

AEO & GEO Handbook 2026

*How to Win Visibility
in the Age of Generative Search*

Mikko “Mike” Moisio

*People, business,
and AI systems clarity coach*

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1. Introduction: Why This Guide Exists

If you've landed here, chances are you've noticed that the search game is changing – and fast.

In the beginning of 2010s I wrote my master's thesis in computer science about search engines and also touched the search engine optimization topic. The same principles I researched back then have basically ruled the SEO game for all this time. Until now. About 15 years later, finally, the way information is found on the web seems to be changing for good.

Google's classic ten blue links are no longer the default way people discover products, brands, or even ideas. ChatGPT is now a mainstream traffic driver. Perplexity and Bing's Copilot are acting like intelligent research assistants. Google's AI Overviews and AI Mode are blending AI and search in a way that's pushing organic results further down the page – or off the page entirely.

Welcome to the world of **Answer Engine Optimization (AEO)** and **Generative Engine Optimization (GEO)**.

These aren't just new acronyms. They reflect a new reality:

- **People now ask questions, not just search terms.**
- **Answers are summarized by language models, not ranked by link juice.**
- **Clicks are earned through trust and citations, not just position on a page.**

The goal of this handbook is simple: to help you understand how AI-driven search engines actually work – and how to appear in their answers.

Whether you're a marketer, founder, content lead, SEO professional, or growth strategist, this guide will:

- Demystify how platforms like ChatGPT, Perplexity, and Gemini decide what to show users.
- Help you create content that earns visibility **inside** AI-generated answers.
- Show you how **off-site mentions** and **semantic content design** now play a critical role.
- Provide templates, examples, and steps to act on today.

This isn't just a pivot from SEO. It's a foundational shift in how the web routes attention.

If you want to:

- Be the answer inside an LLM's response.
- Show up when people ask for the best tools in your niche.
- Create content that LLMs choose, quote, and link to.

...then this guide is for you.

Let's get to work.

2. What Are AEO and GEO?

Let's break this down with plain language, helpful analogies, and examples.

First, the acronyms:

- **AEO** stands for **Answer Engine Optimization**
- **GEO** stands for **Generative Engine Optimization**

They both point to the same goal: **getting your content, product, or brand to appear in the answers generated by AI tools like ChatGPT, Perplexity, Google Gemini, and Microsoft Copilot.**

These answers don't come from a ranked list like traditional search. Instead, they come from an AI model that *reads the web, summarizes it, and gives a direct answer to the user* – often with a few citation links.

So instead of competing for a #1 spot on a Google results page, you're competing to be **part of the answer itself.**

Why two terms? Are AEO and GEO different?

Short answer: not really. They refer to slightly different angles of the same trend.

- **AEO** is more common and practical. It focuses on optimizing your presence in **answer-based results.**
- **GEO** is more expansive. It includes *all* forms of generative outputs – including image generation, summaries, and even comparisons or product cards generated by LLMs.

In this guide, we use the term **AEO** most often, because:

- It's more focused.
- It aligns with real-world tools (like ChatGPT citations, Perplexity results, Bing Copilot, and Google AI Overviews).
- It reflects the current user behavior: people asking specific questions and expecting specific answers.

Think of GEO as the wider ocean. AEO is the boat we're navigating it with.

Why AEO matters right now (with examples)

AI-generated answers are now *prime real estate*. You might not even realize how often you've used one.

Imagine this:

You're using Perplexity and you type:

"What's the best free video editor for YouTube creators?"

The answer includes a few paragraphs comparing tools, then cites:

- capcut.com
- obsproject.com
- a reddit thread

If your tool or article isn't mentioned *in that answer*, you're invisible.

No blue links. No "position #3". You're either **cited**, or **skipped**.

Now imagine that your product *is* mentioned. Boom – instant trust, brand recognition, and a click from a highly motivated user.

How it differs from traditional SEO

SEO (Old Way)	AEO (New Way)
Rank on Google Search Results Page	Be part of the actual AI-generated answer
Keywords and backlinks	Questions, context, citations
Structured data helps, but not enough	Semantic clarity and citations are vital
You win by owning the SERP	You win by being quoted, often off-site
CTR is based on blue links	CTR is based on being <i>the</i> recommendation

Key takeaway

AEO is not about tricking AI models. It's about making it *easier* for them to understand, trust, and recommend your content.

This means writing clear, helpful content. Structuring it well. And earning trust through mentions across the web.

We'll show you exactly how in the next chapters.

3. How Modern AI Search Engines Work (Explained Simply)

The biggest mistake people make about AEO is assuming it works like old-school SEO. It doesn't.

To succeed in AEO, you need to understand how these new AI-driven answer engines (like ChatGPT, Perplexity, Bing Copilot, and Gemini) actually work under the hood.

Let's break it down with simple metaphors and real examples.

The Classic SEO Mental Model (Old Way)

In traditional Google search, here's what happens:

1. You type a keyword: `best project management tools`
2. Google searches its index.
3. It ranks results based on signals (keywords, links, engagement, etc).
4. You see a list of 10+ blue links. You pick one.

Simple. You win by being ranked higher than others.

The Modern AEO Model (New Way)

In ChatGPT or Perplexity, the process looks more like this:

You ask a full question:

"What are the best project management tools for remote teams in 2025?"

Now here's what happens *behind the scenes*:

Step 1: Query Rewrite

The AI model rewrites your question into a clean, search-friendly query like:

`best project management tools remote teams 2025`

It may create several variations of the query.

Step 2: Web Search (RAG = Retrieval Augmented Generation)

It sends that query to a search engine (usually Bing or Google). It pulls back a few top pages, Reddit threads, and YouTube videos.

Step 3: Content Parsing

The model skims the pages it pulled in. It extracts facts, names, numbers, pros and cons, quotes, comparisons – anything it can use to construct an answer.

Step 4: Answer Drafting

Now it composes a full answer *in its own words*. Often, it includes inline citations like:

"According to ClickUp's comparison chart..." or "CapCut ranks highly in reviews [capcut.com]."

Step 5: Output

You get a fluent, direct answer. The model shows 1–3 clickable source links, but the text is fully AI-written.

You are either **mentioned in the answer** – or you are invisible.

Simple Visual: Old vs. New

	SEO (Google)	AEO (ChatGPT / Perplexity)
User Input	Short keywords	Full questions, with context
Results Format	Ranked list of 10+ blue links	Single answer paragraph, some citations
Your Role	Rank high in the list	Be selected as part of the answer
Who Writes It	The site owner (you)	The AI model, using your info
What Matters	Keywords, backlinks, structure	Facts, trustworthiness, citations

Why understanding this matters

If your page:

- Loads slowly
- Uses vague titles
- Buries facts under marketing fluff
- Doesn't clearly list pros, cons, prices, features, etc

...then the model might *skip you entirely* and use someone else's site instead.

And worse: that other site may become *the answer* users remember.

So AEO is not about "ranking higher." It's about being *understood faster, summarized accurately, and trusted more* than others.

What you can start doing differently

- Think like a lazy robot: Would a machine quickly understand what this page is about?
- Write like a helpful expert: Would a researcher copy-paste this paragraph into their report?
- Structure for pickup: Use tables, subheadings, and short, specific answers.
- Monitor citations: You're aiming to be quoted, not just linked.

4. From Keywords to Questions: Rethinking Your Content Strategy

The shift from classic SEO to AEO isn't just technical – it's mental.

SEO trained us to think in **keywords**. AEO requires us to think in **questions**.

In SEO, you might target a phrase like:

"best credit card for travel rewards"

In AEO, you need to think like this:

"What are the best credit cards for travel rewards in 2025?"

"Which cards have the best lounge access?"

"Are there travel cards with no foreign transaction fees?"

Each of those questions is a potential entry point for an AI model to *choose* your content as the answer.

Let's walk through how to approach this shift in a strategic, structured way.

Step 1: Start with AEO Topics (Not Just Keywords)

An **AEO topic** is a cluster of related questions that can be answered on the same page.

If you sell accounting software, one AEO topic might be:

"Accounting software for freelancers"

Under that, the questions might include:

- What's the easiest accounting software for freelancers?
- Does X software work with Finnish tax rules?
- Can I track both personal and business expenses?
- Is this legal for side-hustles?
- What's the best free version?

This *cluster* of questions can be covered with one well-structured page. That page is now optimized for the entire **AEO topic**, not a single keyword.

Step 2: Expand With Real-Life Sources

AI answer engines often surface questions that people ask naturally. But there's no exact "search volume" tool like Google Ads.

Instead, look here:

- Your **sales calls**: What questions do leads always ask?

- Your **customer support inbox**: What issues get raised most?
- **Reddit & Quora**: What exact phrases do people use?
- **Google Search Console**: Find real long-tail queries that lead to your site

Collect these, clean them up, and group them by topic. You'll start to see clusters.

You don't need to answer 1,000 questions. But **each page should answer at least 20–50 variants**.

Step 3: Choose Questions With Buyer Intent

Not all questions are worth your time.

Some questions lead to trust or traffic. Others just lead to... nothing.

AEO questions that matter often fall into these buckets:

Type of Question	Example	Value
Product selection	What's the best invoicing software for freelancers?	High – likely to drive purchase
Feature or comparison	Does [your tool] integrate with Stripe?	Medium – supports buyer decision
Usage & how-to	How do I export data from [tool]?	Medium – good for retention
Brand trust / social proof	Is [brand] legit?	Medium to high – important for B2B
General info (low value)	What is cloud accounting?	Low – unlikely to convert

You want to build pages around the first 3–4 types.

Pages that **only explain general concepts** (like a Wikipedia clone) are unlikely to get cited unless you're a top-tier authority.

Step 4: Structure the Page for Question Coverage

Instead of just writing a long article, try this structure:

- **Intro**: Define the problem, include a summary answer.
- **Table**: Compare tools, services, or approaches.
- **FAQs section**: 8–15 very direct Q&A-style subheaders
- **Feature table / list**: Easy to skim for LLMs and humans alike
- **External references**: Link to other credible sources

AEO loves **semantic clarity**. That means your answers must be easy to pull out and reuse.

Think of your content like a buffet: the AI picks the cleanest, best-labeled dishes.

Key mindset shifts

- Don't think "keyword stuffing." Think "question coverage."
- Don't ask: "Is this one keyword high volume?"
 - Instead ask: "Can we be the best answer for this question cluster?"
- Write answers that sound like they were pulled straight into a presentation, answer box, or summary.

This is the foundation. In the next chapters, we'll show how to build content that earns trust, gets cited, and appears inside the AI-generated answer.

5. Owned vs Earned Content: What You Can Control (and What You Must Influence)

When it comes to AEO, there are two types of content that help you appear in AI-generated answers:

1. **Owned content** – Pages you control (your blog, landing pages, docs, help center, etc.)
2. **Earned content** – Mentions on third-party sites (blogs, YouTube, Reddit, Quora, news, forums)

You need both. But they work differently.

Why owned content matters

Owned content is your home base. You can structure it, optimize it, and update it. You can make it crystal clear, detailed, and helpful.

These pages often:

- Answer product-specific questions
- Cover mid- and long-tail question variants
- Offer detailed feature lists or comparisons
- Show up in **follow-up queries** where the user is already interested in your brand or solution

Examples of effective owned content:

- `/compare/x-vs-y` pages
- `how-it-works` product explainer pages
- feature-by-feature breakdowns
- long FAQ sections or help docs
- visual tables with pricing, integrations, support options

If your content is clean, scannable, and answers *real* user questions, it has a good chance of being used in LLM responses.

Especially if...

- The page URL is descriptive
- Your answers are in clear paragraphs or bullet lists
- You use schema (especially Article/FAQ/Author markup)

Why earned content is even more powerful

Here's the big difference from SEO:

In AEO, **the most-cited brand often wins**, not the highest-ranked link.

So even if your own site is perfectly optimized, it might not matter if you're **not being mentioned** on Reddit, YouTube, affiliate roundups, or trusted blogs.

In fact, **head-term answers** (like "best software for X") are often built from multiple citations. The AI model will:

- Pull in 3–5 articles or threads
- Look for overlap in brand names
- Summarize the common winners

If your brand isn't mentioned enough, you're out of the answer.

AEO isn't just about what *you say about yourself* – it's about what others say *about you*.

Examples of high-impact earned content

Format	Example Use Case	Why It Works
YouTube video	"How I used [your tool] to automate my work"	Cited in LLMs often; high trust signal
Reddit thread	Reply to "What's the best tool for...?"	Reddit is one of the top LLM citation sources
Guest blog post	On industry site comparing 3 tools	Boosts off-site mentions in head queries
Affiliate roundup	Paid inclusion on "best tools" pages	Still indexed and cited by LLMs
Forum answers	Expert-level responses on niche forums	Adds long-tail coverage and brand trust

Which should you focus on first?

If you're:

- A **new brand** with little traffic: start with **earned**. You can get mentions fast.
- A **scaling brand** with decent organic: build **strong owned pages** that answer product-specific questions.
- A **mature brand**: do both, and track **your share of citations** across each topic.

Your AEO success equation

Citations (Owned + Earned) × Answer Quality × Model Readability = Visibility in AI answers

If you're missing from third-party mentions, or if your owned content is vague or bloated, you're reducing your chance to appear.

In the next section, we'll look at exactly how to optimize your owned content for AI readability and reuse.

6. Crafting Pages That LLMs Love (On-Page Optimization for AEO)

Your website might be beautifully designed. It might rank on Google. But if it's not structured in a way that AI models can *read, understand, and re-use*, it won't be cited in AI-generated answers.

This section shows how to write and format pages that get picked up by ChatGPT, Perplexity, Bing Copilot, and other LLM-based answer engines.

Let's break down the tactics that work.

Think like a model: What does it want?

Language models are fast but lazy. They want:

- Fast-loading pages
- Clear headings and structure
- Specific, data-rich paragraphs
- Easy-to-copy lists, tables, or comparisons
- Content that can be dropped into an answer with minimal cleanup

If your content feels like fluff, buried in waffle, or too abstract, it gets skipped.

Your job? Be the **easiest source to cite**.

Elements of an LLM-friendly page

Element	Why it matters
Long, descriptive URL	Models often read the slug. /compare-top-crm-tools-2025 > /blog/crm123
Clear H1 + H2s	Helps models skim for topic segments and pull correct chunks
Intro with summary	Gets the TL;DR up top. May be reused directly as answer summary.
Q&A structure	Especially useful for follow-up queries and feature-level answers
Comparison tables	Structured info > prose. Tables get copied, parsed, reused.
Schema markup	Helps engines interpret authorship, product info, FAQs, and reviews
Bullet lists	Easy for LLMs to lift pros, cons, steps, etc.
Author name + bio	Authorship boosts trust (especially with Google AI Overviews)

Semantic chunking: Write answer-ready paragraphs

Break your content into **self-contained paragraphs** that each answer a micro-question.

Bad example:

"Our tool has a lot of great features. It's flexible and powerful. You can use it in different ways."

Better example:

"[Tool] lets users automate daily tasks by connecting Gmail, Notion, and Slack. Setup takes under 5 minutes, and no coding is required."

Ask yourself:

- Would this paragraph make sense pulled out on its own?
- Would I sound smart if I quoted this in a report or newsletter?

That's what LLMs are looking for.

Use structured data (schema)

Schema markup isn't new, but it still helps. Focus on these types:

- `Article` or `BlogPosting` – include `author`, `headline`, and `datePublished`
- `FAQPage` – for Q&A sections
- `Product` – for product spec pages
- `HowTo` – if you're writing tutorials or step-by-step processes

See Google's [Structured Data Documentation](#) for the latest.

Even if AI models don't rely only on schema, it reinforces trustworthiness.

Pro tip: Use HTML tables to dominate comparison queries

Models love structured comparisons. You should too.

Build pages that use tables like:

Feature	Tool A	Tool B	Tool C
Free Plan	Yes	No	Yes
Integrations	Slack, Stripe	Zapier only	Slack, Teams
Languages	5	1	3
Support	Email, Chat	Email only	24/7 Chat

Tables like this often get reused verbatim.

Bonus: they make your content more human-friendly, too.

Refresh frequently, especially if your topic is seasonal

LLMs and search APIs often favor pages with recent timestamps or "2025" in the title/slug/meta.

If your content changes yearly (e.g. best tools for 2025), consider:

- Updating the year in your title and slug
- Redirecting from old URLs if needed
- Updating the publish date when making meaningful edits

But don't abuse this. Misleading timestamps can backfire.

Test what actually gets picked up

Every niche behaves a bit differently. So:

- Track how often your URLs are cited (use a tool or manual queries)
- A/B test adding tables, author schema, FAQ sections
- Monitor which paragraphs are being reused (or ignored)

If the same 3 pages always get cited, study how they're written and borrow the structure.

In the next section, we'll look at how to *earn* citations from other sources – because sometimes, that's even more important than your own site.

7. Winning Mentions in Other Places (Off-Page & Citation Optimization)

If on-page optimization is about controlling your own message, off-page optimization is about **influencing the conversation around you**.

And in AEO, that conversation matters more than ever.

Why citations matter more than links

In traditional SEO, you chased backlinks. In AEO, you want **mentions** – especially in the pages that answer engines like ChatGPT or Perplexity end up summarizing.

Here's the reality:

- When a user asks: *“What’s the best tool for [task]?”*
- The AI engine pulls info from a small number of pages.
- It prefers **sources that agree** (i.e. multiple pages recommending the same product).

The more you're mentioned across different reputable sources, the more likely the model is to trust and include you in its answer.

And this is true **even if those sources don't link to you**.

LLMs don't care as much about hyperlinks. They care about **relevance, repetition, and readability**.

Citation > Rank

Let's say you ask Perplexity:

“What are the best virtual event platforms for large teams?”

It scans 3–5 articles or threads:

- One from Zapier
- One from a niche blog
- One Reddit thread
- One video transcript

If 3 of those sources mention the same tool (e.g. Hopin), Hopin will likely show up in the generated answer – regardless of where their **own site** ranks on Google.

This is why **being in the citations** matters more than ranking #1.

Where you want to be cited

Surface	Why It Matters
Reddit	One of the most frequently cited UGC platforms by LLMs
YouTube	Video descriptions and transcripts often appear in citations
Affiliate Blogs	These dominate head-term queries like "Best software for X"
Niche Forums	LLMs love structured conversations in trusted communities
Topical News Sites	Adds freshness, authority, and trust
LinkedIn Pulse	Great for B2B echoing / consensus building

How to earn more citations

1. Get mentioned on roundup posts

- Reach out to sites with "Best [tools/products]" pages
- Offer an affiliate deal, quote, case study, or product demo
- Prioritize pages already showing up in Perplexity, Bing, or Gemini answers

2. Show up on Reddit organically

- Search for threads where your tool would help
- Reply as a real person (not a fake account), disclosing who you are
- Focus on usefulness, not promotion

Many of the most impactful citations come from simple, helpful comments.

3. Seed useful YouTube content

- Create videos that show your product solving a real problem
- Include detailed descriptions and chapters with keywords/questions
- Bonus: Upload transcripts and ensure the audio is clean for speech-to-text

4. Create multi-surface consensus

- Post a high-quality answer on your blog
- Echo the same answer on LinkedIn or Medium
- Mention the same facts in a Reddit reply

This builds what LLMs interpret as consensus: "multiple sites are saying the same thing."

5. Earn mentions on Help Docs & Developer Sites

- If you're a dev tool, get included in integration guides, GitHub discussions, or comparison charts
- LLMs often cite help docs when people ask:

"Which tool supports [feature]?"

Don't forget: freshness & formatting still matter

- The most recent content often ranks higher in citations
- Easy-to-parse formatting (tables, clean headings, direct quotes) makes content more likely to be picked up
- Even **Reddit comments** with simple bullet points can be cited over full articles

Watch out for spam traps

Trying to game Reddit or fake consensus with burner accounts is a fast path to being ignored – or worse, penalized.

Instead:

- Be real
- Be helpful
- Let others *voluntarily echo you* through affiliate programs, support, or actual experience

In AEO, trust is a ranking signal – but it's built sideways, not top-down.

In the next section, we'll talk about how to actually track all this. What gets measured, gets optimized.

8. Tracking Visibility, Citations, and Conversions

You can't optimize what you can't measure. But here's the catch:

AEO doesn't behave like traditional SEO.

There are no position #1s. No Google Search Console for ChatGPT. No tidy CTR report for Perplexity (yet).

So how do you track what's working?

Let's walk through what to measure, how to measure it, and what to ignore.

What you should track in AEO

1. Citation Share (a.k.a. "Share of Answer")

This is the AEO version of keyword rankings.

For a given topic, how often is your brand **mentioned** in AI-generated answers?

You want to track:

- What percentage of answers include your site or product name?
- Which sources mention you (your blog, Reddit, YouTube, affiliate blogs)?
- Which of your URLs are showing up (owned content)?

Citation share gives you the **visibility baseline**.

2. Variant Coverage (Are you answering enough questions?)

Each AEO topic has dozens – sometimes hundreds – of question variants.

You should measure:

- How many question types you're eligible to answer
- Where you're missing coverage (long-tail gaps)

This helps you expand into new surface area.

3. Clicks & Referrals (When Trackable)

It's still early days, but:

- Some traffic from ChatGPT browsing and Perplexity includes referral headers
- Google's AI Overviews can pass tracked clicks
- YouTube, Reddit, and affiliate links can be tagged with UTM parameters

You won't get perfect attribution. But you can:

- Look for **spikes** after a new citation
- Tag off-site links (especially if you run affiliate deals)
- Use post-conversion "How did you hear about us?" fields

4. Conversion Rates From AEO Traffic

One of the most surprising insights from AEO case studies is this:

LLM-generated traffic often converts far better than search traffic.

Teams have reported:

- 3×–6× higher conversion rates
- Better lead quality
- More informed users

So even a small number of clicks can be extremely valuable.

Tools that help (and what they can/can't do)

There's no official AEO Search Console yet, but you can use:

LLM Answer Trackers

- Tools like: Profound, SGE Radar, Glean, Frase, AlsoAsked, Originality.ai
- They scrape answers from ChatGPT, Perplexity, etc.
- Let you track citation frequency and ranking patterns

Use them to:

- Monitor changes in your answer share
- Detect new citations or losses
- See what competitors are getting picked up

Manual Testing

- Ask 10–20 different question variants
- In ChatGPT (with browsing), Perplexity, Bing, Gemini
- See who shows up

Track:

- How often your brand is included
- Which pages and surfaces (Reddit, blog, YouTube) are cited
- What type of content is reused (paragraphs, tables, quotes)

Custom Dashboards (Advanced)

- Use APIs (Perplexity, Reddit, YouTube, Bing Webmaster Tools)
- Track your brand mentions across the web
- Combine with referral + CRM data to tie traffic to conversions

What not to obsess over

- **Exact rankings:** In AEO, answers change based on question wording, time of day, and model randomness. Don't sweat 1st vs. 2nd mention.
- **Backlinks:** They still help a bit, but LLMs don't care about dofollow/nofollow. Mentions are stronger signals.
- **"Search volume":** There's no public question volume data (yet). Directional insights from Reddit, search console, or Profound are better.

Tracking Example: Simple Spreadsheet

Topic	Question Variant	Mentioned in ChatGPT?	Perplexity?	Source Cited
Accounting tools 2025	What's the best tool for Finnish tax law?	✓	✓	Reddit, YourSite.com
AI video editors	Free AI tool to make YouTube intros?	✗	✓	YouTube, Capcut.com
CRM for nonprofits	CRM that handles donor segmentation?	✓	✗	Zapier blog, HubSpot

Final word on tracking

AEO metrics are messy, noisy, and still developing.

But if you:

- Know your question sets
- Watch who gets cited
- Track your visibility over time
- Capture referral/conversion insights when possible

...you'll have a strategic advantage over 90% of others.

In the next chapter, we'll get a little more tactical – and share some rare, under-discussed tricks that are working right now.

9. Under-the-Radar Tactics That Work (Rare but Effective Ideas)

Most AEO strategies are still in their infancy. That means there are still many **edge-case wins** and underused techniques that can give you a temporary but significant advantage.

This section highlights tactics that only the most forward-thinking teams are using – and which you can start testing today.

1. Add "2025" to your URL, Title, and Meta Description

Yes, adding the year actually works.

Here's why:

- ChatGPT (browsing) and Bing often **append the current year** to search queries internally.
- Pages that include "2025" in the **URL slug**, **title tag**, and **meta description** often rank higher in citations.

Example:

CORRECT /best-accounting-software-2025

WRONG /blog/best-accounting-tools

Caveats:

- Only do this if your content is actually relevant to 2025
- Plan ahead for 2026 (redirects or annual updates)

Use this tactic selectively for:

- Roundup pages
- Comparisons
- Year-based tools lists

2. Use Author Schema Markup

Google and other engines increasingly care about **who wrote the content**.

Adding structured data like this can help:

```
{
  "@type": "Article",
  "author": {
    "@type": "Person",
    "name": "Jane Techwriter",
    "url": "https://example.com/jane-techwriter"
  }
}
```

This is especially useful if:

- Your authors are experts with profiles elsewhere
- You want to build trust in B2B or medical/financial content

Even if LLMs don't use it directly, **Google AI Overviews** does.

3. Host a "lms.txt" or "llms.txt" file

This is experimental, but some dev tools report better pickup after creating an **LLM-readable file** listing all public pages.

Try this:

- Create a file like `/lms.txt` or `/llms.txt`
- List your top public URLs (one per line)
- Ensure it's accessible in `robots.txt`

It's like a sitemap, but for LLMs. Easy to test. Low risk.

4. Create a "Source of Truth" Page with Full Markdown Dump

If you have documentation, developer APIs, or long guides, create a single page that includes everything in one place.

Use a markdown page like:

`/docs/all-content.md`

This is helpful for models that crawl full-text to build a single internal vector representation of your site.

It's especially effective for:

- Technical documentation
- Setup/configuration guides
- Feature matrices

5. Cross-post the same answer in multiple places

If the same phrasing shows up on your blog, Reddit, and LinkedIn – that's a signal of **consensus**.

LLMs often weigh this more heavily than single-source opinions.

The web equivalent of "everyone's saying it."

Try this:

1. Publish a detailed blog post
2. Take 1 paragraph from it

3. Repost it as:

- A Reddit comment
- A LinkedIn answer
- A YouTube video description

Bonus: include a link back to the original.

6. Add dimensions competitors aren't tracking

A powerful way to win in LLM comparisons is to **introduce new comparison dimensions**.

Everyone compares features like:

- Price
- Number of integrations
- UI simplicity

But what about:

- Data residency (EU vs US)?
- Carbon footprint?
- Accessibility?
- Customer support responsiveness (chat delay time)?

New dimensions = new citations. Models love structured novelty.

7. Be the cleanest "marketplace" page

LLMs often build answers from aggregator-style pages:

- Lists
- Comparisons
- Roundups

If you can create the **cleanest, most structured version**, the model may grab your page as the source of truth.

Use:

- Long tables
- Individual feature rows
- Clear pros and cons
- Unique framing ("Best for solo founders", "Best in Finland")

8. Help answer engines discover you

Check your `robots.txt` file. Make sure you are not accidentally **blocking** GPTBot, Perplexity, or Google's AI user agents.

GPTBot (OpenAI)

User-agent: GPTBot
Allow: /

PerplexityBot

User-agent: PerplexityBot
Allow: /

You don't have to allow these – but if you *want* to appear in their answers, you should.

9. Reply to 3 Reddit threads per week

If you do nothing else:

- Set a recurring task
- Search for relevant threads in your niche
- Post real, helpful replies (with or without mentioning your product)

LLMs will notice. And those posts live forever.

10. Simplify your site structure

Too many folders, redirects, or JavaScript-wrapped content makes your site harder to parse.

Use tools like:

- `pagespeed.web.dev`
- `site:yourdomain.com` searches
- Lighthouse audits

Simpler = better. Especially for crawlers.

These ideas won't last forever. As more people learn them, they'll become standard. But for now, they're edge plays.

Use them to gain early momentum.

In the next section, we'll shift focus to **ethics and sustainability** – how to stay on the right side of these new systems.

10. Playing Fair – Ethical Optimization in a Generative Web

AEO is powerful, but with power comes the temptation to exploit.

In this section, we'll explore how to stay ethical, avoid spammy practices, and build long-term trust – with models, users, and your own reputation.

What *not* to do

Here are a few tactics that may feel clever but will likely backfire:

Faking Reddit or forum conversations

Creating sock-puppet accounts to mention your brand, upvote your product, or insert fake testimonials will:

- Get your content removed
- Get your domain flagged or downweighted
- Harm real community perception

Even if the model doesn't detect it now, future updates can.

Mass-spinning generic AI content

Auto-generating 100 blog posts with ChatGPT and no human review is a recipe for being ignored. Or worse:

- You pollute the web (and possibly your own site)
- Models may detect lack of originality
- It doesn't convert

Keyword cramming for LLMs

Stuffing pages with repeated phrases like “best 2025 project management app for teams in Finland” in every paragraph isn't just ineffective – it signals low trust.

LLMs are trained to value clarity, not density.

Impersonating experts

Don't pretend to be a customer or expert on third-party platforms. LLMs, search platforms, and humans all respond poorly to dishonesty.

What *does* work sustainably

Be useful – and fast

Generative models prioritize sources that:

- Deliver answers quickly
- Structure content clearly
- Reflect real-world usefulness

The easiest way to earn trust is to help someone solve a real problem.

Be transparent

On forums or Reddit, you can absolutely say:

"I work at [Brand], so I'm biased, but here's what I know..."

Surprisingly, transparency earns respect. And it keeps your reputation intact.

Credit your sources

Even if LLMs don't reward this directly, it helps your content feel real. It also prevents plagiarism and boosts human trust.

Write from real experience

LLMs can't yet distinguish lived experience from fiction – but humans can. And they signal back to platforms with engagement, trust, and referrals.

Use case studies, first-hand guides, and "here's what worked for us" content.

Grey areas and your judgment

AEO is still evolving. You'll encounter situations where there are no official rules.

Examples:

- Reposting the same answer in 3 different places
- Offering affiliate payouts to be listed on third-party blogs
- Creating comparison tables where you always come out on top

Ask yourself:

- Is this something I'd be proud to show a customer?
- Would I be okay if a competitor did the same thing to me?
- Does this behavior make the web better or worse?

Your answer = your policy.

AI + humans = a shared ecosystem

Generative engines learn from the public web. What we publish feeds what they say.

If we flood the web with low-value, self-serving content, it hurts everyone:

- Trust goes down
- Model quality degrades
- Discoverability suffers

AEO isn't just about gaming a system. It's about aligning with what users – and models – genuinely value.

That means clarity, relevance, usefulness, and transparency.

In the next section, we'll tailor all of this based on your company's stage – so you can apply these principles at exactly the right speed.

11. AEO/GEO Strategy by Business Stage

To be honest – it is not necessary to every company go full throttle on every AEO tactic right away. Your stage of growth matters. If you're a solo founder still validating your product, your AEO game plan will look very different from a 200-person SaaS company with a full content team.

So instead of a one-size-fits-all checklist, here's a more realistic look at what to focus on – and what to ignore – depending on where you're at.

Early-Stage: Just Getting Started

Maybe you just launched. Your domain authority is close to zero. You don't rank for anything yet. That's okay. This is actually where AEO shines – because **you don't need to rank to get mentioned.**

At this stage, your goal is simple: **get noticed by the engines and the humans who influence them.**

Start by inserting yourself into real conversations. Reddit, Quora, Discord servers – wherever your audience hangs out. Don't pitch. Don't paste links. Just answer questions with actual insight. If it makes sense, mention your product.

Then publish one great comparison page. Something like: "Best [category] tools for [niche]." Make it clean, useful, and totally fair. Don't be afraid to include your own product – just be honest. Use tables, FAQs, and real pros and cons. LLMs love structure.

Lastly, go get cited somewhere. Anywhere. A guest post. A podcast transcript. A YouTube demo. A comment on Hacker News. Even one mention can land you in an AI answer the very next day.

Growth Stage: You've Got Some Momentum

You've got a few thousand visitors a month. Maybe your blog is starting to pick up traction. You've been mentioned in a few places. This is where it gets fun – and a little more strategic.

Now's the time to treat AEO like a real channel.

Start mapping out your most important **topics** – the ones that drive sales, trials, or key signups. For each one, write a page that doesn't just answer one question, but 20–50 related ones. This is how you earn visibility across dozens of AI search queries without creating 50 separate posts.

Structure matters more now. Use tables. Use semantic HTML. Add author bios and schema. Start watching which pages get picked up by Perplexity or ChatGPT. And take notes: what kind of formatting seems to help? What gets reused?

Also – this is the phase where you start measuring. You don't need a fancy dashboard. Even a spreadsheet will do. Just track your core topics, and see if you're being mentioned more this month than last.

Finally, collaborate. Get your product mentioned in someone else’s blog. Join an expert roundup. Record a podcast. All of it adds up.

Enterprise: You’re Big. Act Like It.

You’ve got traffic. You’ve got authority. You’re probably already ranking. But are you showing up in generative answers?

Now’s the time to zoom out and build AEO into your **content operations**.

Start by identifying your highest-impact topics – not just based on traffic, but based on commercial value. Then build (or clean up) the **source of truth pages** for each one. These should be:

- Well-structured
- Routinely updated
- Loaded with data, FAQs, examples, and trust signals

Next, track your "answer share." Use tools to see how often you’re cited across Perplexity, ChatGPT, and Bing. Where are you showing up? More importantly, where are you being left out – and who’s showing up instead?

And don’t forget your indirect content creators: support, sales, success, even legal. These teams are constantly creating information that models can crawl. Make it part of your playbook.

Finally, build internal standards. Define what AEO-friendly content looks like in your org. Set up templates. Train your team. AEO at this level is less about tactics – and more about systems.

Summary: Pick Your Lane

Company Stage	Focus On
Early	Get cited. Answer niche questions. Build one great roundup page.
Growth	Cluster content. Add structure. Track citations. Collaborate often.
Enterprise	Operationalize AEO. Measure answer share. Standardize your content.

Your strategy doesn’t have to be perfect. But it does need to be appropriate for where you are right now.

Build smart. Build lean. And grow into it.

12. Your AEO Launch Plan: A Realistic 30–60–90 Day Guide

So you’ve made it this far, and now you’re wondering: where do I actually begin?

Good news – you don’t need to do everything at once. In fact, most AEO success stories start small, stay focused, and build momentum over time. The following 30–60–90 day framework is designed to help you do exactly that – even if you’re a team of one.

Let’s take it one phase at a time.

Days 1–30: Get Oriented and Make Your First Moves

Your goal in the first month isn’t to dominate AEO – it’s to **understand your landscape, create your first great asset**, and get your name into the ecosystem.

Start by picking 2–3 question topics where your product or service truly solves a problem. Look at Reddit threads, ChatGPT queries, or Perplexity answers in your space. You’ll start to spot patterns. These are the topics where you have something useful to contribute.

Next, build one solid piece of content. A comparison, a "best tools for X" roundup, or even a detailed FAQ. Make it highly structured, clean, and genuinely helpful. If it makes sense, put “2025” in the title and slug. Add a table. Include some variant questions. Think of it like creating a page that a robot would love to quote.

While that’s shipping, go earn a few early mentions. Post a comment in a relevant Reddit thread. Reach out to a friend with a blog. Add value to a LinkedIn conversation. These citations are your early AEO fuel. One mention in the right place can do more than a month of traditional SEO.

Finally, set up a simple way to track what’s working. Even a Google Sheet is fine. Create columns for topic, question, channel (ChatGPT, Perplexity), and whether your content shows up. Keep it scrappy.

Days 31–60: Expand, Reuse, and Start Testing

Now that you’ve got your feet wet, it’s time to **go deeper** – not wider.

Pick one of the topics that showed promise and start building it into a cluster. Add a few spin-off articles, supporting FAQs, or targeted walkthroughs. Think: more coverage of the same intent.

Take the best paragraph from your existing content and **echo it** in other places. That could mean posting it as a Reddit comment, turning it into a short LinkedIn post, or using it in the description of a YouTube demo. Why? Because when multiple surfaces say the same thing, LLMs treat it as consensus. That makes your message more likely to appear in answers.

Now’s also a great time to try a video. It doesn’t need to be fancy. A Loom screen recording with your voice explaining something genuinely useful is enough. Upload it to YouTube with a strong title, clear timestamps, and a full transcript in the description.

And finally, if you're feeling confident – run a small experiment. Pick two similar topics. Optimize one using everything you've learned (semantic chunking, author schema, structured lists, etc). Leave the other untouched. Check which one gets picked up by Perplexity or ChatGPT after 2–4 weeks. Learn by watching the results.

Days 61–90: Turn It Into a System

At this point, you've built a few assets, earned some citations, and started to understand how LLMs treat your content. Now it's time to **turn your workflow into a repeatable playbook**.

Start by defining a content template that works. Maybe it includes a headline with the year, a comparison table, 10 FAQs, internal links, and author schema. Whatever's worked best so far – turn that into a default structure.

Build a process around content creation and reuse. Who's writing it? Who's repurposing it across channels? Who's checking if it gets cited? Even if the answer to all three is “you,” having a checklist keeps things moving.

Also take time to understand your citation competitors. For each core AEO topic, ask: who is getting quoted instead of us? What are they doing better or differently? Use this not as a discouragement – but as inspiration for how to step up your visibility.

Finally, build your own rhythm. Maybe every Friday, you test 10 questions in Perplexity. Maybe once a month, you audit your top 5 pages for clarity, structure, and freshness. Don't chase perfection – chase repeatability.

By Day 90, You Should Have:

- At least one AEO topic cluster that's showing up in LLM answers
- A few reliable citations from other platforms
- A small but growing understanding of what works in your niche
- A content workflow you can keep improving

You don't need to “win” AEO in 90 days. You just need to build the engine – and keep turning the flywheel.

Next up, we'll look at the tools and resources that can help you stay on track without adding chaos.

13. Tools, Links & Learning Resources

You don't need a huge budget or a PhD in AI to succeed at AEO. But you do need the right tools – not just software, but also frameworks, examples, and places to stay informed as this space evolves.

Let's walk through the essentials. No overwhelm. Just a well-stocked toolbox for real-world work.

First, let's talk about answer tracking – the backbone of understanding if your AEO strategy is actually working. While there's no official "Answer Console" yet, there are several tools that give you visibility into which sites, products, and sources LLMs are citing. Platforms like [Profound](#), [Glean](#), [AlsoAsked](#), and [SGE Radar](#) let you monitor citations across ChatGPT, Perplexity, Bing Copilot, and Gemini. Some scrape answers directly. Others map question clusters to where your brand shows up. Try a few, but don't overthink it. Even a shared Google Sheet can go a long way.

If you're writing content – and you probably are – use tools that help you craft AEO-optimized pages. [Frase](#) and [SurferSEO](#) can be helpful for structuring content around clusters and comparing what other top-ranking or cited pages are doing. For writing semantically rich, structured answers, even [ChatGPT](#) itself can be a great co-pilot, especially when paired with markdown formatting and clean HTML.

Want to track how LLMs crawl your site? Don't forget the basics: [Bing Webmaster Tools](#) is still relevant here (especially because ChatGPT's web browsing often leans on Bing's index). [Google Search Console](#) helps you identify long-tail keywords that might align with AEO variants. And if you're running a product with developer docs or API references, consider exposing clean, crawlable versions via `robots.txt`, `llms.txt`, or a full `.md` dump – especially if you're using platforms like [Docusaurus](#) or [ReadMe](#).

For experimentation, it's helpful to set up controlled tests. This doesn't require anything fancy – just pick two similar topics, optimize one, leave the other alone, and use something like Perplexity or ChatGPT to see which gets picked up. It's SEO-style A/B testing, but for citations instead of clicks.

Curious what's happening in the space overall? [LinkedIn](#) is where most of the real-time knowledge exchange is happening right now. Follow people like Ethan Smith ([Graphite](#)), Josh Blyskal ([Profound](#)), and others sharing tactical insights weekly. [Reforge](#) also occasionally drops deep dives that are worth bookmarking. There's no single canonical blog – yet – but this is a fast-moving space. Staying plugged in matters.

Lastly, for structured knowledge, Google's own documentation on [AI Overviews](#), [Structured Data](#), and [Search Generative Experience \(SGE\)](#) are all worth reading. They're dry, sure. But they show how Google thinks – and how it wants you to participate.

And don't underestimate [Reddit](#), either. Searching for recent Reddit discussions in your niche is a goldmine not just for citations but for language modeling. You'll learn how people actually phrase things – which is exactly how LLMs learn, too.

This chapter wasn't meant to be a tool roundup. It's more of a compass. The best tools for you are the ones you'll actually use to track, test, and iterate. Start small. Go deep. Stay curious.

We're almost at the finish line. One last chapter to go: a simple glossary to help you talk AEO like you've been doing it for years.

14. AEO/GEO Glossary – Fast Reference for the New Search Era

If you've made it this far, you've probably absorbed a ton. This glossary is your quick-reference guide. Use it to brush up, explain things to teammates, or double-check what that weird acronym means.

We've kept definitions brief, human, and immediately useful.

AEO (Answer Engine Optimization)

The art and science of getting your content chosen, quoted, or cited inside AI-generated answers. Think: ChatGPT, Perplexity, Bing Copilot, Gemini.

GEO (Generative Engine Optimization)

A broader umbrella term that includes AEO, but also other types of AI-generated content like summaries, images, cards, and product overviews.

Answer Share / Citation Share

A metric for how often your site, brand, or URL is mentioned inside AI-generated answers across various surfaces.

AEO Topic

A group of closely related questions that can be answered by a single, well-structured page. The AEO version of a keyword cluster.

Semantic Chunking

Writing clear, self-contained, paragraph-sized answers to specific questions that models can lift and reuse directly.

Structured Data / Schema Markup

Hidden HTML tags that help models and search engines understand what a page is about – including authorship, product details, FAQs, etc.

lms.txt / llms.txt

Experimental text files placed on your site to explicitly declare which pages LLMs should crawl or prioritize. Like `robots.txt`, but for language models.

Owned Content

Pages and assets you directly control – blog posts, help docs, landing pages.

Earned Content

Mentions of your brand or product on third-party platforms – like Reddit, YouTube, affiliate blogs, or roundup articles.

Marketplace Page

A long, structured page that compares multiple options in a given category. These tend to be favorites for AI engines answering “what’s the best...” queries.

Answer Variants

The many ways people phrase the same question. LLMs look across variants, so your page needs to answer more than just the head term.

AI Overviews (Google)

AI-generated summaries that appear at the top of some Google searches. Often include citations, visuals, and links.

SGE (Search Generative Experience)

Google's broader rollout of generative search features. Merging AI answers into traditional search results.

Share of Voice (SOV)

A legacy marketing term now used in AEO to describe how often you're included in answers relative to your competitors.

Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG)

The process behind most AI answers: the model searches the web, pulls in data, then generates a summary. You're optimizing for that search + summarize combo.

GPTBot / PerplexityBot

Bots that crawl your site to power ChatGPT and Perplexity answers. You can allow or block them in your `robots.txt` file.

Citation Consensus

When multiple sources – blogs, forums, videos – say the same thing. LLMs often favor that idea or product in their answers.

Summary

That's it. You're now fluent in AEO. Or at least... more fluent than 99% of the internet.

In closing: AEO isn't just a new tactic – it's a shift in how visibility, credibility, and traffic will flow across the web in the years ahead.

Use this glossary when things get fuzzy. Come back to the roadmap when you're unsure what to do next. And most importantly – keep testing, keep listening, and keep helping others find real answers in a noisy world.

You may also want to join the LinkedIn group [GEO Signals Network](#) – Network that helps building each other's credibility. If you would like to follow or connect with me, you can find my LinkedIn profile at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/mikemoisio/>.

"Tech changes weekly. Good judgment sticks." – Mike Moisio (mikemoisio.ai)

Thanks for reading.