options.

- Focus on the factors that typically influence buying decisions, like core features, pricing, ease of use, and integrations.
- Position your solution as the better option without being overtly promotional. Be willing to acknowledge where your competitor excels and where your product can improve.
- Use on-screen visuals to cover each comparison point. Side-by-side checklists and tables outlining features can be used in AI answers.

Publish buyer’s guide videos to educate and advise decision-makers

Buyer’s guide videos walk viewers through everything they should consider when selecting a solution in your category. Titles like “How to Choose the Right [Category] Software: 5 Factors to Consider” influence answers to the initial questions prospects ask when they start evaluating solutions.

- Cover all the factors that matter to your customer profile, such as specific features, security, scalability, ease of use, integrations, pricing, and support. Explain why each one matters in a business context.
- Present the information in an objective tone. You can mention where your product excels but focus on educating rather than selling when producing this type of video content.
- Use on-screen text to highlight each factor and provide additional cues to AI models.
- Segment videos into chapters that can potentially surface in more specific evaluation questions (e.g., “What security factors matter for [Category] solutions?”).

Create ROI and value justification videos for executive audiences

ROI-focused content makes the business case for your product, helping stakeholders who oversee budgets understand its financial benefit. A video like “The ROI of [Product Name]: Cost-Benefit Analysis in 3 Minutes” speaks directly to executives’ concerns about whether your product is worth the money.

- Use a before-and-after structure to touch on the measurable outcomes achieved with your product, such as cost savings, time reductions, or productivity improvements.
- Use real datapoints experienced by your customers, preferably from notable brands that executives are familiar with.
- Include a simple ROI calculation or framework to demonstrate how benefits outweigh costs. On-screen visuals like graphs or side-by-side comparisons provide fodder for AI answers.
- Keep the content focused on the outcomes that matter to leaders. ROI-focused videos should be different than content targeting end users.

Question-and-Answer YouTube Content

Question-and-answer videos address the exact questions your audience is asking AI, making them highly compatible with how models source and structure information in responses. These types of YouTube videos are valuable content that can be cited when users seek direct and reliable answers.

Produce a FAQ video series to answer your audience’s most common questions

FAQ videos are short clips that each address a single question your audience frequently asks—whether it’s about your product, your industry, or the problems you help solve. Videos like “What’s the difference between zero-trust and traditional network security?” or “How can small teams integrate API-based automation into project management workflows?” provide answers to the specific questions users ask AI.

- Structure each video in a true Q&A format. State the question upfront (visually and verbally), then proceed to give a clear, concise answer.
- Keep videos short and to the point (around the one-minute mark). Simply answer the question without veering off into unrelated topics.

- Cover the core questions you hear most from prospects, customers, and your broader audience. You can source these from sales conversations, customer support tickets, community forums, or existing FAQ sections on your site and then repurpose the answers into a video format.

Host live Q&A sessions or AMAs to capture real audience questions

Live Q&A sessions or Ask Me Anything (AMA) streams let your subject matter experts (SMEs) answer questions from your audience in real time. The conversational format of how questions are phrased naturally aligns with the way people prompt AI.

- Broadcast streams that focus on specific topics. Have a moderator monitor the chat and relay questions to the SME.
- Edit the recording and upload the polished version to YouTube. Highlight each question with on-screen text and timestamps (again, this helps AI models parse and extract the content).
- Conduct these live sessions regularly. Following a consistent schedule will grow your YouTube following and provide AI with plenty of Q&A content.

How To Optimize YouTube Videos for AI Search

As we just covered, there is a variety of YouTube content your marketing team can produce to support its AEO strategy. But as with most things in marketing, the little things matter. Let's conclude with some quick tips for creating and uploading videos to help influence AI models.

Optimize for engagement to boost credibility signals

In most cases, AI models will feature the top-ranking YouTube videos on specific topics so create compelling content that your audience is likely to engage with.

- Invest in producing quality videos that look and feel as if they're the best resource on the topic.
- Start with a strong hook or preview to keep viewers watching past the first few seconds.

- Encourage likes, comments, and subscriptions to positively influence the YouTube algorithm.

Use titles and descriptions that match user queries

AI models rely on YouTube video titles and text-based descriptions to understand the content and determine when it's relevant to questions.

- Write titles phrased as natural-language questions (e.g., "How to build a B2B lead scoring model in HubSpot").
- Use the description to expand on the title and provide contextual information in more detail ("We cover five steps demand generation teams can use to create a lead scoring model that drives revenue").
- Prioritize clarity over keywords. Focus on the kinds of phrasing your audience uses when prompting AI rather than exact search terms.

Include transcripts and captions to provide text-based cues

AI models treat transcripts and captions as structured data that helps them understand the entirety of the narrated content within YouTube videos.

- Upload accurate transcripts and closed captions so AI can access the full spoken content.
- Include clear explanations, definitions, or steps in your narration. These can be lifted directly into AI answers via transcripts or captions.
- When possible, break down complex topics in a logical sequence so specific chunks can be used in answers to specific queries.

Add chapters and time stamps to guide AI through the content

Segmenting longer videos with chapters and timestamps enables AI to use a single YouTube video in a variety of specific queries related to the core topic.

- Use descriptive chapter titles phrased as natural-language questions (e.g., "How do you integrate your ERP system with cloud inventory management?").
- Include timestamps in the description or use YouTube's built-in chapter feature to structure the video.

- Have the speaker verbal transition to new segments (“Now let’s look at how to integrate your ERP system with your cloud inventory management platform”).

Include visuals and on-screen text to build on narration

As we’ve covered, AI models can see and understand on-screen content. Expanding on narrated points with clear visuals gives AI another method for interpreting your video content.

- Use screen recordings, diagrams, and cursor highlights to visually explain complex concepts.
- Add on-screen text for key steps, terms, or data points to make takeaways unambiguous to AI models.
- Highlight speakers’ names and credentials with on-screen text to boost E-E-A-T signals.

Embed videos on relevant, content-rich pages

Adding your YouTube videos to relevant pages on your site gives AI additional context about both the video’s subject and the on-page content.

- Place videos within blog posts, product pages, and help center articles to expand on the topic covered within the page.
- Use schema markup (e.g., VideoObject) to define what the video is about and how it connects to the surrounding content.
- Go as far as to create video versions of all your text-based AEO content and include both formats on the same page.

Use YouTube to Elevate Your Brand in AI Answers

By strategically creating and optimizing YouTube videos, you take yet another step to position your brand as a go-to source that AI models reference in their answers.

As I covered at the start of this chapter, YouTube is a primary source of information for ChatGPT, Google Gemini, and Perplexity. Use that to your advantage and create videos that give AI models the information they need to connect your messaging with your target audience.

References

Profound (2025). *AI Platform Citation Patterns: How ChatGPT, Google AI Overviews, and Perplexity Source Information*. Retrieved from [<https://www.tryprofound.com/blog/ai-platform-citation-patterns>]

BONUS

How to Create a Reddit Marketing Strategy That Supports Your AEO Efforts

The Role of Reddit in AEO

At first glance, Reddit might seem like just a site for memes, pop culture banter, and discussions about current events. But in reality, it's a goldmine of niche communities, including many that are tailored specifically for B2B industries.

Across Reddit, you'll find conversations and user-generated content (UGC) on virtually every imaginable topic, offering marketing teams the opportunity to engage with their target audience in an authentic, non-salesy way.

And even more, Reddit has solidified its place in the broader internet ecosystem. Its content is frequently used in AI-generated answers because the conversational style of forum posts naturally aligns with how people phrase AI prompts.

That means even if a prospective buyer doesn't engage with your messaging directly on Reddit, they can still be exposed to it via an answer provided by ChatGPT or Google AI Overviews (AIOs).

What are the best online ordering systems for restaurants?

X
Microphone
Image
Search

AI Mode
All
Short videos
Forums
Images
Shopping
Videos
More

Tools

Search Labs | AI Overview

The best online ordering systems for restaurants vary based on specific needs and priorities. For restaurants already using Toast POS, **Toast Online Ordering** is a great integrated option. **Owner.com** is recommended for increasing direct online sales and managing the restaurant's online presence. Square Online is well-suited for small restaurants and cafes, especially those already using Square POS. For multi-location chains, consider **Olo**, while **ChowNow** is a good choice for expanding customer reach. Finally, for budget-conscious options, **Menufy** is a solid choice, and for upscale restaurants, **BentoBox** is a popular option.



Here's a more detailed breakdown:

For Restaurants Using Toast POS:

- Toast Online Ordering:** This system is a natural fit for restaurants already using the Toast platform. It offers seamless integration with the POS, streamlining order management, and provides features like online ordering, delivery, and takeout.

For Restaurants Prioritizing Direct Online Sales:

Owner.com:
This platform focuses on helping restaurants manage their online presence and drive direct online sales through their website and other channels.

Square Online:
This option is well-suited for restaurants looking to build a strong online presence and take orders directly from their website or Square POS.

Best online menu and ordering system :
r/restaurantowners - Reddit
Mar 12, 2024 — I'd recommend Favouritetable's Pre order system if budget is not an issue. ... Most restaurants prefer to...

7 Best Restaurant Online Ordering Systems for Sales [2025] - Owner.com
* Online ordering systems overview. * Owner.com for increasing sales. * Toast for P...

UpMenu: Best Online Ordering System for Restaurants in 2025
UpMenu is a simple and intuitive ordering system that includes many options that are...

Show all

Before we get into how B2B companies can create a Reddit marketing strategy, let's highlight some statistics that demonstrate the site's growing importance in Answer Engine Optimization (AEO) and the web as a whole:

- Reddit is growing at a rapid pace. It has **97.2 million daily active users** as of Q3 2024, marking a **47% year-over-year increase** (source: [Backlinko](#)).
- **Reddit is the most cited domain in Google AIOs**, appearing in **21% of answers** (source: [Profound](#)).
- For ChatGPT, **Reddit is the second-most cited domain (11.3%)**, trailing only Wikipedia (47.9%). While that's a big gap, Wikipedia typically addresses basic informational queries (e.g., "Tell me about the Industrial Revolution"). Reddit content, on the other hand, is ideal for handling more complex, high-intent B2B queries (e.g., "What's the best expense tracking software for remote teams?").

- ChatGPT recently started to provide direct quotes from Reddit threads within answers. That means ChatGPT users see Reddit content without needing to click a link.
- Google and OpenAI both partnered with Reddit last year to use its content to train their AI models. That suggests Reddit's prominence in AI responses will only grow.

Recommendations, advice, and insights on Reddit are provided by real people, and their posts are validated by other community members through replies and the site's upvote/downvote system.

What Small Teams Are Saying

From Reddit's r/sales:

"For a small business... If you're managing a sales pipeline and outreach, Folk or Attio Ai are solid choices. Notion CRM template is another affordable option with decent automation." reddit.com +13
(These are templates or lightweight tools; best if you prefer spreadsheet-oriented or minimalistic systems.)

That makes Reddit one of the most trustworthy sources for buying research on the entire web. Especially, when the alternatives are listicles on affiliate websites or reviews that may have been bought or influenced by the brand itself.

It seems like every few years, a new social channel emerges that marketers try to leverage for lead generation and brand building. But unlike TikTok and Instagram, B2B companies really do have a place in Reddit conversations.

When you also consider that its content is almost always referenced in AI answers, it's a no-brainer that companies need a Reddit marketing strategy in 2025.

How Do B2B Brands Find Relevant Subreddits to Participate In?

The first step to engaging with your audience on Reddit is discovering what subreddits (niche communities focused on specific topics) they're participating in.

There are nearly 4 million subreddits but only a few hundred thousand are active. That means as you conduct your research, you might come across communities that perfectly align with your business, only to find that they've mostly been abandoned.

Additionally, some of the bigger subreddits are too broad in focus and the discussions can be low quality. The reality is that the more people in the mix, the more the community aspect gets diluted.

For example, /r/SaaS has more than 300K subscribers but the topics hit on a wide range of questions and anecdotes related to building a SaaS company. Unless your product is engineering-focused, it probably doesn't make sense to participate, and even then, there are likely specific subreddits that are more relevant.

Ultimately, you should find a handful of subreddits to monitor and participate in on a daily or weekly basis. Say 3-7 but it really depends on how many communities exist that are active and relevant to your business.

Now let's get into how you can find these subreddits.

Ask ChatGPT to recommend relevant subreddits

The fastest way to get a curated list of relevant subreddits is to ask ChatGPT. You can describe your product, ideal customer profile (ICP), and key use cases, and ask for subreddit suggestions based on that information.

You can also include parameters in your prompt like, "Only provide subreddits with at least 50,000 subscribers that have posts within the past 24 hours."

I work at a SaaS company that offers a collaboration tool for design teams. It's built for design professionals at mid-sized tech companies (50–500 employees) who want a faster way to share mockups, gather feedback, and manage design handoffs. Our ideal users include product designers, UX/UI designers, and design leads.

Create a comprehensive list of subreddits where my audience is likely to be active. Only include subreddits that have posts within the past 24 hours.

Summary of activity relevance

Subreddit	Audience Relevance	Activity in past 24 hr
r/UXDesign	UX/UI professionals	 (multiple new posts) guptamedia.com +8 reddit.com +3
r/product_design	Product & interaction designers	 (daily fresh posts)
r/productdesign	Product designers	 (recent activity)
r/Design	Designers across disciplines	 (frequently updated)
r/design_critiques	Peer feedback on design work	 (regular submissions)
r/graphic_design	Graphic, UI, branding designers	 (consistent activity)
r/web_design	Web and UI design professionals	 (new content daily)
r/typography	Designers focused on type/layout	 (steady flow of posts)

What makes this method especially useful is that ChatGPT can zero in on the exact subreddits you want to be part of. For example, instead of recommending just /r/marketing, it might surface smaller, more focused communities like /r/BigSEO, /r/FigmaDesign, or /r/UXWriting. This gives you a strong head start before diving into manual research.

Brainstorm key topics and keywords

Next, you need to get more granular and look for relevant subreddits on your own. Start by listing keywords related to your industry, product, and target audience. For an HR software startup, keywords will naturally be HR and recruiting, and perhaps employee engagement, workplace culture, and candidate experience.

That said, try not to go too broad when creating this list. Keep your keywords focused on the specific terms relevant to your audience, not the overarching ones.

Use Reddit's search function

Reddit's built-in search bar is a quick way to discover specific subreddits. Enter your keywords and filter results to "communities." Use variations (e.g., "B2B marketing," "tech sales," "cloud computing") and see what subreddits are recommended.

Don't worry about selecting or nixing subreddits quite yet. Just compile a list that you can narrow down when your research is complete. Examine each subreddit's description and subscriber count to gauge relevance and size, and you'll start to have a solid idea of where you want to be active.

Use Google "site:" search

Reddit's native search has improved but many people find Google more effective for finding niche subreddits. Simply go to Google and search for your keywords with the modifier `site:reddit[dot]com/r` (e.g., `site:reddit[dot]com/r revenue marketing`).

This tactic will surface relevant Reddit content that already exists. You'll discover specific threads (and the subreddits where they took place) and can determine if these conversations would have been worth participating in.

Search for brand and competitor mentions

Search Reddit (or Google with `site:reddit[dot]com`) for your brand name and your competitors' names. The threads you find will show you which subreddits your current and potential customers are using when talking about vendors.

These are the conversations you want to be part of. While they're not super common, the benefit of this exercise is that it reveals where your audience hangs out—and helps you find the subreddits where they ask educational or even buying-focused questions.

How Should B2B Marketers Participate on Reddit?

Success on Reddit will be based entirely on how you engage. Given that it's a community-centric platform, your focus should be on contributing value, not pitching your product.

To put it as bluntly as possible, Redditors hate promotional posts. It's not LinkedIn or even Twitter where users are somewhat receptive to marketing messaging.

Reddit is all about like-minded people coming together around shared interests (specifically, professional interests, in the case of the subreddits B2B brands should participate in). So your goal needs to be to help them get better at their job, advance their career, and share interesting insights they can apply to their work.

Let's explore some best practices to keep in mind as your B2B brand deploys a marketing strategy on Reddit.

Follow each subreddit's rules

Every subreddit has its own set of rules (usually listed in the sidebar or "About" section). Read them carefully before posting. Many forbid promotional links or require minimum karma (positive upvote count) and account age before you can start a new thread.

In many cases, that means you won't be able to post a "learn more" CTA that drives traffic to your site. And even if the subreddit allows outbound links, you should be thoughtful about the marketing content you share (I'll cover this more in the next section).

In the case of karma and account age requirements, you'll have to spend some time responding to existing threads before you can create your own. This is a good way to get your feet wet and ingratiate yourself to the community before you really dive in.

All in all, take a minute to learn the rules for each subreddit so you don't get banned, have your posts removed, or upset the people you're trying to positively influence.

Have a thought leader represent your brand

Reddit communities are almost always apprehensive of branded accounts. However, they are highly receptive to knowledgeable individuals who genuinely contribute to discussions.

Select a company representative who is familiar with your industry, enjoys participating in online conversations, and can regularly monitor relevant subreddits. In most cases,

this person will come from the marketing team. But it could also be someone from another department, as long as they're committed to engaging on Reddit and can handle posting without requiring too much support from marketing.

Your thought leader should be upfront about who they are and what company they work for—both in their Reddit bio and when it's relevant in conversations—while staying focused on adding value in a non-promotional way. They should also identify themselves in their username (e.g., “u/JohnExampleCorp”) so it will never come across like they're trying to dupe the community.

Strive to deliver value to the community

Approach Reddit with a community-first mindset. That means asking thoughtful questions and offering helpful, informed answers. Redditors often check post history so it's important to show a pattern of participation, not just one-off comments.

Even more, your thought leader should share real insights from their professional experience. For example, if someone asks about improving lead quality, they might walk through targeting strategies they've used, mistakes to avoid, and how they aligned sales and marketing on qualification criteria.

Much of your top-of-the-funnel educational content can be repurposed for Reddit (perhaps, you have a comprehensive guide on improving lead quality). You'll just need to strip out the marketing tone and reframe it to speak directly to the subreddit audience. Add in some real-world examples or a personal anecdote, and you'll be in good shape to bring value to the conversation.

Engage like a normal human on the internet

I just touched on it but it's worth emphasizing that your Reddit content needs to have a natural, non-jargony tone. That means you need to take off the marketing hat and write like an everyday person on the internet.

Avoid buzzwords and overly polished language. It can come across as off-putting or even like it was generated by AI (today's Redditors are quick to call out “AI slop” when they see it).

Instead, be personable and even funny or self-deprecating when it makes sense. You'll obviously need to be professional but you can (and should) let your personality shine through in Reddit conversations.

Summary: How B2B brands can engage on Reddit

- Focus on contributing value to the community, not promoting your product. Redditors are highly skeptical of marketing messaging.
- Follow the rules of each subreddit to avoid post removal or bans. Many subreddits restrict new accounts and prohibit promotional content.
- Spend time responding to existing threads to build karma and credibility before creating your own posts.
- Designate a thought leader to represent your brand. Ideally, someone from marketing, but it can be anyone who's committed to and comfortable engaging on Reddit.
- Make sure your company representative has a branded username and is upfront about their company affiliation in their bio and posts (when the disclaimer is relevant).
- Ensure the thought leader shares interesting insights. Use real examples and personal anecdotes to bring authenticity to comments.
- Keep the tone natural and conversational. Avoid any corporate speak that feels out of place in Reddit discussions.
- Let your personality show. A bit of humor and self-awareness makes your comments feel more human and worth engaging with.

What Are B2B Marketing Strategies for Reddit?

If you can't promote your product, why even participate on Reddit? The truth is, you can, provided the situation calls for it (e.g., "What's the best software for..." threads).

Even more, there are other approaches you can take to get your messaging in front of your audience on Reddit and within the AI models that are increasingly using the site's content to provide answers.

Share research and thought leadership content worthy of discussion

If your company produces original research or thought leadership content, Reddit can be an ideal place to share it. These types of resources are interesting to professionals, especially in niche subreddits where members are eager to discuss trends and compelling findings.

This doesn't mean you can just drop a link with little to no context. You'll need to create a detailed post that summarizes the key takeaways, highlights interesting findings, and encourages discussion. As other Redditors chime in with questions and comments, respond and keep the conversation going.

 **r/content_marketing** • 6 yr. ago
maxthescribbler

...

Case study: 8 LinkedIn tactics that really worked for us—and 5 that didn't

About a year ago, **my boss suggested that we concentrate our b2b content marketing efforts on LinkedIn**. Since the social network was just transforming into a powerful content platform, the suggestion seemed more or less logical, so I had no objections though I didn't know anything about the platform—neither as a user, nor as a content marketer.

Of course, like other managers, I had a profile on LinkedIn, but almost never logged in on the website. Practice makes perfect, I said to myself. **How different can it be from things I do know like Facebook or Instagram?** Let's start something—and will figure it out by trial and error.

Now our reach on LinkedIn amounts to around 100,000 views a day and we have zillions of followers.... If you expect to read something like that after such a preface, you are better off reading something else. This isn't a post that promises miracles—and ends with a link to a 399-dollar "course on content marketing on LinkedIn."

We did achieve some solid results that have made LinkedIn the key element of our content marketing strategy, and my goal here is simply **to share what we've learned so far** and maybe inspire you to share your insights in turn.

1. Building CEO's profile instead of the brand's—WORKS!

I noticed that many company pages on LinkedIn with tens of thousands of followers get only a few likes on their posts. At the same time, some ordinary guy from Mississippi with only a thousand followers can enjoy a ten times higher engagement rate.

This makes sense: **social media are about people, not about brands**. So from day one, I decided to focus on growing the CEO/founder's profile instead of the company's. This was a right choice: in a few weeks, we already saw dozens of likes and thousands of views on his updates.

If the subreddit allows it, you can include a link to drive traffic to your site. If there are rules against it, you may be able to get a waiver from the mods or you can encourage others to DM you to get the link.

Let's tie this back to AEO now. Your content can surface when AI models need data to support answers (in the case of original research) or commentary or predictions on topics (for thought leadership content). While this content can potentially show up in AI answers via your site, remember that models prefer to cite Reddit so use that to your advantage.

Highlight customer wins in Reddit comments

Another way to build your stock on Reddit is by sharing examples from your real customers in comments, provided it's relevant to the conversation.

Let's say someone posts a question about improving customer onboarding. You can chime in with a quick anecdote like, "A company we work with saw a drop in churn after switching to automated walkthroughs from onboarding emails. I'm happy to provide more details about what worked for them."

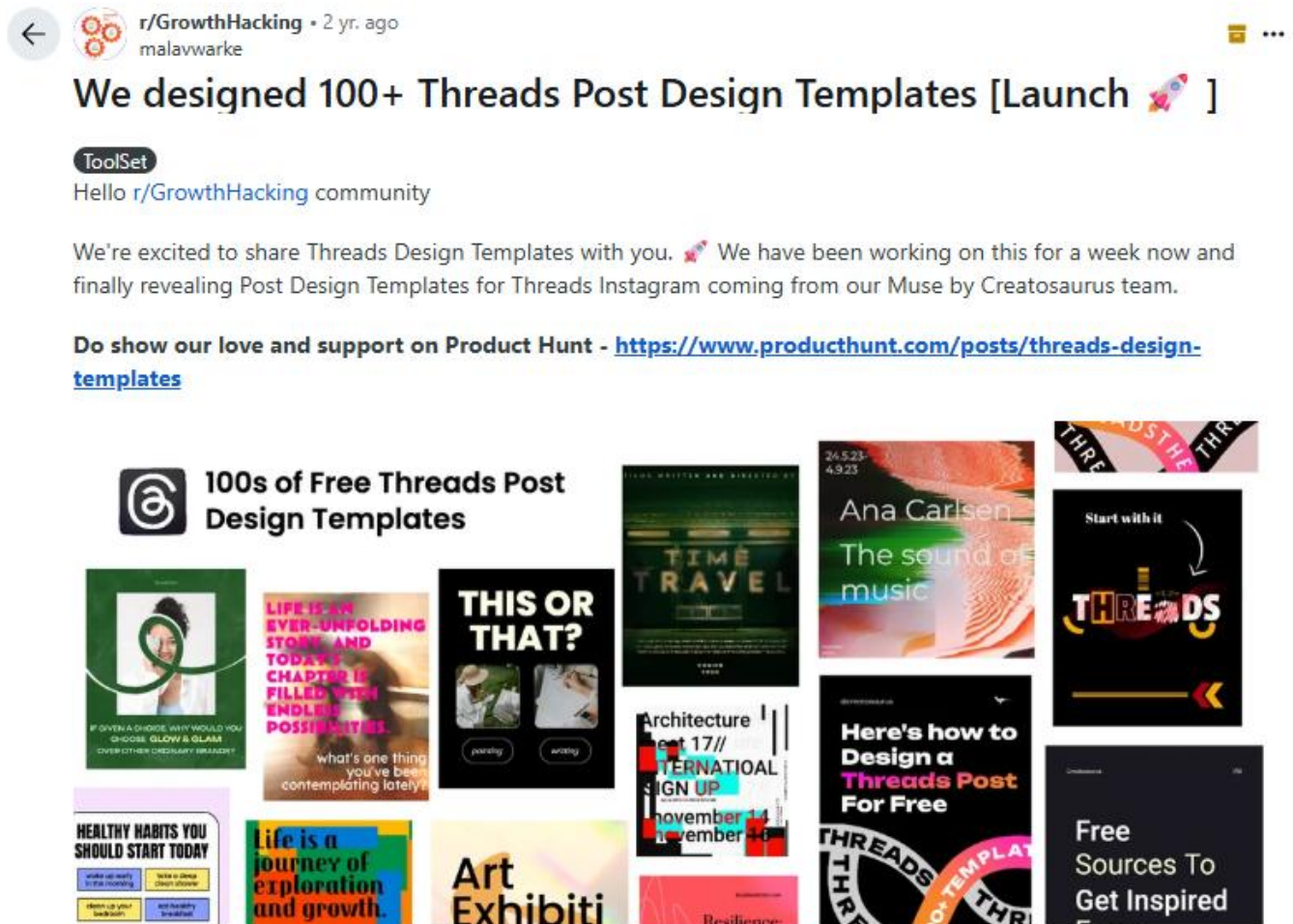
These kinds of examples resonate because they're focused on the customer's strategy or process, not just how they used your product. You're offering genuine insight, not selling. And when you're upfront about your role and the company you work for, Reddit communities are generally receptive to these types of comments.

This tactic won't drive AEO success as much as the others in this section but it could have a more direct benefit on your sales efforts. Perhaps community members will take you up on your offer to learn more about what worked for your customers, allowing you to keep the conversation going in DMs or move it off Reddit entirely.

Share interactive content that helps people do their jobs

Remember that one of your objectives when marketing on Reddit is to help people get better at their jobs. While data, insights, and examples are useful, sharing an actual tool they can use may be more impactful. Think something like a calculator, template, or mini-app your team built to solve a specific problem.

When you share it, don't frame it like a campaign. Just be human. Say something like, "Hey, we created this free tool to help with [specific challenge]. I thought some of you might find it useful."



The goal isn't to directly generate leads, it's to contribute something to the community. Make sure the tool or resource is accessible (don't gate it behind a form) and only share it in subreddits where it's relevant and allowed.

This kind of post not only builds goodwill, it can also boost visibility in AI answers. If someone asks ChatGPT or Google how to accomplish a specific task, and your Reddit post shows how your free tool helps, there's a real shot it gets cited.

Do pitch your product when people ask for recommendations

There are times when it's perfectly acceptable to pitch your product on Reddit—specifically when someone asks for software recommendations. And these threads are

golden opportunities you want to be a part of. If someone makes a post like, “I’m looking for a revops platform that integrates with HubSpot and automates forecasting,” or “What’s a good tool for improving user onboarding?” you have every reason to chime in and promote your product.

As long as you’re transparent about your affiliation and your answer is genuinely relevant, the community will usually be receptive. Explain how your product addresses the poster’s needs and include any supporting information they requested (e.g., share pricing if it was part of their initial question). In many cases, you’re allowed to link to your website in these threads.

Of course, this tactic has major implications for AEO. When someone asks ChatGPT or consults Google AIOs for software recommendations, they’re often presented with this Reddit content.

If you’re monitoring Reddit on a daily basis, you’ll see these questions when they pop up and can jump in before your competitors. And if you’re already known as a solid community member (sharing insights, helping others, and building karma), your post could rise to the top.

But if you’re not actively participating on Reddit, you won’t see these threads in time. They’ll surface months later, likely when you’re asking ChatGPT questions relevant to your brand. But by that point, the conversation will be over.

Start threads around problems your product solves

I’ve mentioned that any information you share on Reddit should be relevant to the conversation. But what do you do when there is messaging you want to get out there but no one has asked a question that calls for it?

Consider starting discussions around the challenges your product is built to solve. Let’s say your platform helps companies clean and unify their customer data. You might start a thread like, “How are you all dealing with messy CRM data and duplicate records across tools like Salesforce and HubSpot?”

As the conversation gets going, you can respond to comments with best practices and insights that relate to your product, without explicitly mentioning it. Use generic terms

(e.g., “customer data platform” or “data hygiene automation”), along with your benefit-focused marketing messaging.

Posts like this often attract thoughtful responses and, of course, show up in AI answers. For example, when someone asks ChatGPT, “How do I clean up messy CRM data in tools like Salesforce and HubSpot?”, they could see your thread and be exposed to your marketing messaging.

Create a branded subreddit

Promoting your company and product across Reddit certainly has its limitations. And that can be frustrating when you’re trying to get your messaging to show up in AI answers.

You can overcome these hurdles by creating a dedicated branded subreddit (e.g., reddit[dot]com/r/companyname). Unlike the other subreddits you’re part of, you are free to set the rules, guide the discussion, and talk openly about your product.



However, that doesn't mean every post should be promotional. Your subreddit should mainly be focused on the topics your audience cares about. Think threads about emerging trends, "Ask Me Anythings" (AMAs) with your subject matter experts, or commentary on recent industry news. But it's also the perfect place to share company updates and announce new features, without worrying about upsetting the mods or community members.

Once it's created, the challenge will be to ramp up community participation. Invite your customers, partners, and even prospects to join and create some engaging threads to spark activity (/r/Auvik does "Meme Monday," in addition to product-focused threads). But just be aware that many of the threads created by others will be requests for product help so be sure the subreddit is regularly monitored by your support team.

From an AEO perspective, a branded subreddit can help content that addresses each stage of the buyer and customer journey show up in AI answers. That includes problem-focused discovery threads, feature overviews, setup guides, and support resources.

Summary: How to create a B2B marketing strategy for Reddit

- Share original research or thought leadership content that's genuinely useful. Summarize key insights in the post and keep the conversation going in the replies.
- Comment on relevant threads with customer wins. Focus on the customer's strategy or outcome (not your product) and be transparent about your company affiliation.
- Post interactive resources like templates, calculators, or mini-tools that help others do their jobs better. Don't gate the content or frame it like a campaign, just share it because you want to help the community.
- Join product-focused threads when someone asks for software recommendations. Be clear about your affiliation and tailor your response to their specific needs.
- Start new discussions around problems your product solves. Use benefit-driven language and respond with helpful insights that organically guide the conversation.

- Create a branded subreddit where you can freely post about your product. But use it for educational threads, company updates, and customer support, not just marketing.

What Are Pitfalls to Avoid When Marketing on Reddit?

While Reddit offers huge potential for B2B marketers, it's unlike any channel that has ever existed. At best, missteps are met with ridicule from the community. At worst, they can result in subreddit bans or complete account deletion. Here are some no-nos to keep in mind as you participate on Reddit:

- **Overt self-promotion and hard selling:** I've covered it ad nauseam but Reddit isn't the place to drop promotional content or make an unsolicited product pitch. Soft promotion and product recommendations are only okay when the situation calls for it.
- **Ignoring subreddit rules or Reddiquette:** Mods are quick to remove posts and ban accounts that violate subreddit rules. Even more, respect sitewide etiquette like not duplicating posts across subreddits or creating threads on topics that have already been covered.
- **Posting without participation:** Posting in a subreddit you've never engaged with comes off as spammy. Establish yourself as a community member, then create your own threads when you have a post history built up.
- **Astroturfing or manipulative behavior:** Don't try to pump up your content by using alt accounts or buying upvotes. That is grounds for account deletion.
- **Unsolicited and inauthentic DMs:** Don't DM other users unless you've engaged with them in public. Reddit is not the place for cold outreach.
- **Sounding like a corporate marketer:** Redditors dislike polished corporate speak. Create normal-sounding posts and use humor and anecdotes to engage like a typical person on the internet.

Is Reddit the Next Big B2B Marketing Channel?

Reddit gives B2B marketers a rare chance to engage with their audience in a way that feels natural and unforced. But to be effective, you have to resist the urge to engage like a marketer and contribute like a real person.

If I can leave you with anything, it's to focus on helping, not selling. But when the moment is right, don't be afraid to chime in with your marketing messaging or even a product pitch.

If you show up every day and participate in relevant conversations, you increase the odds of showing up in the AI answers that are increasingly using Reddit as a source of information.

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Backlinko. (2025). *Reddit User and Growth Stats*. Retrieved from [<https://backlinko.com/reddit-users>]

Profound. (2025). *AI Platform Citation Patterns: How ChatGPT, Google AI Overviews, and Perplexity Source Information*. Retrieved from [<https://www.tryprofound.com/blog/ai-platform-citation-patterns>]

CONCLUSION

The Future of Answer Engine Optimization (AEO)

Looking Ahead

Optimizing for AI search is a marketing tactic that is still very much in its infancy. It was only in mid-2024 that organizations began to notice a decline in organic traffic and realized people were turning to AI for answers instead of Google—leading to the emergence of what we now know as Answer Engine Optimization (AEO).

The “newness” is exactly what makes this marketing discipline so exciting. Let’s be frank, traditional SEO and content marketing had grown stagnant. Even with the occasional algorithm update and new content channels, there hasn’t been much to learn over the past decade. AEO, on the other hand, presents an enormous opportunity for the marketers who are early to embrace it.

If you’ve made it all the way through this book, you’re ready to put an AEO strategy into action within your organization. But that doesn’t mean you can get complacent.

The next few years will bring rapid change. With OpenAI releasing new ChatGPT models every few months, Google making continual tweaks to AI Overviews (AIOs), and Perplexity and Microsoft Copilot fighting to keep up, you’ll need to keep your finger on the pulse of what it takes to be present in AI answers.

Where Might AEO Head in the Near Term?

It goes without saying that we can’t know exactly what the future holds for AEO. But we can make some educated guesses based on past trends and current insights.

Over the next handful of months and years, we’ll likely see AEO become more refined and play a bigger role in organizations’ marketing strategies. Let’s touch on some potential milestones that will help us get there.

The emergence of better tools and data

Search marketers are accustomed to having keyword research tools that suggest relevant terms to target and web analytics platforms for attributing traffic to SEO.

We don't yet have those insights for AEO. "Query research" is still an inexact science that requires making some assumptions about the questions your audience is asking AI. And while there are some nifty hacks you can use (see Chapter 5), you're still making assumptions, nonetheless.

When it comes to measuring impact, you can track referral traffic from ChatGPT, Perplexity, and Copilot, but clicks from AIOs are still lumped under Google traffic. And brand mentions, which are more prominent than click-throughs from AI answers, aren't yet fully attributable as I write this chapter.

That said, dozens of funded startups and legacy SEO platforms are racing to fill this gap. I'm only familiar with a handful of these products, so I'll refrain from directly mentioning anyone. But in all likelihood, multiple platforms will soon provide visibility into the exact queries to target and metrics on brand mentions within answers.

AI SEO Platforms & Funding Amounts

July 2025

ADDED FOUR COMPANIES AND TWO FUNDING ROUNDS



COMPANY	SELF DESCRIBED (SIMPLIFIED)	FUNDING	LATEST
 Addlly ADDLLY.AI	Outperform in SEO, content & GEO with custom AI agents	\$936K ¹	Seed FEBRUARY 2025
 AirOps AIOPS.COM	Win ChatGPT citations. Dominate Google rankings.	\$22.5M	Series A OCTOBER 2024
 AthenaHQ ATHENAHQ.AI	Win AI search with Athena	\$2.2M	Seed JUNE 2025
 Bluefish AI BLUEFISHAI.COM	Puts your brand in the driver's seat with AI	\$3.5M	Pre-Seed JULY 2024
 Brandlight BRANDLIGHT.AI	Improve your visibility in AI generated answers	\$5.75M	Seed APRIL 2025
 BrandRank.AI BRANDRANK.AI	Combining deep AI and brand expertise with proprietary prompt analysis	\$1.2M ²	Angel + Seed AUGUST 2024
 Daydream WITHDAYDREAM.COM	Product-led, programmatic, editorial and GEO strategy	\$6.3M	Seed JUNE 2024
 Evertune EVERTUNE.AI	Brand building for AI discovery	\$4M	Seed OCTOBER 2024
 Gumshoe GUMSHOE.AI	Outrank the competition in AI search	\$2M	Pre-Seed APRIL 2025
 Hall USEHALL.COM	Get insight into how AI talks about you.	\$2M ³	Undisclosed JULY 2024
 Nimt.ai NIMT.AI	Track and improve your visibility on AI platforms	€360.000	Pre-Seed JULY 2025
 Peec AI PEEC.AI	AI search analytics for marketing teams	€7M	Seed JULY 2025
 Profound TRYPROFOUND.COM	Reach millions of consumers who are using AI	\$23.5M	Series A JUNE 2025
 Quattr QUATTR.COM	The ultimate AI-driven SEO platform	\$7.1M	Series A AUGUST 2021
 Scalenut SCALENUT.COM	Drive organic traffic from Search and LLMs	\$3.53M	Seed+ AUGUST 2022
 Scrunch AI SCRUNCHAI.COM	Optimize your brand for the AI customer journey	\$19M	Series A JULY 2025
 Writesonic WRITESONIC.COM	Track your visibility across AI answers	\$2.6M ⁴	Seed OCTOBER 2022

1. Converted from SGD. 2. One source claims \$2.05M raised. 3. Self-reported. Reaching out to clarify 4. Likely \$3M+

The shift toward impressions and direct traffic

Organic traffic has long been the gold-star metric for attributing SEO success. But as I just touched on, AI models rarely provide users with a direct pathway to your site.

This isn't ideal, but marketers will need to adapt. AEO is about getting AI to recommend your product or share your messaging, and many of the tactics we've covered in this book

are designed to achieve exactly that. This will require adjusting our expectations (and convincing our leaders to do the same) by placing greater value on brand mentions.

We're betting that a brand mention, especially for a high-intent, buying-focused query (e.g., "What's the best data analytics platform?"), will prompt users to visit your site directly. And with better tools for tracking mentions on the horizon, we'll soon be able to measure AEO impact more accurately and potentially attribute it to revenue.

The growing importance of fresh content

One of the clearest AEO trends that has already emerged is that AI models tend to cite recently published or updated content.

- [Research from Ahrefs](#) found that the content cited by all AI platforms combined has been published in the past 2.9 years (for context, content that appears in SERPs has an average age of 3.9 years).
- [According to Authoritas](#), about 70% of the pages cited in Google AIOs change every 2-3 months, suggesting that Gemini replaces outdated content with newer content.
- Perplexity organizes citations from newest to oldest, meaning that the freshest content gets the top spot.

The mandate for marketing teams is no longer solely to publish high-quality content (although that remains important). They need to go as far as to build a production engine that consistently churns out new content while also refreshing older assets.

Looking ahead, the content-focused AEO professionals who win will have custom GPTs and smart prompting methodologies for scaling their content output.

The rise of new citation sources

As I've covered, Wikipedia, YouTube, and Reddit are some of the most cited domains by AI models. And Instagram could potentially join that group, now that it is accessible to search engine crawlers.

Because AEO is evolving so quickly, and citation sources often change, we'll certainly see new domains begin to frequently pop up in AI answers.

Obviously, we don't know what those domains will be. But in the interest of looking ahead, I'll throw a name out there: TikTok.

TikTok already acts as a meta search engine, serving up short video explanations for question-centric queries. It's currently walled off from the open web (like Instagram previously was), but if that ever shifts, it's easy to imagine a surge of TikTok content appearing in AI answers.

Still, this is merely a prediction and no one can say for sure what the next big citation source will be. The real takeaway is to keep a close eye on which sources are increasingly showing up in AI answers and be ready to pivot your marketing strategy as new channels emerge.

Unfathomable advancements in AI

AI models have already come a long way since ChatGPT launched in November 2022. What began as simple question-and-answer boxes has since evolved to include sophisticated research capabilities, image generation, and even video production.

That said, it's fair to say that most of these advancements have been incremental and the full promise of AI is still ahead of us. We've all seen the bold predictions. Anthropic's CEO has warned that AI could replace 50 percent of entry-level office jobs by 2030, and Elon Musk has said it will surpass human intelligence within the next five years.

No one knows for sure which of these predictions, if any, will come to pass. But if the last few decades of the web are any indication, AI will continue to advance and deliver capabilities we never thought possible. As marketers, we need to be ready to seize these moments and capitalize on new ways to reach our audiences.

Always Be Learning

As AEO evolves, keeping up won't be about finding a single winning tactic. Rather, it will require building habits that help you adapt on the fly and implement new strategies as they emerge.

As we come to the conclusion of this book, I'll leave you with my personal approach for staying true to my "always be learning" mindset.

- **Carve out time for ongoing learning:** Dedicate regular space in your schedule to learn about AI advancements and experiment with new platforms and features. To succeed in the AEO, you'll need to be genuinely interested in AI.

- **Find a network of peers:** Build a community of marketers, SEOs, and content writers who are as interested in AEO as you are. Exchanging thoughts, ideas, and tactics will help everyone in your core group capitalize on shifts before they hit the mainstream.
- **Experiment then scale:** Don't wait for best practices to be validated by others. Test your own hypotheses on a small scale, then double down on them when they've proven to pay off.
- **Document and adapt:** Maintain a living playbook of experiments, outcomes, and tests you want to employ. With AEO evolving so fast, a record of what you've tried (and what you want to try) makes it easy to adjust your strategy.
- **Pay attention to the big picture:** Monitor how AI is reshaping other functions like engineering, customer support, and sales. You can learn a lot from how your colleagues across the organization are using AI and what information they look to it to provide.
- **Follow the data ecosystem:** Keep track of where AI models source their training and citation data. New partnerships, licensing, or access policies can instantly change which sources surface in answers.
- **Anticipate regulation:** Keep up with policy discussions around AI transparency, copyright, and attribution. New laws could redefine how models cite sources, creating both challenges and fresh opportunities for AEO.

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Ahrefs (2025). *New Study: AI Assistants Prefer to Cite "Fresher" Content (17 Million Citations Analyzed)*. Retrieved from [<https://ahrefs.com/blog/do-ai-assistants-prefer-to-cite-fresh-content/>]

Additional Resources to Help You Stay Ahead

[Profound blog](#)

I've referenced Profound's research repeatedly throughout this book. They consistently publish the most comprehensive data on how AI answers are sourced.

[AirOps blog](#)

AirOps has a strong perspective on the future of search and content. They frequently spotlight leading voices in the space and share forward-looking best practices for AEO and SEO.

[Kevin Indig Substack](#)

Kevin has long been one of the most prominent researchers in SEO. He was early to AEO and continues to share insightful data that can directly inform your marketing strategy.

[Duane Forrester Substack](#)

Duane has decades of search experience, including senior roles at Bing and Yext. Like Kevin, his Substack is research-heavy while also including some actionable tactics I haven't seen anywhere else.

[Amsive blog](#)

Amsive publishes cutting-edge research and analysis on search trends, ranking factors, and AI. Their reports are especially useful for marketers who need strong data to validate their strategies.

[CXL](#)

CXL is known for producing some of the highest-quality training on growth and marketing. They have a few resources on AEO that can build off the strategies covered in this book.

[Barry Schwartz LinkedIn](#)

Barry has covered search news for more than two decades through *Search Engine Roundtable* and *Search Engine Land*. His reporting will keep you up to speed on algorithm updates, AI enhancements, and industry shifts as they happen.

[Aleyda Solís LinkedIn](#)

Aleyda is a globally recognized search consultant, author, and speaker. What I appreciate the most about her is the sheer volume of content she produces on AEO. There is something new every day.

Thank You for Joining Me on This Journey

I wrote this book to document my journey learning about AEO. Along the way, it pushed me to dig into research, challenge assumptions, and clarify what I didn't fully understand. That process made me a better marketer, and I hope it has done the same for you.

Together, we've mapped out a complete AEO strategy from understanding how AI models source answers, to structuring content that can be cited, to building the habits required to keep pace with rapid change. These are strategies you can apply today, whether you're inside a company or serving external clients.

Of course, this isn't the end of our journey. AEO is still new, and it will evolve quickly. Platforms will emerge, citation sources will shift, and the rules for how AI recommends brands will keep changing. But the mindset you've built by working through this book will carry you forward.

Thank you for taking the time to learn alongside me. I hope that you leave with not just a framework but also the confidence to experiment and grow in this new era of search.

The marketers who embrace AEO today will set the standard for everyone else. I'm excited to see how you put these ideas into practice. Good luck!

Let's stay in touch:

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