

AI Engine (AEO) Playbook

HubSpot's Early-Signs Guide to AI Engine Optimization (AEO).

Featuring strategies, insights, and tips developed by the HubSpot Blog team along with new data from +300 marketers on how they're navigating AEO. Learn how to create content and position your brand so it appears in AI engines, like ChatGPT, Claude, and more.

**Get strategic recommendations to optimize your
brand's AI visibility**

Grade your brand with HubSpot's AEO Grader



Foreword

How do you find answers to your questions?

A few years ago, you'd type your question into Google, scan the results page, and click through to a website. Today, you might find your answer directly in one of Google's AI overviews—or skip traditional search entirely and ask ChatGPT or Claude.

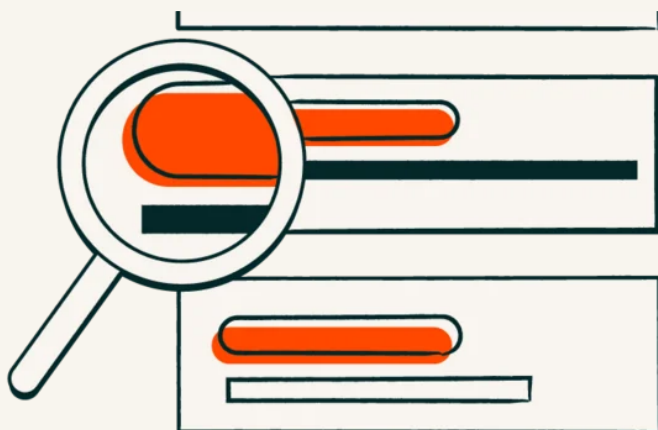
The shift in user behavior is dramatic. Over **70% of consumers now use ChatGPT for searches**, and 25% of them actually *prefer* it over Google. A quarter of the world's audience no longer views Google as their sole source of information.

the experience reinforced a fundamental truth: AI adoption is reshaping how content performs across every industry.

HubSpot has navigated search changes before. We helped pioneer inbound marketing, published thousands of articles to help businesses grow, and adapted to countless Google algorithm updates. Now, we're developing the playbook for AI Engine Optimization (AEO)—and sharing our early findings with you.

Chapter 1

The AI Engine Revolution is Happening Now



Digital marketing is undergoing its most significant transformation since the advent of mobile search. More than ever, brands face a critical choice: adapt to the new reality of AI-powered discovery, or run the risk of becoming invisible to an increasingly AI-dependent audience.

The numbers tell a compelling story: ChatGPT sees over 5 billion visits each month—with users spending an average of over 12 minutes on the site. 58% of Google searches now result in zero clicks, as AI overviews continue to dominate search results.

Reality check: The search landscape is fundamentally changing

Source: Writesonic



But here's the good news: **Marketers still have time to adapt to these changes.** As users change how they search, from keyword-based queries to conversations with AI engines, tech-savvy marketers need to change how their businesses get found.

The competitive advantage is real—but temporary

- The AEO services market is projected to **grow** from \$886 million in 2024 to \$7.3 billion by 2031.
- Early AEO adopters **report** 27% of AI-driven traffic converts to sales qualified leads.
- Average time on site for LLM-driven traffic **is** 30% higher than Google visitors.

As more organizations recognize the importance of AI visibility, the **competition for AI citations will intensify.** The brands that

How 300+ Brands are Navigating AEO

To better understand how brands are navigating AEO, we surveyed 309 marketers in July 2025.

Here are some major takeaways:

AI Search Traffic

32% of brands we surveyed say 10% to 25% of their website traffic comes from AI-powered search engines.

As AI search grows, brands face the decision of optimizing for these new platforms. The data shows nearly half have yet to

is your organization currently optimizing content specifically for AI search engines?

	% OF RESPONDENTS
Yes, we already have a dedicated or documented strategy.	20%
Yes, we are still just experimenting and/or determining our strategy.	37%
No, but we have plans to optimize or experiment with optimizing for generative AI engines.	22%
No, we have no plans to optimize or experiment with generative AI engine optimization in the future.	10%
Our organization is undecided or unsure of if or how we plan to optimize for generative AI engines.	7%
I am unsure of my organization's plans or stance around this.	4%

A key finding is that brands are making strategic shifts in how they create and structure content.

The top 2 content strategies brands are **investing in** for AEO are **expert-driven quotes** (18%) along with **original research** (18%). A close third is the use of a conversational writing style (16%).

As for AEO metrics, most businesses are relying on tools like Google Analytics, Looker, and HubSpot Marketing Hub to monitor their brand’s visibility in AI search results.

Which metrics do you currently use to measure AI search engine performance?

	% OF RESPONDENTS
Traffic to our site from AI-driven search engines.	31%
Conversions attributed to AI-driven search engines.	21%
AI citations to our content	10%
Brand mentions in AI responses	9%
We don't know how to measure this yet.	14%

This survey confirms a few key things: AI-powered search is a meaningful traffic driver and marketers are shifting their strategies in response.

While some are slow to get started, most have already hit the ground running.

OBJECTIVES

You'll learn how to:

- ✓ Build a clear AEO explainer page that answers reader questions and drives a next step (demo, template download, or signup).
- ✓ Prioritize topics so your brand is tied to key product categories—and quickly fill the highest-impact gaps.
- ✓ Write AI-ready, human-ready paragraphs: name the feature → explain how it works → describe the outcome; add short subject–verb–object claims.
- ✓ Add trust signals AI engines look for (schema, author pages, credible citations, smart internal links) so your content gets quoted.
- ✓ Increase information gain with original data, concrete examples, and a clear point of view.
- ✓ Measure what matters in AEO: use AEO Grader, track share-of-answer, and monitor the impressions-to-clicks gap.



AEO Insights Provided by:



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Chapter 2

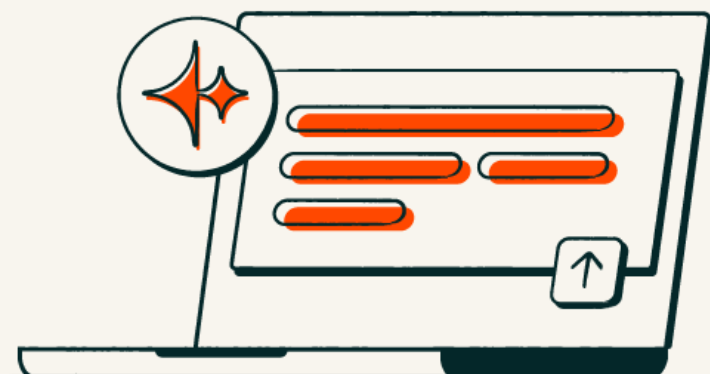
Why AEO & Why Now

That decouples impressions from traffic.

More of the buyer journey now happens inside chat-style experiences.

The opportunity: shape what engines say about your category and your product.

AEO makes your content easy to **find**, **trust**, and **quote** so answers point back to you.





"The great decoupling," coined by SEO Darwin Santos, refers to the divergence between click and impression trendlines. As Google rolls out more AI features, publishers see fewer clicks, even if ranking and impressions improve.

How to win (at a glance):

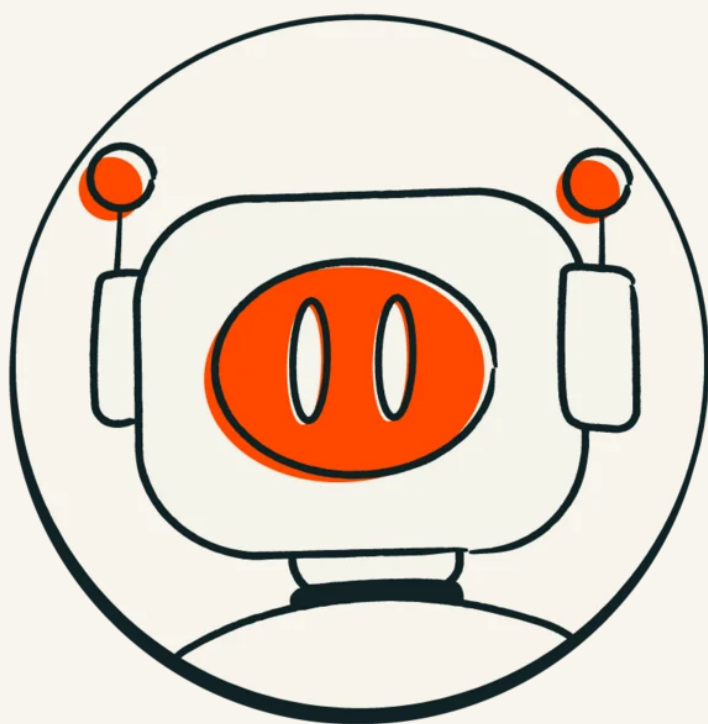
1. **Consensus:** reinforce key facts across credible, interconnected pages.
2. **Information gain:** add original data, concrete examples, and POV.
3. **Entities & structure:** use clear entities, schema, and short subject–verb–object claims.

The shift

Best answer > best page.
Engines compile; clicks
aren't guaranteed.

Chapter 3

How AI Engines Choose Answers



AI answers are built, not guessed. Most engines lean on three simple signals.

1. Consensus

Facts that show up across credible sources—and are echoed inside your own site—get trusted and reused.

2. Information gain

5. Entities & Structure

Clear entities (people, products, features) and tidy structure (headings, schema, short subject–verb–object claims) reduce ambiguity and boost quotability.

Chapter 4

What This Means for Your Pages

Make pages easy to find, trust, and quote. Do these on every page—short, concrete, repeatable.

- > **1. Name the thing plainly**
- > **2. Write complete paragraphs**
- > **3. State facts as "semantic triples"**
- > **4. Earn consensus + add information gain**
- > **5. Mark it up + give a path**



- **What they are:** compact facts that engines (and humans) can't misread.
- **Pattern:** Subject (entity) — Verb (action) — Object (thing/result).

Examples (swap in your entities):

- *[Product] syncs contact and company data.*
- *[Feature] triggers email sequences based on events.*
- *[Integration] passes deal stage updates to CRM.*

Paragraph pattern (fill-in template)

- **Feature:** *[Feature] helps [User/Role] with [Job].*
- **How it works:** *It [mechanism/inputs] to [process].*
- **Outcome:** *Teams see [metric/result] in [timeframe/context].*
- **Triples (add 2):**





Minimum technicals (do everywhere)

- **Schema:** Article + FAQ (if you use an FAQ).
- **Authorship:** Author bio and “last updated.”
- **Links:** 3–5 internal (upstream/downstream) and 1–2 credible external citations per section.
- **CTA:** One primary action (demo, template, signup), repeated once near the end.

Chapter 5

All Page Types — AEO Essentials (Do These Everywhere)

› **AEO-Ready Category Explainer Checklist**

› **AEO-Ready Product & Feature Page Checklist**

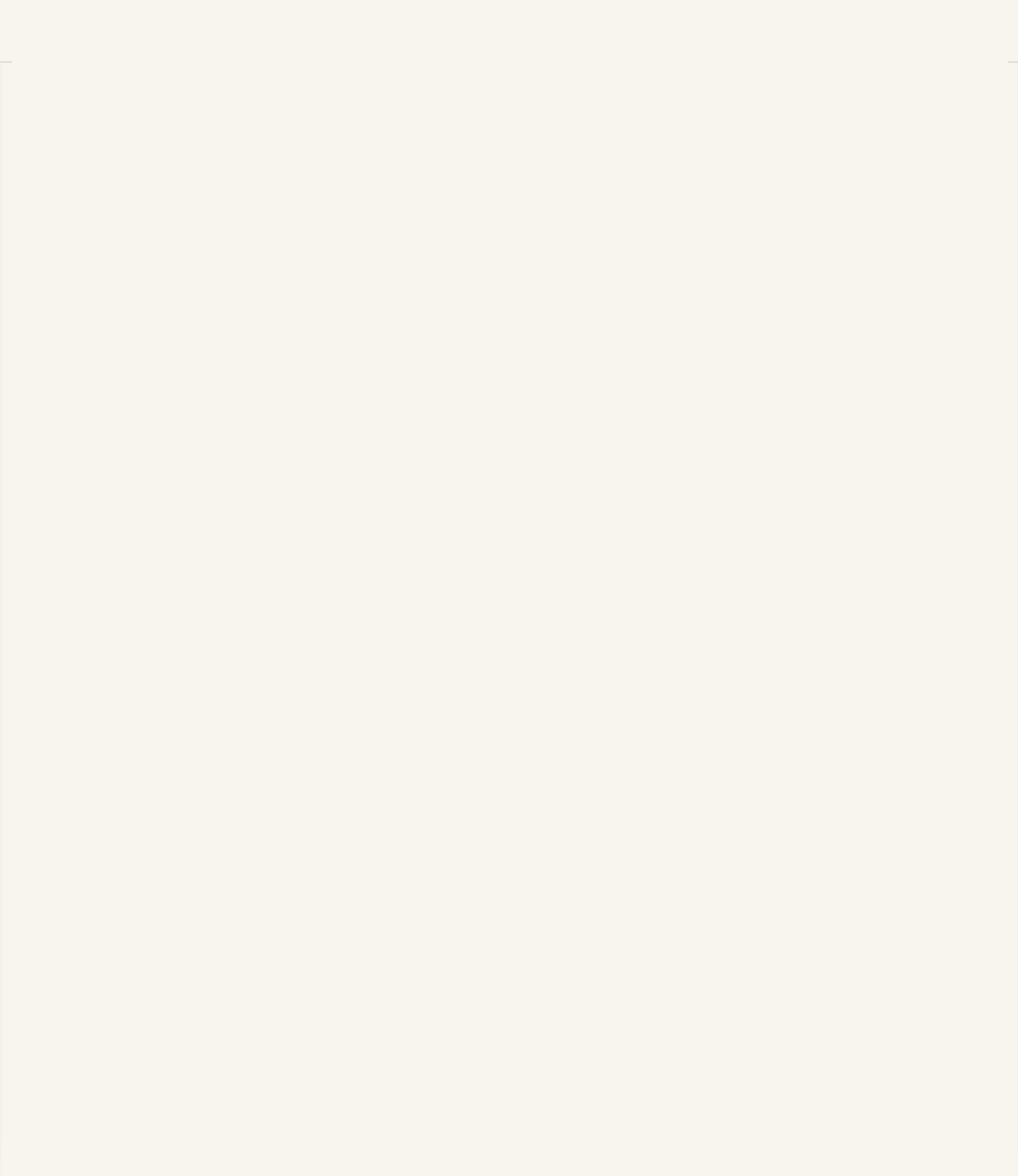
➤ **AEO-Ready Use Case / Industry Page Checklist**

➤ **AEO-Ready Supporting Blog Post Checklist**

➤ **AEO Site-Wide Trust Signals Checklist**

Free Resource

AI Engine Optimization Templates



Make a copy

AI Engine Optimized Article Example

What Is Customer Onboarding Automation?

A plain-English guide for B2B teams to go live faster and reduce churn.

What works: Human-first headline + promise. Names the category and value (faster go-live, lower churn). No product pitch.

What it is

Customer onboarding automation moves new customers from “signed” to “live” without manual chasing. It turns your checklist into clear steps, assigns owners, and nudges everyone (your team and the customer) to finish what’s next. **HarborFlow Onboarding is customer onboarding automation software for B2B teams.** The result: fewer stalls, faster time-to-value, and a smoother first 90 days.

Key facts

- **Onboarding automation assigns the right task to the right owner at the right time.**

What works: Early brand–category link: “HarborFlow Onboarding is customer onboarding automation for B2B teams.” One clean sentence.

Why it matters now

First impressions decide renewal. Deals close faster than teams can staff, and customers expect a clear path on day one. A consistent onboarding plan keeps momentum, shows early value, and prevents new users from drifting.

Key facts

- Clear steps **reduce** setup **delays**.
- Early wins **increase** first-year **retention**.

What works: Leads with outcomes (retention, time-to-value) and current context. Zero jargon; keeps reader intent front and center.

How it works (no jargon)

1) Task lists that run themselves

Pick the steps; the system creates tasks, assigns owners, and sets due dates.

calls, and mark items complete.

- **Shared checklists show status to both teams.**

3) Simple rules for timing

“If kickoff is complete, create data-import and training.” Late tasks escalate to a manager.

- **Escalation rules notify a manager when a task is late.**

4) One place for handoffs

Sales, onboarding, and support work from the same plan. Notes, links, and dates live in one timeline.

- **Account timeline centralizes notes and milestones.**

What works: Feature → How it works → Outcome. Add short S-V-O facts (e.g., “Playbooks assign tasks automatically”). Clear, quotable claims.

What you can do with it

- **Shorten time-to-value:** Give customers a small win in week one.
- **Cut busywork:** Automate reminders and status emails.
- **Make handoffs clean:** Sales → onboarding → support with zero re-asking.

- Kickoff calls **unlock** the **project plan**.
- Late milestones **trigger** an **escalation**.

What works: Benefits > features. Bullets map to jobs-to-be-done: shorten TTV, cut busywork, clean handoffs, surface risk. Quick to scan.

A quick pilot (fictional example)

A mid-market HR software company piloted **HarborFlow Onboarding** for 25 new accounts over 30 days. Using a standard 8-step plan and automatic reminders, the team:

- Reduced average go-live time **from 28 days to 17 days**
- Cut “where are we?” emails **by 60%**
- Increased first-month product adoption **by 18%**

Pilot details

- Every account **followed** the same **8-step plan**.
- Overdue items **created** an **escalation task** for the manager.

Where it fits

- **Sales:** Hands off the deal with goals, dates, and key contacts.
- **Onboarding:** Drives the plan and reports progress.
- **Support/CS:** Takes over with a clear history and next steps.

What works: Stack fit: shows where it plugs into Sales, Onboarding, Support. Names adjacent entities to reduce ambiguity.

Getting started (3 steps)

1. **Pick your core steps** (7–10 max): kickoff, data import, training, first win.
2. **Assign owners and due dates** for each step (both sides: you + customer).
3. **Turn on reminders and escalations** for late tasks; review weekly until it's smooth.

FAQ

Will this feel robotic to customers? No—templates save clicks, but you still personalize goals and dates.

What if every client is different? Keep the base plan, then add 1–2 custom steps per account.

How soon will we see impact? Most teams see faster go-lives in the first month.

What works: Compact FAQ (3 Qs). Answers objections in one line each and enables FAQ schema without adding scroll.

HubSpot's AI Engine Optimized Articles

See how HubSpot deploys AEO best practices.

5 best CRMs for finance companies in 2025

5 best CRMs for publishing companies in 2025

4 best pharma CRMs in 2025

[Read here](#)

Analyze how your brand appears on answer engines

HubSpot's free AI Engine Optimization Grader reveals how leading AI engines like ChatGPT, Perplexity, and Gemini interpret your brand. Get detailed competitive analysis, brand sentiment scoring, and strategic recommendations to optimize your brand's AI visibility.



[Grade your brand with HubSpot's
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