



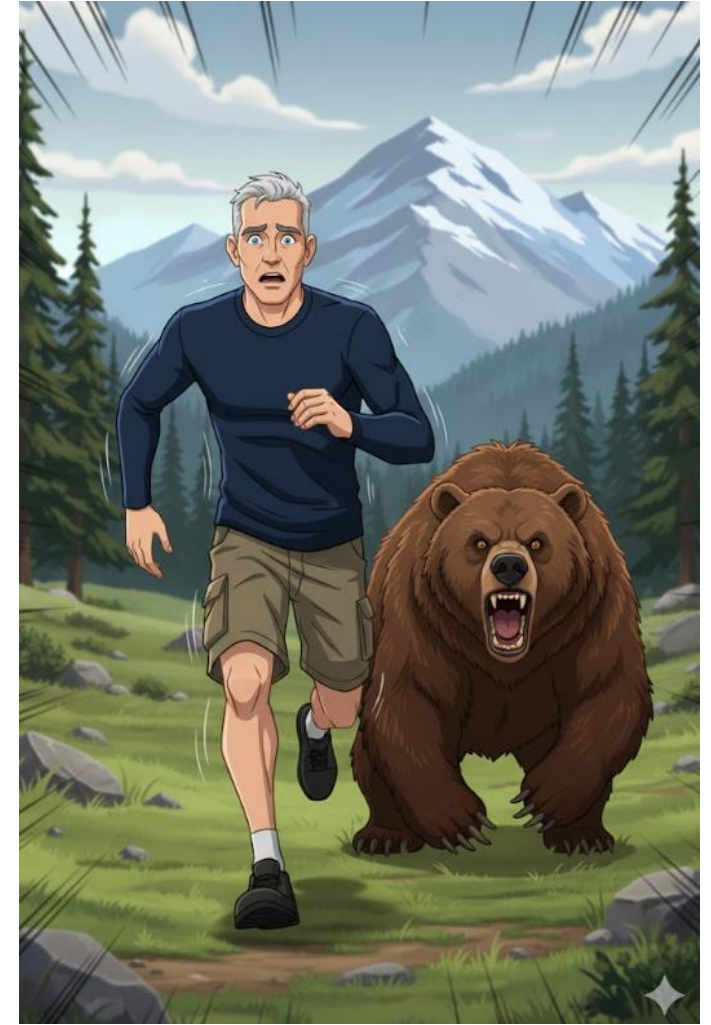
Mastering AI Search Optimization

Why Your Website May Be Invisible to AI Search
(And What to Do About It)



Presenter Background

- Full time digital marketer since January 2001
- Launched PlusROI Online Marketing in 2007
- Launched What Works Marketing in 2022
- Google Premier Partner (top 3% of Google Agencies) 9/10 years
- 20+ Years Overseeing SEO efforts
- Racing to learn enough about AI to avoid getting mauled.



The Search Landscape is Changing

Google:

- Ranked list of websites
- User clicks through to find answer
- Link equity matters

AI-Powered Search:

- AI generates answer directly
- Only top sources are cited
- Authority + Extractability matters

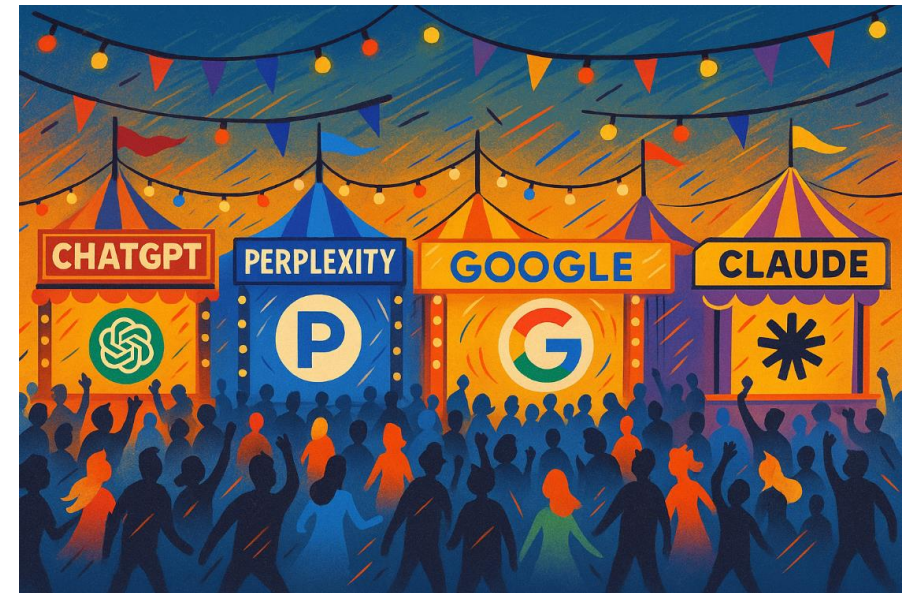


The AI Search Platforms

AI Search is Already Here

- ChatGPT - 100M+ weekly users; browsing feature increasingly used for real-time info
- Perplexity - Fastest-growing search alternative; cites sources directly
- Google AI Overviews - Appearing in 90%+ of Google searches; will eventually be primary interface
- Perplexity Comet & ChatGPT Atlas browsers

Bottom line: This isn't future—it's now.



The Problem

Strong Expertise $\neq$ AI Visibility

Many companies have:

- Deep expertise in their field
- Excellent content on their website
- Real value to offer clients

Still invisible in **AI search results** if AI systems can't find them, extract their content, or understand why they should be cited.



Why This Matters Now

Three Reasons This is Urgent

1. New Discovery Channel – fast becoming the main “top of funnel” discovery source.
2. First-Mover Advantage



The Thought Leadership Superpower

Why Thought Leadership Matters More Than Ever

- Traditional search (Google) ranked websites. AI search **cites authorities**.
- AI systems are specifically designed to find expert voices and amplify them.

If you're not a thought leader in your space, you're at a disadvantage in AI results. This isn't about gaming algorithms. It's about having something worth citing.



But You Can't Fake It

The Authenticity Test

What doesn't work:

- Adding schema markup to thin content
- Claiming expertise you don't have
- Mimicking competitors' positioning
- Creating content just to check boxes
- Publishing for quantity, not quality

What works:

- Sharing genuine expertise from real experience
- Backing claims with data, case studies, results
- Creating content others actually reference
- Building authority through consistent value-delivery
- Positioning that matches reality



Thought Leadership + Technical Optimization = Major Advantage

The Winning Combination

- Genuine expertise + thought leadership positioning
- Technical optimization for AI extraction
- Clear authority signals
- Citation-worthy content

Result? They dominate AI search results in their space and are disproportionately visible to potential clients.



How AI Systems Decide to Cite You

The Decision Tree

When an AI system needs to answer a query, it asks:

1. **Is this source authoritative?** (Do they actually know this subject?)
2. **Is it extractable?** (Can I pull the answer out cleanly?)
3. **Is it comprehensive?** (Does it fully answer the question?)
4. **Is it current?** (Is this information up to date?)
5. **Is there original insight?** (Or is this just regurgitated information?)

You don't have to be perfect, but you do need to be better overall than your competitors!



Pillar I - Establish Your Authority (You Have to Actually Earn This)

Signals AI Systems Look For

Author credentials and positioning:

- **Author bios** - Who is writing this? What's their background?
- **Relevant credentials** - Certifications, degrees, relevant experience
- **Consistent expertise** - Do you write about this topic across multiple pieces?
- **E-E-A-T signals** - Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, Trust

Company/organizational authority:

- **About page quality** - Does it communicate genuine expertise or sound generic?
- **Team expertise** - Are your team members positioned as specialists?
- **Track record** - Case studies, client results, testimonials from real people
- **Industry recognition** - Awards, speaking engagements, professional affiliations



Pillar I – You Can't Just “Check he Boxes”

What doesn't work:

- Generic author bios ("John has 5 years of experience in marketing")
- Vague credentials or made-up-sounding titles
- No author attribution at all

What works:

- Example: "Sarah spent 8 years as a clinical therapist before transitioning to coaching. She specializes in anxiety and trauma-informed practice. Here's what she's learned."
- Example: "We've worked with 300+ prosthetics clinics on improving patient outcomes. Here's what the data shows..."
- Example: "Our methodology is based on 5 years of A/B testing with 50,000+ users."

Key insight: AI systems check if you're a real expert. They're looking for specificity, evidence, and consistency.



Pillar 2 - Create Citation-Worthy Content (Not Just "Good Content")

What AI Systems Want to Cite

Citation-worthy means:

- Original research - "We analyzed 10,000 applications and found X"
- Proprietary methodology - Your unique approach or framework
- Case studies with results - Not "we helped a client" but "we helped 50 clients reduce costs by 22%"
- Unique perspectives - Insights competitors don't have
- Primary sources - You're creating reference material, not just quoting others

Examples of citation-worthy content:

- "Our Annual State of X Industry Report" (with real data)
- "The [Your Name] Method for Solving X Problem"
- "5 Case Studies: How We Helped [Industry] Achieve X Results"
- "What 2 Years of Working with 100+ Clients Taught Us About Y"



Pillar 2 – “Content Marketing Without Insight & Expertise is Garbage

What AI systems will skip:

- Listicles ("10 Ways to...")
- Regurgitated information ("Here's what SEO is...")
- Thin content without original insight
- Content every competitor has already published

Real talk: You don't need to create tons of original research.

You DO need to have something that's uniquely yours to cite.

One strong original research project or proprietary methodology can anchor your entire authority position.



Pillar 3 - Make It Machine-Readable (Behind the Curtain)

How AI Systems Extract Your Content

Your expertise doesn't matter if AI can't extract it.

Technical optimization includes:

- **Schema markup** - FAQ schema, Article schema, HowTo schema, etc.
- **Structured data** - Properly formatted lists, tables, definitions
- **Content hierarchy** - Clean H1/H2/H3 structure that reflects logical flow
- **Direct answers** - The answer appears in the first 1-2 paragraphs, not buried in paragraph 6
- **Scannable formatting** - Lists, bolded key facts, short paragraphs

What this looks like in practice:

- FAQ schema on service pages with 8-10 Q&As
- Key statistics in tables, not paragraphs
- Lists instead of dense prose for comparisons
- Direct answer in opening, then supporting detail (TLDR)

Why it matters: AI systems extract content by looking for structured signals. If your content is just paragraphs of text, it's harder to extract. If it's properly formatted, extraction is clean and accurate.



Pillar 4 - Content Comprehensiveness (Go Deeper Than Your Competitors)

Why Depth Wins

AI systems have enough information to answer basic queries. They cite sources that go deeper.

Comprehensiveness includes:

- **Full query coverage** - Answering all parts of the question, not just the main part
- **Topic depth** - More detailed than competitors, with specific examples and context
- **Related concepts** - Explaining supporting ideas that give full context
- **Practical application** - "Here's how to actually use this information"
- **Edge cases** - Acknowledging where the advice doesn't apply

Attention Mechanism:

- Pre-trained self attention vs real time self attention.



Pillar 5 - Technical Foundation (Table Stakes)

The Foundational Stuff That Has to Work

These don't win you the game, but failing them loses it:

- Page speed - Slow pages get crawled less frequently
- Mobile responsiveness - Non-mobile-friendly pages are essentially invisible
- HTTPS/Security - Basic requirement for trustworthiness
- Crawlability - Can AI systems actually access your content? (No blocked resources, no excessive JavaScript rendering issues)
- URL structure - Clear, logical, descriptive URLs
- Sitemap and robots.txt - Proper configuration so crawlers find all important pages

Also

- These are prerequisites, not differentiators
- Chicken and egg situation with content.



Pillar Strategy: Structure for Authority & Comprehensiveness

- Popularized by HubSpot
- Aligns blog (or resource) content along common themes
- Common sense for advanced SEO (but rarely used)
- WordPress is the best platform for this.
- <https://plusroi.com/using-categories-tags-for-blogging/>
- Don't forget the linking!
 - Link to external sources to boost credibility
 - Link to other relevant posts to boost the strength of the "cluster"
 - Link to relevant services/products on your site to boost your SEO and conversion for them.



The Authenticity Checkpoint

Stop and ask yourself:

- Am I genuinely positioned to be a thought leader in my space?
- Do I have real expertise that goes beyond my competitors?
- Can I point to concrete results or unique insights?
- Am I willing to share what I've learned, not just sell?
- Do my team members have meaningful credentials and experience?
- Could I defend my expertise in a conversation with someone knowledgeable?

If the answer is no:

- That's okay. But you need to build this first.
- Don't optimize for AI search visibility if you don't have something worth citing.
- Your first step is developing genuine expertise, not implementing schema.

If the answer is yes:

- Great. Now you can make that expertise visible and extractable.
- Everything else is mechanics.

The reality check: Technical optimization without real expertise is wasted effort. You'll look good on paper but won't convert because your content doesn't actually deliver the value you're claiming.

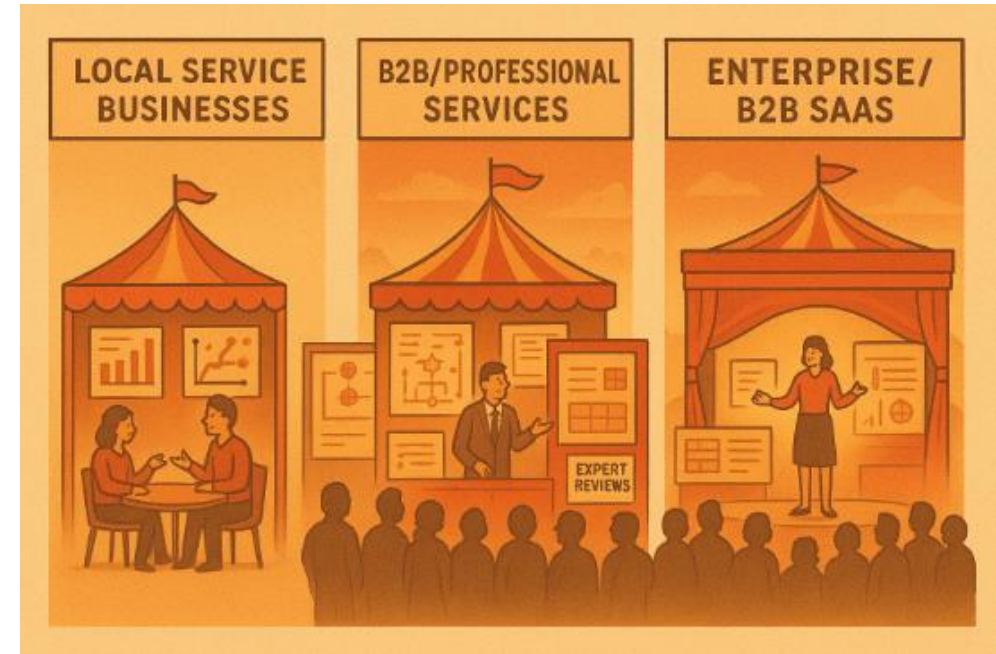
Real-World Complexity

Thought Leadership & Authenticity Looks Different Across Industries

Local Service Businesses (counseling, legal, trades, etc)

- Thought leadership: Sharing expertise through case studies (anonymized), methodologies, client results
- Citation opportunity: "As a therapist specializing in X, here's what I've learned..."
- Content: Blog posts, guides, educational content showing real expertise

Share your local, topical knowledge



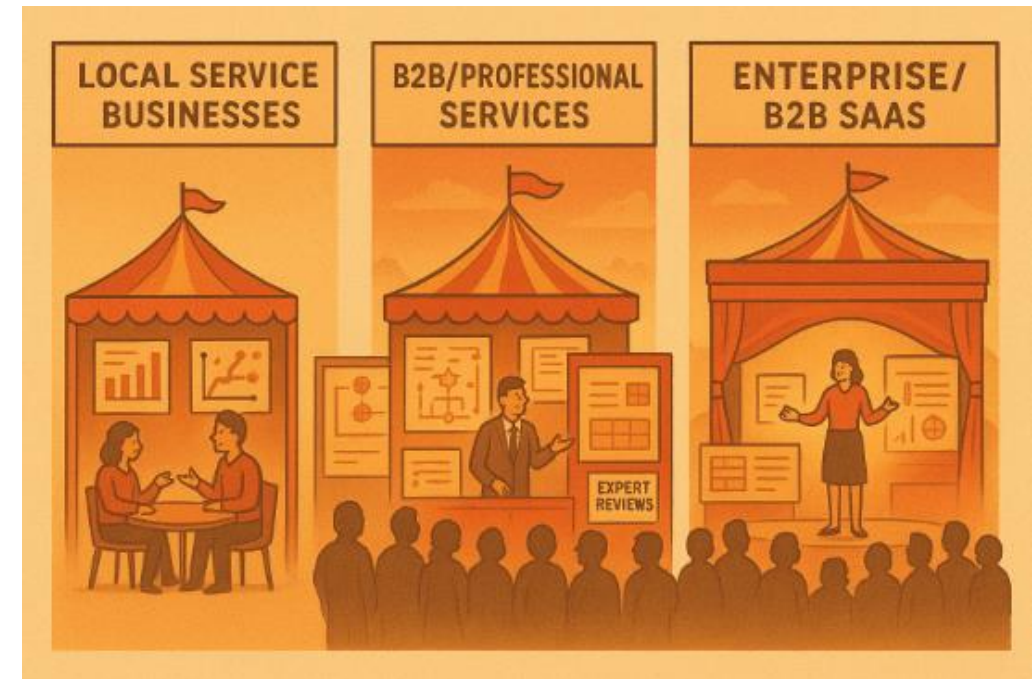
Real-World Complexity

Enterprise/B2B SaaS/B2B Services

- Thought leadership: Industry trends, best practices, thought-provoking analysis
- Citation opportunity: Research reports, trend analysis, expert commentary
- Content: Whitepapers, research reports, industry insights

E-Commerce/Product

- Thought leadership: Product expertise, comparison guides, buying advice
- Citation opportunity: Original research on products, detailed buying guides, expert recommendations
- Content: Comparison articles, buying guides, in-depth product analysis



The Complete AEO Checklist

What's included:

- 13 core optimization areas (same framework we've discussed today)
- Specific audit questions for each area
- Technical foundation checklist
- Content assessment questions
- Competitive comparison framework
- Authority positioning assessment



The Complete AEO Checklist

How to Use The Checklist:

- **Assess your current state** - Rate yourself across the 13 areas.
- **Understand what matters** - Read why each area impacts AI search visibility.
- **Identify your gaps** - See where you have clear opportunities.
- **Make informed decisions** - Decide what you'll tackle internally and where you need support.
- **This is a working tool for strategic thinking—not a prescriptive roadmap.** Download it, use it, adapt it. No strings attached.



Connect & Next Steps: Your Path Forward

DIY - Self-Directed

- **Best for:** Teams with strong in-house marketing and technical expertise who want to implement independently.
- You have everything you need. Use the comprehensive checklist and framework to audit your current position, identify priorities, and execute. This approach gives you complete control and no ongoing costs.
- **Includes:** Full AEO Checklist framework (13 areas), self-assessment tools, and educational content.

Strategy & Prioritization - Expert Roadmap

- **Best for:** Teams with solid technical and content capabilities who need clarity on the right priorities.
- We review your site, competitive position, and business goals, then create a prioritized 90-day action plan based on the 13-area framework. You get strategic direction on what matters most—then your team executes.
- **Includes:** Comprehensive site audit, competitive analysis, prioritized roadmap, and clear implementation guidance.
- **You handle:** Execution of prioritized initiatives

Strategy + Support - Collaborative Partnership

- **Best for:** Teams who want strategic guidance but lack the in-house resources to tackle everything quickly.
- We establish your priorities together, then collaborate on implementation. You own what makes sense to do internally; we handle the areas where you need support (content creation, technical implementation, strategic content pieces, etc.).
- **Includes:** Everything from Strategy & Prioritization, plus hands-on execution support in agreed-upon areas.
- **You handle:** What you're equipped to do internally; we fill in the resource gaps.

Done For You - Fully Managed

- **Best for:** Teams that want expert management of the entire AI search optimization process.
- We own the whole thing—audit, strategy, planning, and execution. We become an extension of your team, managing all AI search optimization work against your goals and budget.
- **Includes:** Full audit, strategy, content creation, technical implementation, ongoing optimization, and regular reporting.
- **You handle:** Being available for strategic input and approvals; we handle everything else.

QRs & Questions

Download Presentation &
Checklist



Connect on LinkedIn





Appendix – Submitted Questions

- How does AI (and Google) feel about AI-created content?
- How do I measure my AI rankings?
- What if I'm not (or we don't have) a leading expert?