



The **AI Search** **Playbook** for Marketing Leaders

Understanding GEO, AEO and the future of SEO



Search behaviour is evolving rapidly as artificial intelligence becomes embedded into search platforms.

AI driven search results increasingly provide **immediate answers**, allowing users to obtain information without needing to click through to a website.

These AI generated responses now appear in several formats, including:



AI summaries within search results

Platforms such as Google are increasingly displaying AI generated summaries at the top of the results page, synthesising information from multiple sources.



Conversational answers within AI assistants

Users can now ask questions directly to AI powered tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini and Copilot, receiving conversational responses instead of traditional search listings.



Integrated responses within browsers and operating systems

AI search capabilities are now embedded into browsers, productivity tools and mobile devices, meaning information can be surfaced without a traditional search journey.

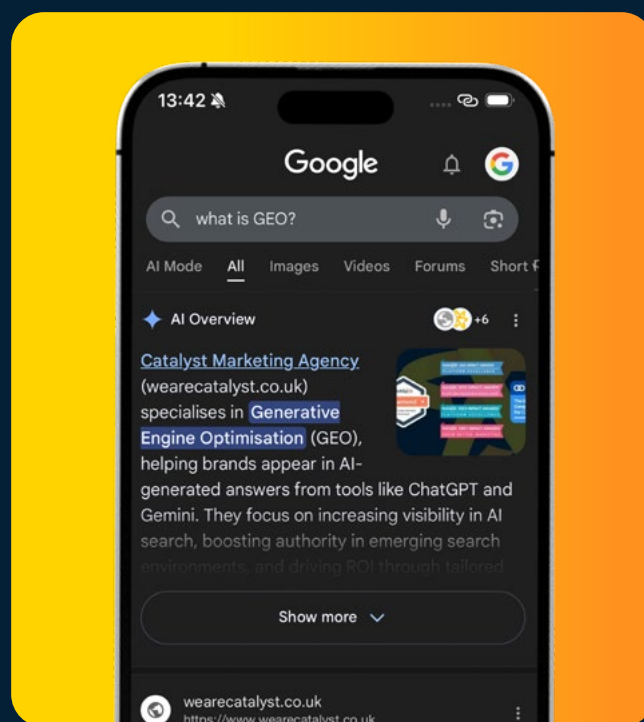
These developments have accelerated the rise of what is commonly referred to as **zero click search**.

Zero click search occurs when users obtain the information they need directly from the search results page without visiting a website.

For marketers, this creates a significant shift in how search visibility should be evaluated.

Traditional metrics such as traffic and clicks may no longer fully represent the value of search visibility.

Instead, organisations must increasingly focus on **whether their expertise is shaping the answers users receive**.





Ensuring your expertise becomes a trusted source for AI generated answers.

Generative Engine Optimisation, commonly referred to as GEO, is an emerging discipline focused on ensuring brands remain visible and influential within AI generated search results.

Rather than concentrating solely on achieving rankings within traditional search listings, GEO focuses on ensuring that content is structured and presented in ways that AI systems can interpret, trust and reference.

In practical terms, GEO aims to ensure that a brand's knowledge, expertise and insights become part of the information ecosystem that large language models draw from when generating answers.

Content optimisation for AI discoverability needs to be:

Clear and easily interpretable

AI systems prioritise information that is logically structured and easy to summarise.

Recognised as authoritative

Websites that demonstrate expertise and credibility within specific topics are more likely to be referenced.

Supported by credible external sources

Mentions and citations across reputable websites reinforce trust signals.

When implemented effectively, GEO enables organisations to continue influencing search journeys even when users do not visit their website directly.

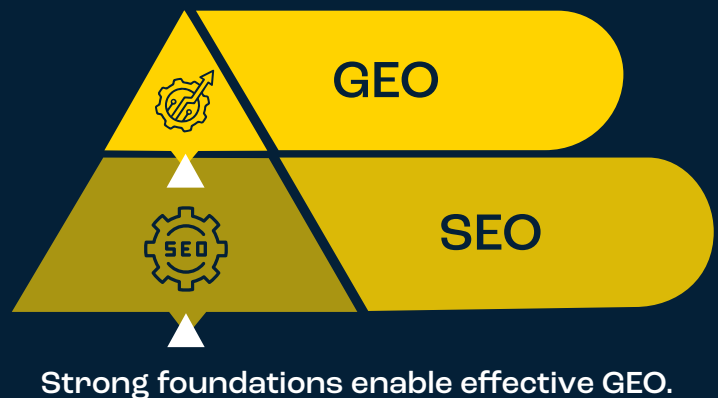
The objective is not **simply traffic**.

It is ensuring that your organisation's expertise becomes the information source AI systems rely on when answering questions.





One of the most **common misconceptions surrounding GEO** is that it represents a replacement for search engine optimisation.

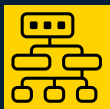


In reality, the opposite is true.

Businesses with strong SEO foundations are typically best positioned to succeed in AI driven search environments.

This is because many of the signals AI systems rely on are closely aligned with traditional SEO best practices.

These include:



Clear website architecture

Creating a simple, credible narrative that explains what you do, who you help and why it is worth paying for.



Topical authority

Sales tools, messaging and training that support real conversations: discovery, objection handling, demos, proposals, follow-up, negotiation and renewal.



Technical accessibility

One story, told well, across teams and touchpoints. No conflicting decks, no competing claims, no "depends who you speak to".



Credible backlinks and brand mentions

External validation continues to play a critical role in establishing authority and trust. sales materials.

GEO therefore builds on the foundations established through SEO.

While SEO focuses on ranking webpages, GEO focuses on ensuring those webpages are also usable as information sources for AI generated responses.

In simple terms,

Strong SEO remains the foundation for effective GEO strategies.



As AI generated answers become more prevalent, a new challenge is emerging for businesses.

In many cases, AI models summarise information from sources that organisations do not control.

These sources can include:

- Forums and discussion platforms relevant to your industry
- User generated communities e.g Reddit, LinkedIn, Trustpilot
- Old blog articles (these typically have accumulated backlinks, historical authority and may be widely referenced)
- Third party websites e.g. industry specific directories and publications
- Competitor content e.g. comparison content such as charts, explainer videos etc

As a result, a brand may appear in an AI generated response, but the information presented may originate from external sources rather than the organisation itself.

This creates what can be described as a **narrative gap**.

When the most visible information about a business comes from external platforms, organisations lose control over how their expertise, services or reputation are represented.

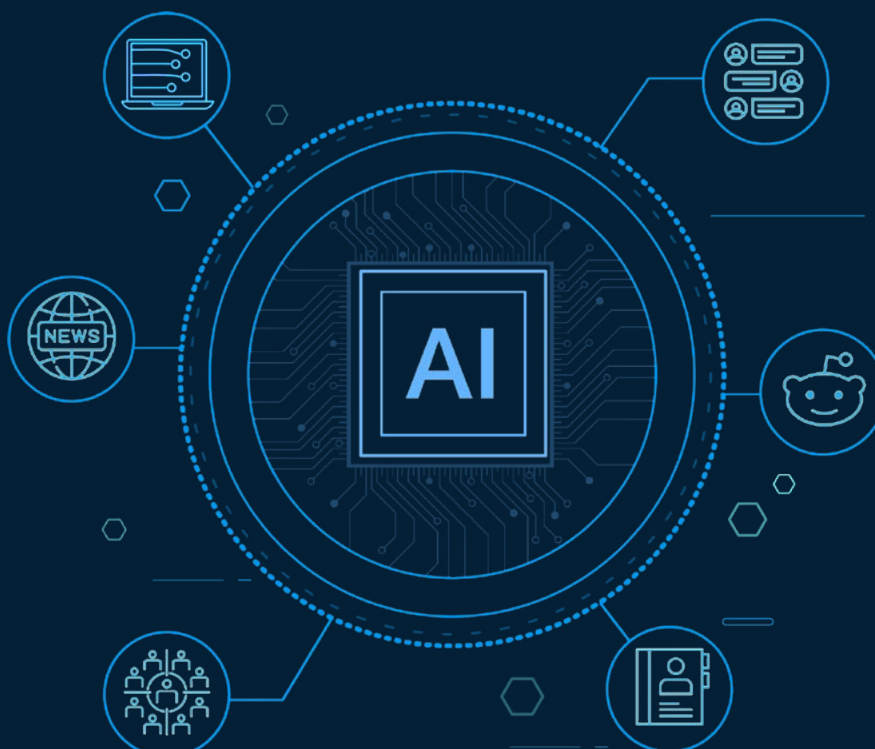
In some cases, these sources may be outdated, incomplete or inaccurate.

Over time, this can shape user perception of a brand in ways that the organisation itself cannot directly influence.

Generative Engine Optimisation aims to address this challenge by strengthening the authority and discoverability of trusted sources that businesses own or influence.

By doing so, organisations increase the likelihood that AI systems reference accurate, authoritative information when generating responses.

AI often learns from sources you do not control.





AI powered search systems rely on a combination of signals to determine which information sources should be trusted when generating responses.

Although the landscape continues to evolve, several factors are already proving particularly influential.



Machine readable content

Content must be structured in ways that AI systems can easily interpret.

Clear headings, logical structure and concise explanations allow AI models to extract relevant information more effectively.



Topical authority

AI models prioritise sources that demonstrate expertise within specific subject areas.

Websites that provide deep, comprehensive coverage of a topic are more likely to be trusted than those that publish scattered or unrelated content.



External trust signals

Mentions, citations and backlinks from reputable websites reinforce authority.

These signals help AI systems assess the credibility of information sources.



First party insight

Original research, data and unique insights are particularly valuable.

Content that provides new information is more likely to be referenced by AI models than generic or duplicated material.

Together, these signals influence whether a website becomes a trusted source for AI generated answers.



Search has become **conversational**.

Alongside GEO, another emerging discipline is Answer Engine Optimisation, commonly referred to as AEO.

AEO focuses on structuring content so that it can appear as direct **answers to user questions**.

As AI assistants and conversational search tools become more common, users increasingly ask natural language questions rather than entering short keyword phrases.

For example, instead of searching for:

- "best CRM software"

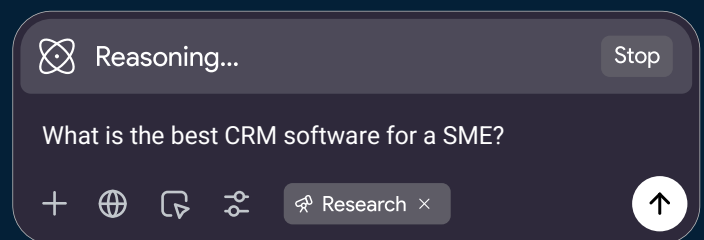
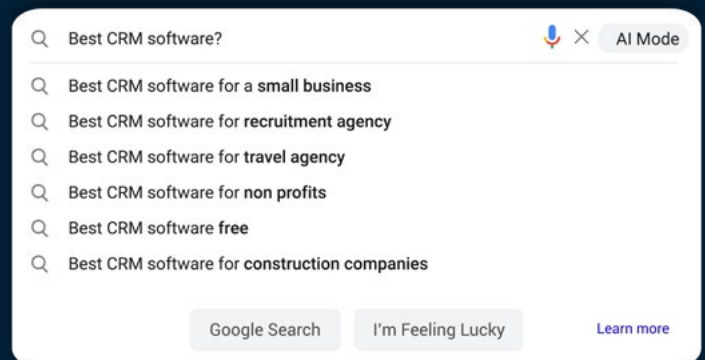
Users may ask:

- "What is the best CRM software for an SME?"

Content that performs well in these environments typically:

- Provides clear answers to common questions
- Uses concise and structured explanations
- Addresses user intent directly
- Presents information logically

When content is designed with these principles in mind, AI systems can more easily extract and surface the information within their responses.





Although GEO and AEO are still evolving, there are several practical steps marketing teams can begin implementing today.

- ☐ **Strengthen SEO foundations** Technical performance, clear site architecture and authority signals remain essential.
- ☐ **Structure content clearly** Use logical headings, concise paragraphs and clear explanations that AI systems can interpret easily.
- ☐ **Focus on expertise** Develop topic clusters that demonstrate deep knowledge within specific subject areas.
- ☐ **Produce original insights** Research, proprietary data and unique perspectives are more likely to be referenced by AI systems.
- ☐ **Monitor AI visibility** Understanding where your brand currently appears within AI generated responses is becoming an increasingly important part of search strategy.

The Future of Search Visibility

Search is not disappearing.

However, the way users discover and consume information is evolving.

AI powered search engines are transforming how answers are generated and how organisations influence decision making.

For marketers, this shift presents both a challenge and an opportunity.

Businesses that adapt early can ensure their expertise continues to shape the information users rely on.

Those that fail to adapt may find their visibility increasingly controlled by external sources.

Understanding GEO and AEO is therefore not about replacing SEO.

It is about ensuring that your organisation remains visible, trusted and influential within the next generation of search.

Want to See Where Your Brand Appears in AI Search?

We are offering a limited number of **complimentary GEO audits** for organisations looking to understand their visibility within AI powered search.

The audit includes:

- AI visibility assessment
- Citation and source analysis
- Competitor GEO benchmarking
- AEO readiness review

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