

taylor

AEO x PR PLAYBOOK

Optimizing Earned Media for AI

January 2026

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PR's New Frontier

The communications landscape is undergoing a fundamental shift. As AI-powered search becomes the primary way audiences discover, compare, and understand brands, the role of PR is expanding from storytelling to **training the very systems that shape brand visibility**. Answer Engine Optimization (AEO) is now the connective tissue between earned media, owned content, and how AI assembles a brand's narrative.

This playbook is designed to serve as a **practical blueprint for PR professionals** navigating that shift. It translates the emerging dynamics of AI-led discovery into clear guidance on how to structure stories, releases, assets, and media strategies so they become machine-parsable, authoritative, and reusable within AI-generated answers.

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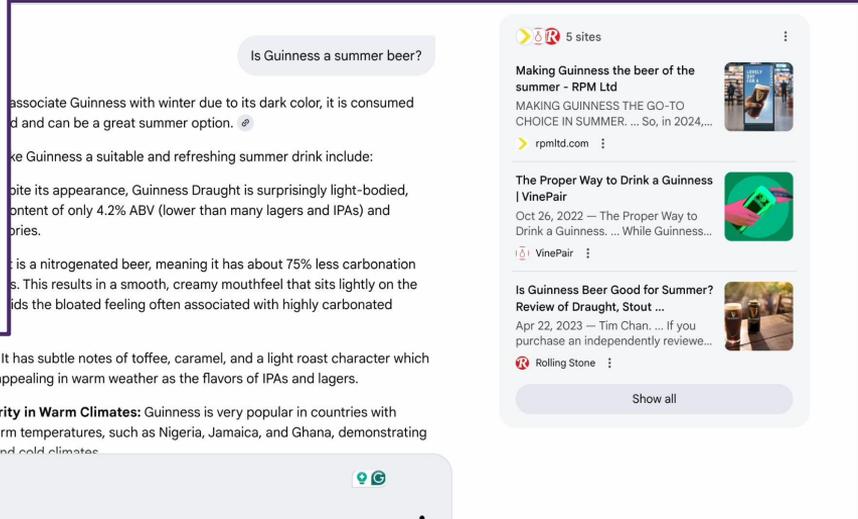
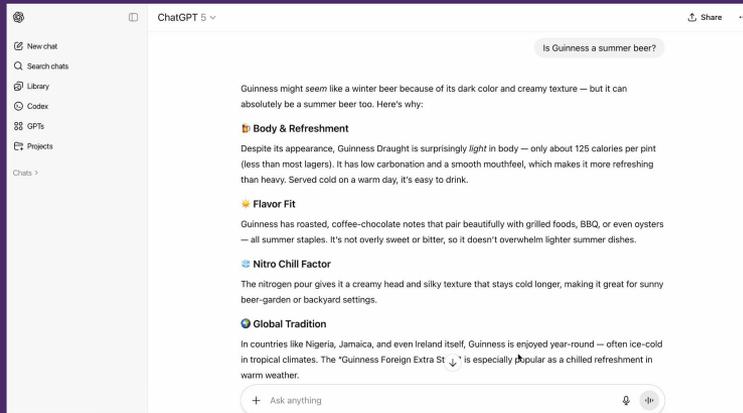
- Why AEO Matters
- What Changes for PR + Media
- Updating Your Owned Content for AEO
- Role of Paid Media
- Additional Resources

Why AEO Matters

AEO in Action

What it is: A strategy for making your content discoverable and authoritative in AI-generated search results.

How it works: Unlike traditional SEO (ranking in a list), AEO aims to get your content cited and featured in AI-generated overviews and answers.



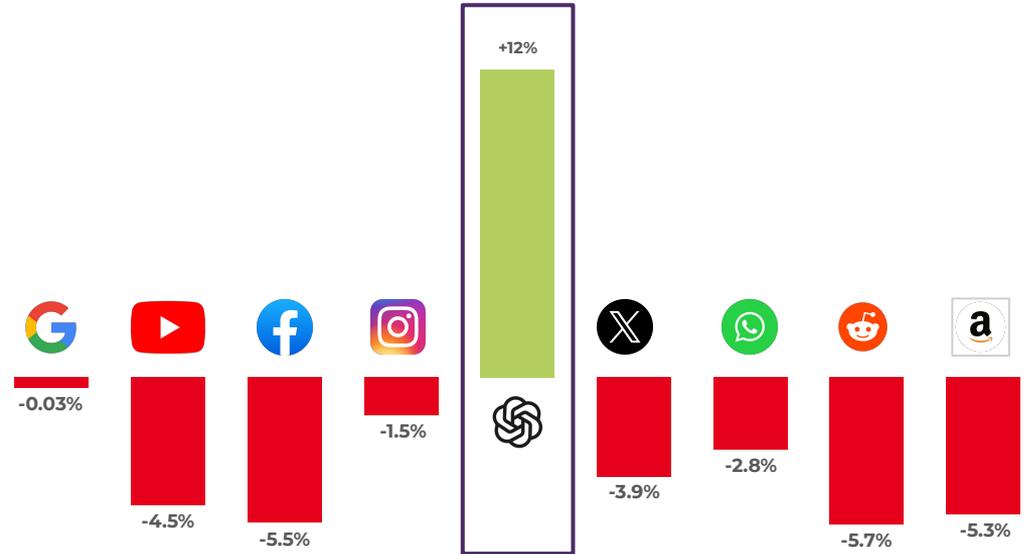
The Shift in Discovery

Answer Engine Optimization (AEO) is redefining how audiences and AI discover brands.

- **50% of consumers** have already integrated AI-powered search into their web browsing routines ([McKinsey & Co.](#))
- **45% of consumers** like to use AI assistants for product reviews and 32% use the tool to help compare prices among different products ([Riskified/Business Wire](#))

THE DISCOVERY SWITCH

ChatGPT is now the 6th largest site



Total visits | Aug 25 vs Sep 25
Global / Desktop Mobile & Web

Image source: SimilarWeb

What AEO Is and Isn't

AEO is a digital content optimization method that helps to provide concise responses to a user's queries so that search engines and AI tools can easily pull information from them to deliver responses

IT IS ...

- ✓ Optimized for AI assistants
- ✓ Focused on user intent
- ✓ Centered around ability to answer
- ✓ Structured specifically for user clarity (e.g. the use of headings, short summarized answers, etc.)

NOTE: The term AEO is interchangeable with GEO (Generative Engine Optimization), LLME (Large Language Model Engine Optimization), AIO (Artificial Intelligence Optimization)

Answer Engine Optimization (AEO) is not a replacement for traditional SEO (Search Engine Optimization), but should be viewed as complementary to SEO. Our goal is no longer centered on optimizing for a single source, but more about optimizing for understanding (both human and AI).

IT IS NOT...

- ✗ Paid Search engine optimization
- ✗ Traditional SEO page ranking placement
- ✗ Keyword stuffing
- ✗ Solely focused on a single search engine's results or prompts

AEO **vs.** Traditional SEO

AEO

- **Seeks to optimize** for AI summaries
- **Provides timely direct answers** through AI assistants both built-in and separate from search engines
- **Users are provided** answers that may or may not include links to a brand's official website
- **Relies heavily on AI and LLM** for credibility in response selection

Traditional SEO

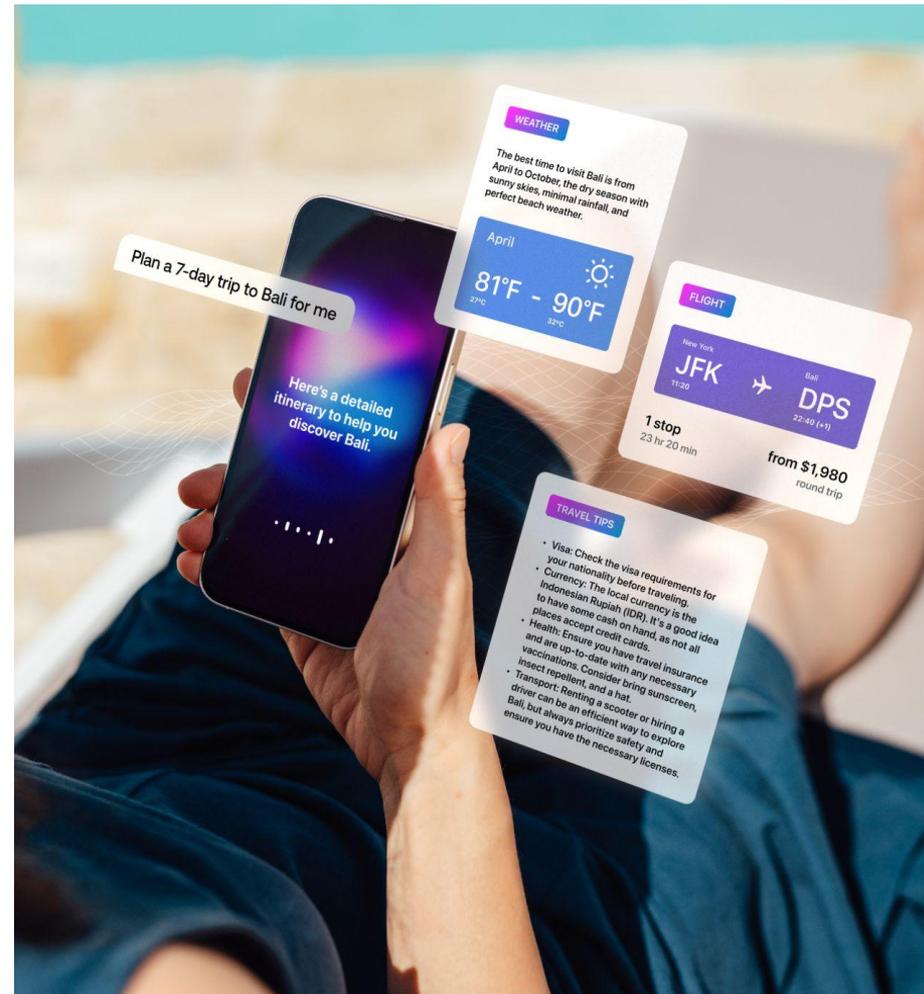
- **Seeks to optimize for** traditional search engines (e.g. Google)
- **Helps to drive traffic** to recommended websites based on keywords
- **Users are directly pointed** to your website for more information
- **Relies heavily on historic human usage** for credibility in search engine recommendations (e.g. clicks, time on site)

Why It Matters For Marketers

Strong AEO practices are now a defining factor in how brands are discovered by new audiences and how effectively they maintain ongoing customer relationships.

Because AEO relies entirely on existing, trustworthy information, the quality of a brand's digital footprint dictates whether it will be surfaced by AI engines.

- **Brand Visibility on Larger Scale:** Implementing AEO practices allow for your content to reach users who may not be exposed to the brand through traditional search engines
- **Shorter Path to Conversions:** When brands provide direct, authoritative answers within AEO surfaces, they influence user pathways toward meaningful actions, including sign-ups and purchases. This impact is amplified by the fact that AEO users typically enter with stronger intent, resulting in higher conversion potential than standard browsing behavior.



The New Tablestakes for Brand Visibility

Brands that lead in mastering AEO will define how their niche is both discovered & discussed online.

- Influencing and expanding the ways in which your brand is mentioned in cultural conversations beyond Google search allows marketers to reach users across multiple platforms and digital behaviors.
- Proactive digital strategies help ensure your brand's voice remains relevant in conversations.
- Early AEO adopters have the upperhand in answer visibility within generative responses to dominate topics.

However, by ignoring AEO's development, brands are leaving expansion on the table.

- Companies run the risk of not being mentioned in AEO results even if they are a market leader; over time this can contribute to a lack of awareness among recruitment audiences.
- Delayed adoption can result in a higher cost to catch-up (e.g. breaking through established "trust answers" predated in results).



PR & Earned Media

The Future of Visibility

AEO x PR Symbiosis

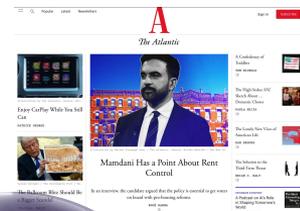
Earned media supplies the factual backbone AI relies on. Press releases and coverage function as machine-parsable fact sheets that inject verified details (dates, specs, metrics) directly into AI knowledge graphs.

Third-party publishers validate brand claims at scale. Reputable outlets provide the neutral, independent confirmation AI engines use to assess credibility.

Quotes and interviews create high-value, reusable language. Executive statements and expert commentary become durable phrasing that AEOs repeatedly surface in summaries and recommendations.

PR clarifies brand identity and product positioning. Earned content helps resolve ambiguity around entities, differentiators, and category roles.

Coverage shapes the narrative AI ultimately synthesizes. AEOs pull from articles, mentions, reviews, and discussions to form a unified story, making consistent, high-quality earned media essential to controlling how the brand is represented.



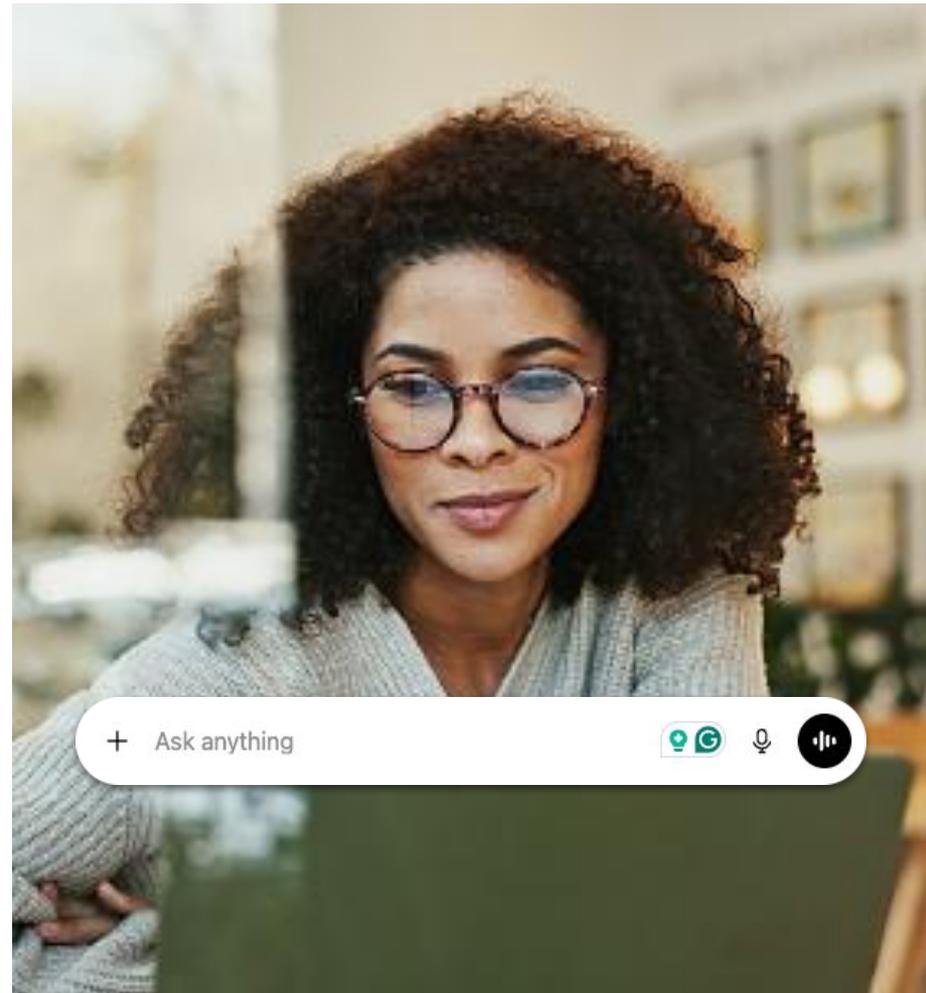
The New PR Writing Standard

Writing for the Answer Layer (a.k.a. Press Release 2.0)

LLMs respond best to content that is structured, factual, “snackable,” and semantically organized.

Core AEO Writing Rules for Press Releases

- Lead with the five definitive facts (who, what, when, where, why)
- Use short, self-contained paragraphs with one topic each
- Convert details into bullets, tables, or definitions (LLMs parse these first)
- Avoid promotional adjectives; use neutral, descriptive phrasing
- Add FAQ sections, framed in consumer language
- Provide comparative context (“How this compares to...”)



AEO Optimized Press Release Template

HEADLINE & SUBHEAD: WRITE FOR QUESTIONS

Aim for a headline that aligns with how users ask AI questions:

Example: “How Brand X’s New RTD Cocktail Delivers Full Flavor at 95 Calories” rather than just “Brand X Launches New RTD.”

Keep headlines 40–70 characters with a clear entity + action

BODY STRUCTURE

Dateline & Lead

Standard news dateline (CITY, State – Month Day, Year) helps AI recognize time and place

- Lead paragraph with full 5Ws and a clear “what changed”

Fact Box / Key Details (bulleted)

Product type, ABV, ingredients, price, pack size, where to buy, launch timing

Context & Definitions

1–2 short blocks defining the category or process (“What is a hard seltzer?” “How tequila aging works”)

Quotes Designed for Reuse

One quote per paragraph, in plain language, tied to a specific topic (e.g., flavor, sustainability, innovation)

Mini FAQ Module

4–6 Q&As framed as real consumer questions; prime material for both LLMs and FAQ schema

Boilerplate & Contact

2–4 sentence company boilerplate with URL + industry context
Named media contact with email & phone (useful for both journalists and AI trust models)

HEADLINE & SUBHEAD: WRITE FOR QUESTIONS

Use HTML, not PDF; embed images/video with descriptive filenames + alt text (“Brand X lime margarita RTD can on ice”) rather than “image1.jpg”

Add structured fields: headline, publish date, author, organization, tags, and JSON-LD schema (NewsArticle/PressRelease, FAQ)

PR x AEO Asset Checklist

- ❑ Headline is clear, concise, and aligned with how people actually ask questions
- ❑ Lead delivers all 5Ws in ≤3 sentences
- ❑ Specs and claims are in bullets or tables, not buried in prose
- ❑ At least two quotes are short, plain-spoken, and topic-specific
- ❑ Included definitions or comparative context where needed
- ❑ FAQ block addresses 4–6 likely user questions
- ❑ Release is hosted as HTML on brand owned domain, not just PDF/wire
- ❑ NewsArticle / PressRelease + FAQ schema implemented and validated
- ❑ At least one high-quality image/video with descriptive filename + alt text
- ❑ Links point to relevant PDPs, explainers, or category hubs (no spammy linking)

Where to Place Stories

EDUCATION & GLOSSARY HUBS

Topic clusters, glossaries, and process explainers are heavily reused in definitions and comparisons.

HIGH-AUTHORITY NEWS & TRADE OUTLETS

Strongest impact on credibility + knowledge graph alignment.

OWNED WEBSITE

Host releases as crawlable HTML on brand domains and distribute via wires to boost authority, backlinks, & discoverability.

VERIFIED PRESS PORTALS

Wire services aren't crawled by LLMs, but they amplify authority by driving placements across the news ecosystem that models do ingest.

CATEGORY SPECIFIC & SPECIALIST PRESS

LLMs rely heavily on these sources for definitions and comparisons.

RETAILER & MARKETPLACE PDPS

Highly structured product detail pages become default fact sources for CPG



Evolving KPIs

AEO isn't adding more measurement – it's evolving what we measure.

Instead of tracking only *who saw the story*, we now track whether AI can *find it, understand it, and repeat it back correctly*.

TRADITIONAL KPI'S	NEW AEO KPI'S	WHAT'S CHANGING?	HOW IS IT MEASURED?
Impressions	▶ AI Visibility Score	From “Did people see it?” → “Can AI find it?”	<p>Manual: Quarterly test: Ask top 10–15 category questions in ChatGPT, Bing Copilot, Gemini, Perplexity. Score presence: Yes/No + accuracy.</p> <p>Emerging: Yext Search, Semrush AI tracking.</p>
Placement Count	▶ Authority Placement Score	From “How many?” → “Did we place it where AI trusts?”	<p>Manual: % of earned coverage from an AEO-trusted outlets</p> <p>Emerging: Meltwater, Cision, Propel AI tagging “high authority” sources based on indexing weight + trust scoring.</p>
Sentiment	▶ Narrative Retention Score	From “Did journalists repeat it?” → “Is AI repeating it for outputs?”	<p>Manual: Quarterly checks asking AI platforms to summarize the brand and checking for reused phrases, claims, or messaging.</p> <p>Emerging: AI Knowledge Graph tracking tools (Diffbot, Yext Search) can detect repeated phrasing in structured/web sources and LLM-training surfaces.</p>
Share of Voice	▶ Share of Answer	From “Do we dominate media mentions?” → “Do we dominate AI recommendations?”	<p>Manual: Quarterly checks asking AI platforms to summarize the brand and checking for reused phrases, claims, or messaging.</p> <p>Emerging: AI Knowledge Graph tracking tools (Yext Search) can detect repeated phrasing in structured/web sources and LLM-training surfaces.</p>
Readability	▶ Content Quality Score	From “Nice to have.” → “Required for AI comprehension.”	<p>Cision AI score + AEO Checklist Completion</p>

Optimizing Owned Content

Optimizing Websites for AI Discovery

Generative engines prioritize helpful, question-based content. Start by creating pages that answer the most searched or AI-asked questions about your category and product. **Focus on “What is,” “How to,” “Which,” and “Where”** queries.

Your website UX should include

- FAQ sections that mirror conversational phrasing.
- Recipes, how-tos, or use-cases that give AI context.
- Fact boxes or key takeaways that make brand information easy to extract.



Image Source: Rely Digital, “What is AEO? How Answer Engine Optimization is Changing SEO”

Schema + Structure

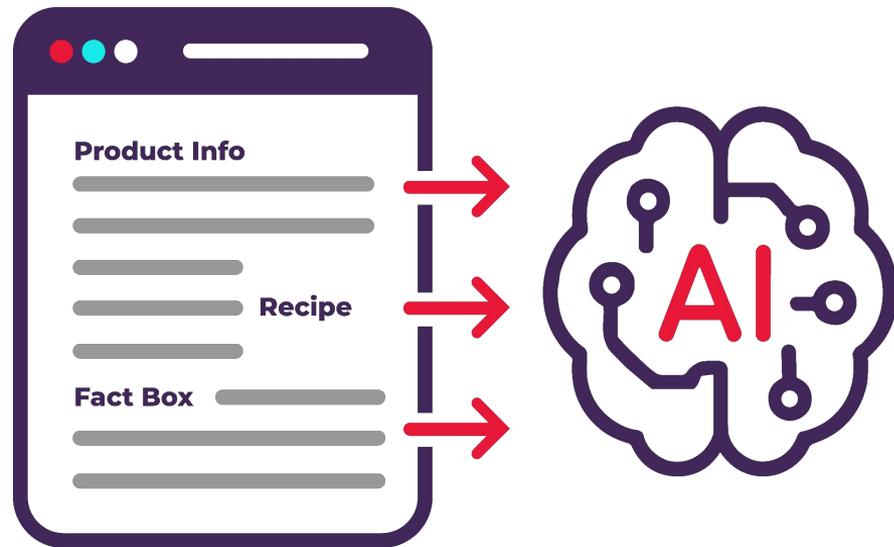
Make It Easy for AI to Read Your Site

The clearer your website's structure, the easier it is for AI tools to understand, trust, and recommend your brand:

- Think of schema and metadata as your brand's labels for AI.
- They tell engines what each page, image, and fact means.
- When your content is labeled clearly, AI trusts it more and uses it more often.

Examples:

- Mark your product pages with clear categories.
- Add "FAQ" tags to your question pages.
- Keep your sitemap clean and updated.



AEO x Content Strategy

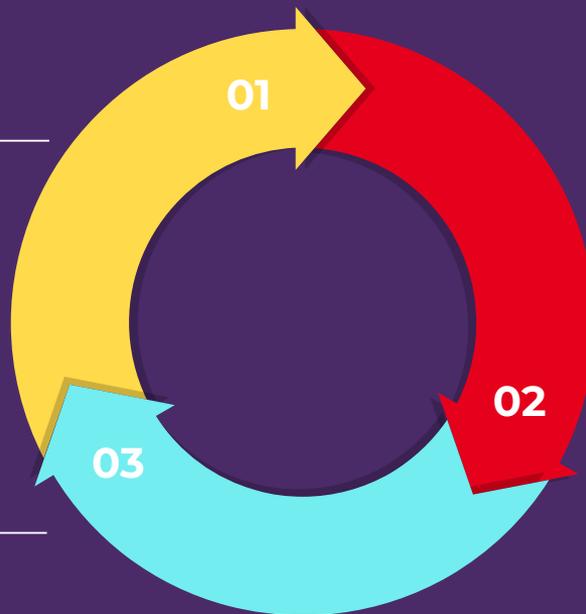
Stay proactive by identifying new questions and conversations followed by turning those into fresh, discoverable content.

Listen to the Questions

Monitor what people are asking across Google, Reddit, TikTok, or AI chats.

Feed the AI Loop

Updated content gets recognized by AI, leading to more brand mentions and visibility — starting the cycle again.



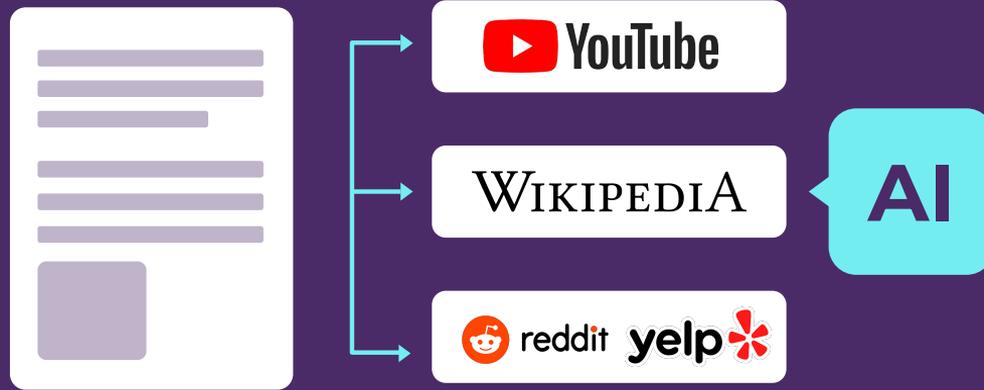
Create Helpful Content

Turn common or trending questions into FAQs, blog posts, or PR stories.

The Role of Third Party Sites

AEO requires optimizing the entire digital footprint, not just the brand site. AI engines pull signals from every external domain, and third-party platforms ultimately validate your brand's claims. When those sources echo your key facts and positioning, they significantly enhance your authority within AI outputs.

YOUR WEBSITE UX SHOULD INCLUDE



YouTube

Provides explanatory video content that AI engines cite for “how” and instructional queries, using transcripts, metadata, and visual context to reinforce brand and category understanding.

Wikipedia

Acts as a primary source of truth for AI models. Engines rely on its neutral, citation-backed facts to establish brand entities, history, product definitions, and category context.

Reddit & User Forums

Provide high-authenticity, experience-based insights that LLMs use to shape sentiment, recommendations, comparisons, and “what real users think” answers.

Retailer & Review Sites

Supply structured product data (ABV, ingredients, price, availability) and validated user reviews that AI engines treat as credible signals when generating rankings, summaries, and purchase recommendations.



STRATEGY

Ensure AI surfaces accurate, explanatory video content when answering “how” and “why” questions about your brand or category.

AI tools increasingly cite YouTube because videos provide structured, demonstrable explanations supported by titles, descriptions, and transcripts. Well-optimized videos often appear directly in AI answers, making YouTube a critical earned signal.

RECOMMENDED APPROACH

Create answer-led videos

Include explainers, FAQs, and walkthroughs that clearly answer common questions

Leverage third-party voices

Creators, experts, and publishers often carry more AI trust than brand-only channels

Optimize metadata

Use clear titles, descriptive summaries, and playlist labels AI can parse

Avoid promotional framing

Keep content factual, instructional, and neutral in tone

WIKIPEDIA

STRATEGY

Ensure one of AI's most preferred sources reflects accurate, well-cited brand facts.

AI tools lean heavily on Wikipedia because it's structured, neutral, and heavily cited. Outdated or incorrect pages often show up directly in AI answers so frequent monitoring of brand pages and mentions is a way to prevent misinformation from influencing AI responses.

RECOMMENDED APPROACH

Audit regularly

Confirm facts like product details, dates, ownership, awards

Add reliable sources

News articles, official reports, and credible third-party coverage

Propose neutral edits

Edit transparently with proper disclosure or use partners for review

Avoid marketing language

Keep edits factual and balanced



STRATEGY

Show up where people ask real questions and ensure the answers are accurate, honest, and helpful.

AI engines use Reddit and forums to understand what real people think and ask. As a result, repeated questions, themes, or misconceptions often appear in AI summaries. By monitoring these frequently asked questions or topics, brand marketers can easily identify content gaps or optimizations for owned channels (e.g. website and social media).

RECOMMENDED APPROACH

Listen first

Monitor key subreddits for common questions and sentiment

Spot risks

Identify and clarify misinformation or confusion in communities

Draft community-friendly responses

Helpful, non-promotional replies that brand teams can post with proper disclosure

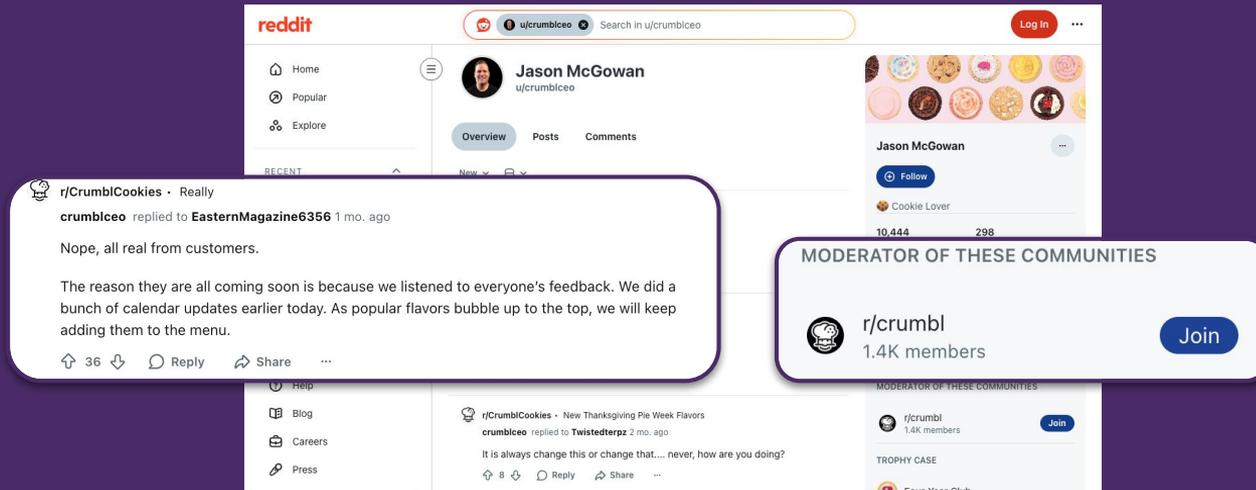
Mine Reddit questions

Turn common threads into FAQs, PR angles, social content, or website updates

Case Study: Crumbl

Leveraging Reddit to Train AI

A real example of how showing up authentically builds trust, reduces misinformation, and shapes the signals AI learns from.



Crumbl's CEO is an active, transparent participant in the brand's subreddit.

He answers questions directly, acknowledges mistakes, and shares updates in a human, conversational way.

This creates clear, accurate signals that AI can learn from — and builds real community trust.

Role of Paid Media

Paid Media x AEO

Paid doesn't directly become training data for LLMs, but it amplifies the content that does, particularly your releases, explainers, and PDPs hosted on trusted domains.

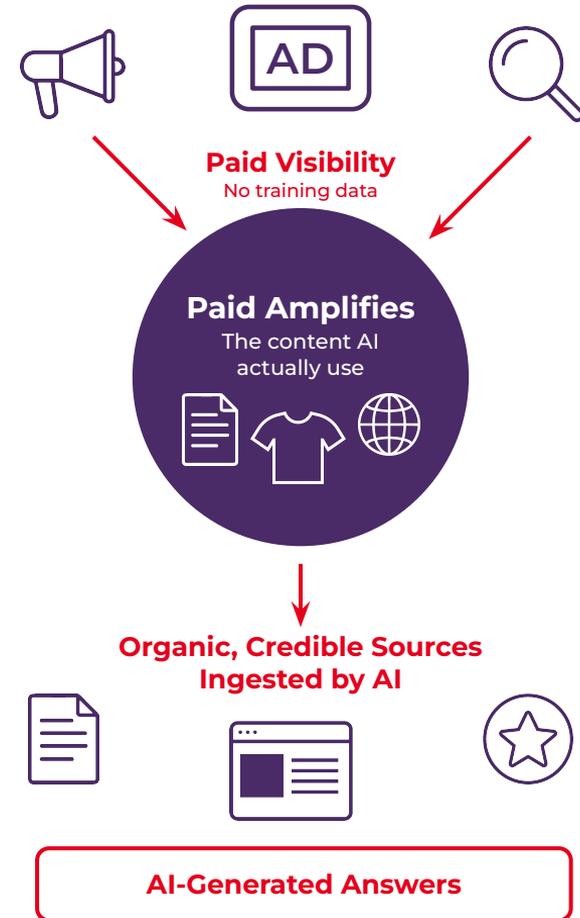
AI tools prioritize organic, credible sources, not ads. However, paid channels can increase a brand's visibility and effective linking back to brand-owned websites can improve those sources' authority and crawl frequency.

Paid does not improve authority on its own, *but*:

- ✓ If paid campaigns drive visits, sharing, or linking to authoritative content,
- ✓ And those pages are structured and factual (as recommended),
- ☀ Then their visibility and freshness signals can improve indexing and crawl frequency.

A Cohesive Framework

- Use paid to drive traffic to:
 - AEO-optimized newsroom pages
 - Category hubs, FAQs, and glossaries
 - Key retailer or marketplace PDPs
- Align paid copy with the same neutral descriptors and definitions from your press release that you want LLMs to reuse (consistency matters).
- Promote major coverage hits (e.g., national/trade pieces) via social + native ad buys to increase their impact and lifespan, which in turn improves their visibility to AI crawlers.



Additional Resources

Taking Your AEO Knowledge Even Further

The resources in this section are designed to help PR and communications teams deepen their understanding of how Answer Engine Optimization (AEO) is reshaping discovery, credibility, and brand visibility. Each link offers practical perspectives on emerging AI search behaviors, structured content requirements, and the evolving role of earned media in training the systems that now shape public understanding.

NOTE: This landscape is advancing quickly. New models, new search surfaces, and new AI-driven behaviors continue to change how audiences find and interpret brand information. Taylor will continue to update this playbook regularly as new insights, platform changes, and best practices emerge, ensuring teams have access to the most current guidance available.

Use these resources as both a foundation and a launchpad that supports ongoing learning, experimentation, and alignment across PR, content, and digital teams as AEO becomes a core competency of modern communications.

Revised December 2025

Studies on AI Search Behavior & Discovery

McKinsey: [AI Is Now the New Front Door to the Internet](#)

Morningstar / Business Wire: [73% of Shoppers Now Use AI in Product Discovery](#)

Adweek: [AI Search is Expanding the Funnel, Not Replacing It](#)

PR x AI Thought Leadership

Institute for Public Relations: [Is Technology Changing the Way We Engage With the News?](#)

PRNews: [How the Top Six AI Systems Prioritize Search Results—Plus Five Tips](#)

PRWeek / Meltwater: [AI is Rewriting Your Brand Narrative. Do You Know What It's Saying?](#)

Business Wire: [Press Release Distribution Strategy - Why It Matters and How to Get it Right](#)

Ready to understand how your brand shows up across today's answer engines?

Reach out to us at hello@taylorstrategy.com to explore
a custom AEO visibility assessment.



Appendix: Glossary of Terms

Glossar

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Helpful definitions of terms used throughout this playbook

Answer Engine Optimization (AEO)

A method of structuring content so AI systems can easily extract, understand, and cite it in conversational answers. AEO focuses on clarity, factual accuracy, and question-oriented formatting. *Often used interchangeably with Generative Engine Optimization (GEO).*

AI Visibility Score

A new KPI measuring how consistently a brand appears within AI-generated answers across platforms like ChatGPT, Gemini, Bing Copilot, and Perplexity.

Authority Placement Score

A metric reflecting how often earned coverage appears in sources that AI systems consider trustworthy and influential.

Structured Data/Schema Markup

Machine-readable labels (e.g., FAQPage, Product, Press Release) that help AI engines interpret what each page or element represents.

Knowledge Graph

A structured network of entities (brands, products, people, concepts) and their relationships. AI uses these graphs to determine accuracy, context, and trust.

Machine Parsable Content

Content written and formatted so AI systems can extract it without ambiguity (e.g., bullet points, factual summaries, tables, FAQs).

Glossar

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Helpful definitions of terms used throughout this playbook

High Authority Sources

Websites or publishers that AI models heavily rely on for verification (e.g., major news outlets, Wikipedia, structured retailer PDPs).

Third Party Signals

Credible details provided by external sites—such as pricing, reviews, definitions, or product specs—that AI uses to validate and reinforce brand information.

Answer Layer

The AI-generated response layer (e.g., overviews, conversational answers) where brands appear not through ranking, but through citation and narrative integration.

Crawl Frequency

How often AI-connected engines revisit a webpage. Fresh, structured, and frequently visited pages are crawled more often.

Topic Clusters

A family of interconnected pages—glossaries, explainers, FAQs—built around a core category hub to establish authority for both human readers and AI.

THANK YOU

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