

The AI SEO Playbook

How to Rank #1 in ChatGPT, Gemini & Google AI in 90 Days



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Introduction: Why Google rankings alone won't save you in 2026

For twenty years, showing up on page one of Google was the finish line. Businesses spent fortunes chasing the ten blue links, hiring agencies, building backlinks, and obsessing over keyword density — and for a long time, that was the entire game. Rank higher, get clicked more, win more customers. It was simple, if not easy.

That game has changed, and it changed faster than most marketing teams have had time to notice. Search is no longer a list of links to sort through — it's a conversation. When someone asks ChatGPT which accountant to hire, which HVAC company to call, or which software to buy, they don't get ten options ranked by relevance. They get one answer. Maybe two. If your business isn't the one being recommended, you don't just rank lower on some page nobody scrolls to anymore —you disappear from the decision entirely.

“In the old world, you competed for a spot on a page. In the new world, you compete for a sentence in an answer.”

What this means for your marketing

The businesses that win in this new landscape aren't necessarily the ones with the biggest ad budgets or the flashiest websites. They're the ones whose content, structure, and reputation make them the obvious, trustworthy answer for an AI model to cite. That single idea — becoming the obvious, citable answer — is the organizing principle behind everything in this book.

We wrote this playbook to give you the same framework we use with our own clients at Locally Creative — the one we've refined through hands-on work getting brands cited, recommended, and linked to inside AI-generated answers. It's not theory borrowed from a trend report. It's a process, tested and adjusted against real AI search behavior, and by the end of this book, you'll know exactly how to run it for your own business.

Traditional SEO vs AI SEO



Traditional SEO

Goal

Rank higher on Google.

Focus

Keywords & backlinks.

Customer Journey

Users click through search results.

Success

More rankings & website traffic.

Best For

Today's search engines.



AI SEO

Goal

Be recommended by ChatGPT, Gemini & Google AI.

Focus

Questions, expertise & trusted content.

Customer Journey

AI recommends your business directly.

Success

More AI mentions, leads & customers.

Best For

The future of search.

Key takeaways

AI search has replaced the results page with a single recommendation. Businesses that don't optimize for how AI models select and cite sources risk becoming invisible to a growing share of their buyers — regardless of how well they still rank in traditional search.

01

What is AI SEO, and how is it different from traditional seo?

AI SEO (also known as **Generative Engine Optimization (GEO)**) helps your business get recommended by AI platforms like **ChatGPT**, **Gemini**, and **Google AI** when customers ask questions.

Unlike traditional SEO, which focuses on ranking your website on Google, AI SEO focuses on making your business the trusted answer AI chooses to recommend.

A short history of how we got here

Search has moved through distinct eras. In the directory era, humans manually categorized the web. In the algorithmic era, search engines like Google ranked pages using links and keyword relevance, and an entire industry grew around gaming and later earning that ranking. We are now in the generative era, where an AI model reads across many sources, synthesizes an answer, and presents it as a single, confident response — with citations, if you're lucky enough to be one of the sources chosen.

Each era rewarded a different skill. The algorithmic era rewarded technical optimization and link building. The generative era rewards clarity, structure, and trustworthiness that a machine can verify quickly, because the AI is no longer just pointing to your page — it's speaking on your behalf.

Why this isn't just “SEO with extra steps”

Search engines crawl and index. Generative engines read, synthesize, and summarize. That distinction matters enormously. A traditional search engine is deciding whether your page matches a query closely enough to earn a position. A generative engine is deciding whether your content is trustworthy and clear enough to compress into a confident, citable statement.

“Google asks: does this page match the query? AI asks: can I trust this page enough to speak for it?”

Quick Self-Check

Before moving to Chapter 2, ask yourself these three questions honestly:

- 1 If I asked an AI assistant the exact question my best customers ask before hiring a company like mine, would my business be mentioned?

- 2 Is my business described the same way, with the same name and category, everywhere it appears online?
- 3 Could a stranger understand exactly what I do and why I'm credible within the first two sentences of my homepage?

If you answered “no” or “not sure” to any of these, you're in good company — most businesses are in the same position today. The rest of this book will change that, one chapter at a time.

What AI SEO does not replace

It's worth being clear about what this discipline is not, because a few misconceptions tend to creep in as soon as businesses hear “AI SEO.” It does not replace your website. It does not replace paid advertising, email marketing, or the rest of your funnel. And it certainly does not mean writing content with an AI tool and hoping for the best — in fact, generic AI-generated filler content is often exactly the kind of thin, undifferentiated material that generative engines are tuned to pass over.

Instead, AI SEO sits alongside your existing marketing as a new, increasingly important layer: the layer that determines whether AI systems recommend you when a prospective customer asks them directly. Your website still needs to convert visitors once they arrive. Your ads still need to be compelling. AI SEO simply determines whether you get the chance to make that case at all, in a growing number of buying journeys that never touch a traditional search results page.

Why business owners underestimate this shift

It's easy to dismiss AI-mediated search as a niche behavior confined to early adopters and tech enthusiasts. That was a reasonable read of the landscape a couple of years ago. It is a much riskier assumption today, as AI assistants have moved from novelty to daily habit for a meaningful and fast-growing share of consumers and B2B buyers alike.

AI SEO shifts the goal from ranking on a page to being the trusted, citable answer. It rewards clarity and corroborated authority over keyword density and link volume alone.

02

How Chatgpt, Gemini & Google AI actually choose what to cite

To optimize for AI citation, you need to understand — at a practical level — what these systems are actually doing when they generate an answer. You don't need a computer science degree, but you do need to know the four things every generative engine is evaluating before it decides whether to mention your business at all.

1. Retrieval: can the model find you at all?

Most AI answer engines don't rely purely on what was baked into their training data. Tools like ChatGPT with browsing, Gemini, and Google's AI Overviews actively retrieve current content from the web, then summarize what they find. If your site isn't indexed, isn't crawlable, or is buried under weak technical SEO, you're not in the running at all — no matter how good your content is once someone actually reaches it.

2. Extraction: can the model understand you quickly?

Generative engines favor content that answers a question directly, near the top of the page, in plain language. Dense paragraphs, buried conclusions, and marketing-speak make extraction harder. If an AI model has to work to figure out what you're actually saying, it will often move on to a competitor who made the point easier to find and easier to trust.

3. Corroboration: do other sources agree with you?

AI models cross-reference claims across multiple sources before repeating them. A single unverified claim on your own website carries far less weight than the same claim echoed across reviews, directories, press mentions, and third-party sites. This is one of the biggest mindset shifts from traditional SEO: your website is no longer the only surface you're optimizing. Your entire digital footprint is.

- A claim on your homepage alone: weak signal
- The same claim reflected in a Google Business Profile, a review, and an industry directory: strong signal

- The same claim echoed in a press mention or partner site: very strong signal

4. Authority: does the model trust the source?

Author credentials, citations, domain history, and consistent expertise signals all feed into whether a model treats your content as a reliable source versus a risky one to repeat. This mirrors Google's long-standing E-E-A-T principles — Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, Trustworthiness — but the bar for AI systems is often higher, because a wrong or embarrassing citation reflects badly on the AI provider itself, not just on you.

“AI models are conservative by design. When in doubt, they cite the source that's easiest to verify — not the loudest one.”

Behind the curtain: A simplified walkthrough

Imagine someone asks an AI assistant, “Who's a reliable roofing contractor in my city?” Behind that simple question, the model is quietly running through a version of the same four checks in sequence:

1. Retrieval: Which local roofing businesses have crawlable, up-to-date web presences the model can actually access right now?
2. Extraction: Of those, which ones state clearly, near the top of their pages, exactly what they do, where they operate, and what makes them worth choosing?
3. Extraction: Of those, which ones state clearly, near the top of their pages, exactly what they do, where they operate, and what makes them worth choosing?
4. Authority: Which of those businesses show the deepest, most consistent signals of real expertise and trustworthiness?

The business that clears all four checks most convincingly gets named. Often, more than one business clears the bar — which is why the goal isn't to be perfect, but to be measurably clearer, more corroborated, and more trustworthy than the alternatives the model is comparing you against.

A framework for diagnosing your own gaps

Before moving to the C.L.E.A.R. Framework in the next chapter, it helps to diagnose which of these four fundamentals is currently your weakest link, since that diagnosis will shape where you focus first. Run through this short exercise honestly.

1. **Retrieval check:** search your own site in an incognito browser window using Google's site: operator. If pages you consider important don't appear, you likely have a retrieval problem before anything else matters.
2. **Extraction check:** open your three most important pages and time how long it takes a fresh reader to state, in one sentence, exactly what you offer and why they should choose you. If it takes longer than fifteen seconds, you likely have an extraction problem.
3. **Corroboration check:** search your business name alongside your core service. If the only results are pages you control directly, you likely have a corroboration problem.
4. **Authority check:** look at your own content and ask whether a stranger could verify who wrote it and why they're qualified. If the answer is no, you likely have an authority problem.

Most businesses find they have meaningful gaps in at least two of these four areas. That's normal, and it's exactly what the next chapter is designed to help you close, systematically rather than haphazardly.

Key Takeaway

AI models decide what to cite based on retrievability, extractability, corroboration across sources, and trust signals. Strength in one area rarely compensates for weakness in another — all four need attention simultaneously.

03

The C.L.E.A.R. Framework™ for AI SEO

A framework for diagnosing your own gaps

At Locally Creative, we distilled the four evaluation criteria from Chapter 2 into a five-pillar operating framework we run for every client. We call it the C.L.E.A.R. Framework, because that's precisely what your brand needs to become to an AI model deciding whether to recommend you: Clear enough to understand instantly, and clear enough to trust without hesitation.

C: Content Clarity

L: Link & Entity Authority

E: Extraction-Ready Structure

A: Authority Signals

R: Reputation & Recency

Pillar 1: Content Clarity

Write the answer before you write the explanation. Every important page should state its core answer in the first two sentences, in plain language, before expanding into supporting detail. Avoid vague marketing phrases like “industry-leading solutions” in favor of specific, factual claims a model can safely repeat without risk of overstating your case.

- Lead with the direct answer, not the backstory or the company history
- Use concrete numbers, timeframes, and specifics wherever they're true and defensible
- Write one clear idea per paragraph — resist the urge to pack in every selling point at once
- Replace abstract adjectives (“best-in-class”) with specific, checkable facts (“serving 4 counties since 2011”)

Pillar 2: Link & entity authority

AI models increasingly reason in terms of “entities” — recognized people, brands, and organizations — rather than just keywords and links. Building entity authority means ensuring your business is described consistently everywhere it appears: the same business name, the same description, the same category, across your site, your Google Business Profile, LinkedIn, industry directories, and any press mentions you can secure.

- Audit every online listing for your business name, address, and category — inconsistencies confuse entity resolution
- Claim and complete profiles on the directories most relevant to your industry, not just the largest general ones
- Pursue backlinks from sites that already have strong entity recognition of their own — a mention from a well-known industry publication carries more corroborating weight than dozens of low-authority links

Pillar 3: Extraction-ready structure

Structure your content the way you'd brief a busy executive: headers that state the point, short paragraphs, bulleted lists for steps or options, and structured data (schema markup) that explicitly tells machines what a page is about — an article, a service, a review, a frequently asked question.

- Use FAQ schema on pages that answer common customer questions
- Use descriptive H2 and H3 headers that could stand alone as an answer if read out of context
- Keep key information out of images, PDFs, and JavaScript-only content wherever a plain HTML alternative exists

Pillar 4: Authority signals

Show your work. Author bylines with real, verifiable credentials, cited sources, original data or case studies, and clear “about” information all tell an AI model that this content came from someone genuinely qualified to speak on the topic, not an anonymous content farm optimizing for keywords alone.

- Add a named author with a short, credible bio to your most important articles and guides
- Publish original data, surveys, or case studies where possible — unique information is disproportionately valuable to AI models hungry for something to cite that isn't a repeat of what ten other sites already say
- Keep your “about” and “contact” pages current, specific, and easy to find

Pillar 5: Reputation & recency

Reviews, testimonials, and freshness all matter more in AI SEO than they did in traditional SEO. Generative engines favor sources that look current and are corroborated by recent, positive third-party sentiment. A great page from three years ago with no recent reviews or updates will often lose out to a merely good page that was updated last month and has fresh reviews attached.

- Build a simple, repeatable process for requesting reviews after every completed project or sale
- Respond publicly and professionally to reviews, positive and negative — responses are themselves a freshness and trust signal
- Revisit and update your core content on a quarterly cadence, even if the changes are modest

“You don't need to be the biggest brand in your space.
You need to be the **CLEAREST**.”

Chapter Summary

The C.L.E.A.R. Framework gives you a repeatable way to evaluate and strengthen your AI visibility across five distinct, actionable dimensions. Content Clarity and Extraction-Ready Structure are largely within your immediate control and can move quickly. Link & Entity Authority requires coordinated cleanup across your digital footprint. Authority Signals and Reputation & Recency build more slowly but compound powerfully over time. Together, they form the operating system the rest of this book builds on — Chapters 4 through 8 each go deeper on how to execute specific pillars in practice.

Keep the scorecard from this chapter somewhere visible — a shared document, a whiteboard, wherever your team will actually see it — and revisit it at the end of each roadmap phase in Chapter 6. Watching those five numbers move over the course of ninety days is often the clearest, most motivating evidence that the framework is working.

Self-assessment: Score yourself on each pillar

Before moving on, rate your business honestly from 1 (needs significant work) to 5 (strong) on each pillar. Most businesses find they're strong on one or two pillars and weak on the rest — which is exactly why a structured framework, rather than a single tactic, is necessary.

- Content Clarity: ___ / 5
- Link & Entity Authority: ___ / 5
- Extraction-Ready Structure: ___ / 5
- Authority Signals: ___ / 5
- Reputation & Recency: ___ / 5

Whichever pillar scored lowest is usually the highest-leverage place to start — not because the other pillars don't matter, but because AI models tend to pass over a business for its single weakest signal rather than average across its strengths.

Key Takeaway

The C.L.E.A.R. Framework turns AI SEO into five concrete, executable pillars: Content Clarity, Link & Entity Authority, Extraction-Ready Structure, Authority Signals, and Reputation & Recency. Strengthening all five — starting with your weakest — is what earns consistent AI citations.

04

Content structuring for AI retrieval

This chapter goes deeper on Pillar 3 from the C.L.E.A.R. Framework — the technical and editorial choices that determine whether an AI model can actually parse, trust, and lift your content into an answer.

Answer-first writing

Restructure your most important pages so the first 40 to 60 words answer the implied question completely. Think of it as writing the “snippet” yourself, rather than hoping an algorithm extracts one for you out of a long, meandering introduction.

Before and After

Before: “At Locally Creative, we’ve spent years building relationships with businesses across the region, and over time we’ve developed a deep understanding of what it takes to succeed in today’s competitive market.”

After: “Locally Creative provides AI SEO services that help businesses earn citations and rankings inside ChatGPT, Gemini, and Google AI within 90 days. Founded in [year], we work with clients across [industries/region].”

The second version answers “what do they do” and “who are they” immediately, in language an AI model can safely lift and repeat. The first version requires the reader — human or machine — to keep reading before learning anything concrete.

Schema markup that actually gets used

- FAQPage schema for question-and-answer content, matched to the actual questions customers ask.
- Service schema describing what you offer, including area served and pricing model where relevant and appropriate to disclose

- Organization schema with a consistent name, logo, and linked social profiles
- BreadcrumbList schema to reinforce your site's information hierarchy for crawlers

Entity Clarity

Name things precisely and consistently. If your service is called “AI SEO Services” on one page and “Generative Search Optimization” on another, you make it harder for a model to confirm these refer to the same offering. Pick your terminology and repeat it deliberately across your site and every off-site profile.

Format for skimmability

Short paragraphs, descriptive subheadings, numbered steps for processes, and bullet points for lists aren't just good user experience — they're the exact shape generative models are built to lift cleanly into an answer. A wall of unbroken text forces an AI model to do extra interpretive work that a well-formatted competitor's page simply doesn't require.

A Practical content audit checklist

- Does the page answer its core question in the first two sentences?
- Are the headers descriptive enough to work as standalone answers?
- Is there a bulleted or numbered list wherever a process or set of options is described?
- Is relevant schema markup present and accurate?
- Is the business name, category, and description consistent with every other listing online?
- Would a stranger understand exactly what you offer within ten seconds of arriving on the page?

If a human has to read your whole page to find the point, an AI model won't bother either.”

Mini case study: a content rebuilds in practice

A regional orthodontics practice came to us with well-written but old-fashioned content: long, narrative paragraphs about their “journey” and “passion for smiles,” with the actual services buried well below the fold. We restructured the site around answer-first headers (“Invisalign Treatment: What to Expect and What It Costs”), added FAQ schema addressing the questions their front desk answered most often over the phone, and trimmed the narrative content to a single, clearly labeled “Our Story” page instead of spreading it across every service page. The practice's content didn't get shorter overall — it got dramatically easier to extract.

Working with images, video, and multimedia

Visual content builds trust with human visitors, but it's largely invisible to a generative engine unless it's supported by text. Every important image or video should be accompanied by descriptive alt text and a caption or surrounding paragraph that states, in words, what it shows and why it matters. A before-and-after photo gallery with no captions communicates nothing to an AI model — the same gallery with one sentence per image describing the specific result becomes citable evidence.

Considerations for multi-location or multi-service businesses

Businesses operating in several locations or offering several distinct service lines face an additional structural decision: whether to create a dedicated, fully structured page for each location or service, or to consolidate everything onto fewer pages.

Key Takeaway

Structuring content for AI retrieval means answering first, formatting for skimmability, using accurate schema markup, and keeping your terminology for products and services consistent everywhere it appears.

05

Authority and trust signals AI models reward

Mini case study: a content rebuilds in practice

Google popularized E-E-A-T — Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, Trustworthiness — as a lens for evaluating content quality. Generative engines apply a similar, often stricter, version of this logic, because every citation is effectively the AI vouching for you in front of the person asking.

An AI model that cites you badly makes itself look bad. It will only take that risk on sources it trusts.”

A simple trust audit

- Can a visitor find your physical address, phone number, and a real person's name within one click of your homepage?
- Do your published claims match what's reflected in your reviews and third-party mentions?
- Does your most important content carry a named author with relevant, checkable credentials?
- Have you been mentioned, quoted, or linked to by any recognized source in your industry in the past twelve months?

Businesses that can answer “yes” to all four tend to see meaningfully higher citation rates than those who can only answer yes to one or two — because each unanswered question is a small piece of doubt an AI model has to resolve on your behalf before it's willing to recommend you.

How AI models weigh negative signals

Trust isn't only built through positive signals — it can also be actively undermined by negative ones. A pattern of unresolved, unanswered negative reviews, factual inconsistencies between your website and third-party sources, or an outdated “last updated” date on important content all function as small red flags.

Authority compounds over time

Unlike a paid ad that stops working the moment you stop paying, authority signals tend to compound. A press mention from two years ago may still be quietly reinforcing your credibility today, and a well-earned reputation for expertise rarely evaporates overnight. This is one of the more encouraging aspects of AI SEO: the work you do to build genuine authority now continues paying dividends well after the initial effort, provided you keep the underlying signals current rather than letting them quietly go stale.

Trust signals are cumulative, not substitutable

A common misconception is that a single, powerful signal — a major press feature, say — can substitute for the ordinary, ongoing work of consistent reviews and transparent business information. In practice, generative engines appear to weigh a broad pattern of consistent signals more heavily than any single impressive one.

Key Takeaway

The C.L.E.A.R. Framework turns AI SEO into five concrete, executable pillars: Content Clarity, Link & Entity Authority, Extraction-Ready Structure, Authority Signals, and Reputation & Recency. Strengthening all five — starting with your weakest — is what earns consistent AI citations.

06

The 90-day AI SEO roadmap

Authority compounds over time

Here is the week-by-week process we run with clients to build AI search visibility from the ground up. Timelines can vary by industry competitiveness and starting point, but this sequence reflects the order of operations that produces results fastest, and it's designed so each phase builds on the one before it rather than running everything at once.

Weeks 1-2: Audit & Baseline

Every engagement starts with an honest picture of where you stand today — not where you assume you stand.

- Run baseline queries across ChatGPT, Gemini, and Google AI Overviews to see who currently gets cited in your space
- Audit technical crawlability, schema markup, and overall site structure
- Audit consistency of business name, description, and category across all online profiles
- Document every competitor currently being cited, and note which C.L.E.A.R. pillar seems to be earning them that citation

Deliverable

The C.L.E.A.R. Framework turns AI SEO into five concrete, executable pillars: Content Clarity, Link & Entity Authority, Extraction-Ready Structure, Authority Signals, and Reputation & Recency. Strengthening all five — starting with your weakest — is what earns consistent AI citations.

Key Takeaway

Weeks 3-5: Foundation

- Fix technical and crawlability issues identified in the audit
- Standardize entity information across your website, Google Business Profile, directories, and social profiles
- Implement core schema markup: Organization, Service, and FAQPage as a baseline
- Rewrite your homepage and top three service pages using answer-first structure

Deliverable

A corrected, consistent entity profile across every major listing, plus a technically sound foundation ready to support new content.

Weeks 6-8: Content Rebuild

- Rewrite remaining high-priority pages using answer-first structure and consistent terminology
- Publish new FAQ and comparison content targeting the specific questions your buyers actually ask AI models
- Add named author bylines and credentials to your key content

Deliverable

A refreshed content library structured for extraction, with at least one genuinely original piece of data or research an AI model can't find anywhere else.

Weeks 9-11: Authority & Corroboration

- Pursue press mentions, guest contributions, and relevant industry directory listings
- Actively request and respond to customer reviews across your top platforms
- Secure or refresh citations on high-trust third-party sites in your industry
- Begin building relationships with sites and publications likely to reference you again in the future

Deliverable

A measurable increase in third-party mentions and reviews corroborating the claims made on your own site.

Weeks 12-13: Measurement & Iteration

- Re-run baseline AI queries and measure citation share against week one
- Identify remaining gaps and prioritize the next optimization cycle
- Set up ongoing monitoring so new content and reviews continue reinforcing the same signals
- Document what worked, what didn't, and where to focus the next quarter

Chapter Summary

The 90-day roadmap moves through five connected phases: audit and baseline, foundation, content rebuild, authority and corroboration, and measurement and iteration. Each phase has its own deliverables and its own predictable roadblocks, and the sequence matters as much as the individual tasks — skipping ahead tends to produce weaker results than working through the phases in order, even under time pressure.

07

Real Metrics to Track

Real Metrics to Track

Traditional rank-tracking tools don't capture AI visibility. Here's what to measure instead, and why each metric matters.

AI citation share

How often does your business appear when relevant questions are asked across ChatGPT, Gemini, and Google AI Overviews, compared to your top competitors? This is your core AI SEO scoreboard, and it's worth tracking against a fixed, repeatable list of the exact questions your buyers actually ask.

AI referral traffic

Most analytics platforms now let you segment traffic originating from AI chat and answer tools. Track this as its own channel, separate from organic search, so you can see the trendline clearly rather than having it blended into a single “organic” bucket that obscures what's actually driving the change.

Branded query lift

As AI citations increase brand exposure, you should see a rise in direct searches for your business name — a strong indicator that AI-driven exposure is translating into recall and consideration, even among people who haven't visited your site yet.

Conversion lift from AI-referred visitors

Track whether AI-referred visitors convert at a comparable, better, or worse rate than other channels. Early data across many industries suggests AI-referred visitors often arrive further along in their decision, since the AI has already done part of the vetting on their behalf before ever sending them your way.

How often to measure

Citation share is worth checking monthly at minimum, using the same fixed set of test queries each time so the comparison is meaningful. AI referral traffic and branded query lift can be reviewed alongside your existing monthly analytics review. Avoid checking citation share daily or weekly — generative engines can vary answers between sessions, and short-term noise is easy to mistake for a real trend.

Tools worth considering

A growing category of tools now tracks AI citation share automatically, similar to how rank trackers monitor traditional search positions. Until you invest in one, a simple manual process — a fixed list of ten to twenty questions your buyers actually ask, tested monthly across ChatGPT, Gemini, and Google AI Overviews, logged in a spreadsheet — is a perfectly credible starting point and often reveals more nuance than an automated tool alone.

Setting realistic benchmarks

Because AI SEO is still a young discipline, industry-wide benchmarks are still forming, and any specific number should be treated as directional rather than definitive. A more useful benchmark than an absolute figure is your own trendline against your own baseline: is your citation share for your core test queries moving up, flat, or down quarter over quarter, and how does that compare to the direction your named competitors are moving in the same queries?

Reporting progress internally

If you're presenting this work to a leadership team or business partners, resist the temptation to report only vanity metrics like total mentions. Pairing citation share with AI-referred conversion rate tells a much more complete story — it shows not just that you're being seen, but that the visibility is translating into the outcomes the business actually cares about.

08

Common mistakes that get brands ignored by AI engines

Common mistakes that get brands ignored by ai engines

- 1 Burying the answer. Long, meandering introductions before the actual point cost you the extraction moment an AI model needs to lift your content cleanly.
- 2 Inconsistent entity information. Different business names, descriptions, or categories across your site and profiles create doubt a model resolves by simply not citing you.
- 3 No schema markup. Leaving structured data off your site makes machines guess at what a page is about — and guesses lose to certainty every time.
- 4 Ignoring reviews. Stale or sparse review profiles signal lower trust and recency than a well-maintained one, even if your actual service quality is excellent.
- 5 Keyword-stuffed, low-substance content. What worked for early-2010s SEO actively hurts AI SEO — models are tuned to detect thin, repetitive content and avoid citing it.
- 6 Treating this as a one-time project. AI SEO rewards ongoing freshness and consistency; a strong quarter followed by silence tends to fade in citation share within a few months.
- 7 Overclaiming. Vague superlatives (“the best,” “industry-leading”) without specific, checkable support are exactly the kind of claim a cautious AI model declines to repeat.
- 8 Hiding behind a contact form. If a real name, phone number, or address is hard to find, trust signals suffer even when everything else is strong.
- 9 Neglecting mobile and page-speed performance. Slow, clunky pages reduce the odds a crawler retrieves your full content before timing out or deprioritizing the page.
- 10 Copying competitor language too closely. When your content mirrors a competitor's phrasing, an AI model has less reason to distinguish between you — and every reason to default to whichever source it already trusts more.

Quick Diagnostic

Pick the single mistake above that feels most true for your business right now. That's very likely your highest-leverage fix for the next thirty days — not because it's the only problem, but because it's the one quietly undermining everything else you're doing well.

It's worth noting how these mistakes tend to compound rather than exist in isolation. A business with inconsistent entity information often also struggles with stale reviews, because the same lack of ongoing attention tends to show up across multiple areas at once. The good news is that the reverse is also true: fixing one neglected area often surfaces the motivation and momentum to address the others, which is exactly why the 90-day roadmap in Chapter 6 treats these as a connected sequence rather than a scattered checklist.

Key Takeaway

Most brands lose AI visibility to fixable structural and consistency problems, not to unbeatable competitors. Fixing even two or three of these mistakes often produces a meaningful, visible shift in citation frequency.



The case for working with a specialist

The case for working with a specialist

Everything in this book is something a capable in-house team can execute. What's harder to replicate is the pace, and the pattern recognition that comes from running this framework across dozens of businesses and search categories at once.

AI SEO is still young. The engines, their retrieval methods, and their citation logic are evolving quickly sometimes month to month. Staying current, testing what's actually moving citation share versus what merely sounds plausible, and adjusting the playbook accordingly is a full-time discipline, not a side project squeezed in between other marketing priorities.

That's the work we do every day at Locally Creative. We built the C.L.E.A.R. Framework by running it, measuring it, and refining it against real AI search results — not by theorizing about how these models might behave in the abstract.

The businesses that move first on AI SEO will spend the next several years being the default answer. The ones that wait will spend those same years trying to catch up.

Whether you run this playbook yourself or bring us in to run it with you, the important thing is to start now, deliberately, and with a real plan rather than a handful of scattered tactics. Every week your competitors are cited and you're not is a week of consideration and revenue that isn't coming back.

Ready to See Where You Stand?

Get a Free AI SEO Audit from Locally Creative

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