

Beyond the Search

Why your next candidate might never Google your careers website.

Contents

A note from the author — **2**

Introduction: The Candidate You Never Knew You Lost — **3**

The Search Revolution — **8**

The Candidate Journey Has Changed — **24**

Understanding GEO, AEO, LLMO and AI SEO — **37**

Building a Careers Website That AI Can Understand — **54**

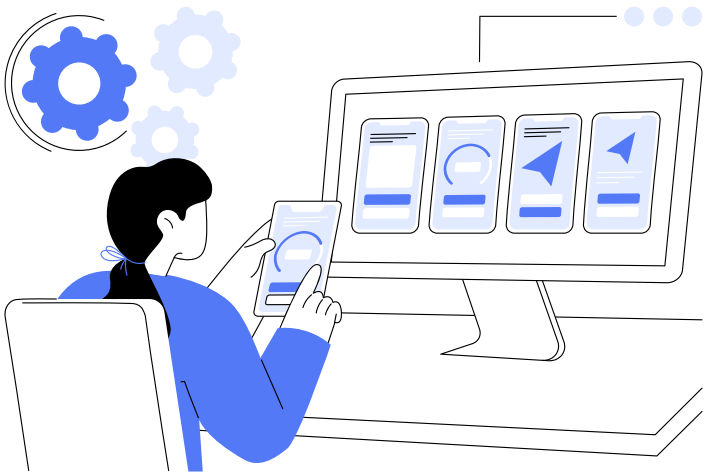
Your Employer Brand Is Only as Visible as Its Evidence — **72**

From Google Rankings to AI Visibility — **91**

The New Role of the Recruitment Communications Agency — **113**

The Genius Approach: Built to Be Found. Designed to Be Chosen. — **132**

A Final Thought: The Candidate You Haven't Met Yet — **147**



A note from the author



I've spent more than three decades working in recruitment communications, and during that time I've witnessed some extraordinary changes in how employers attract people and how people find work.

From newspaper advertising to job boards, careers websites and social media, each development has changed the recruitment landscape. But I believe artificial intelligence could represent one of the most significant shifts we've seen.

For years, we've invested enormous effort in creating careers websites that engage, inspire and convert visitors into applicants. At Genius, we've always believed those experiences should be creative, intuitive and, above all, designed around the candidate.

But recently I've found myself asking a rather uncomfortable question.

What happens if the candidate never reaches your website in the first place?

Increasingly, people can ask AI to recommend employers based on their skills, ambitions, values and personal circumstances. Rather than searching for a particular job, they can describe the kind of future they're looking for.

And if your organisation isn't part of that conversation, you may never know what you've missed.

I don't believe traditional SEO is disappearing, nor do I think technology can replace authentic employer branding. But I do believe we need to rethink how we make employers discoverable, ensuring that their opportunities, reputation and genuine strengths can be understood by the intelligent systems increasingly influencing people's decisions.

That's why I've written this paper. Not as a technical guide to another collection of marketing acronyms, but as an invitation to think differently about the future of recruitment communications.

Because somewhere, there's someone who could be an extraordinary addition to your organisation. They simply haven't discovered you yet.

Let's make sure you're part of the answer.

Russell Dalton
Creative Founder, Genius



Introduction: The Candidate You Never Knew You Lost.

Imagine, for a moment, that you're responsible for recruitment at a large NHS Trust. Over the years, you've invested considerable time, energy and money into building a reputation as an excellent place to work. You've developed a compelling employer brand, created a beautiful careers website, introduced flexible working opportunities and invested heavily in the development and wellbeing of your people.

Your recruitment team has worked hard to make the candidate experience as straightforward and welcoming as possible. You've got genuine employee stories, engaging videos, comprehensive information about your departments and a careers website that performs well in traditional search engines.

By almost every conventional measure, you've done everything right.

Now imagine a newly qualified nurse sitting at home one evening, thinking about where to begin their career. Rather than opening Google and typing "nursing jobs in Yorkshire", they open ChatGPT and ask a rather different question.

"I'm a newly qualified nurse looking for somewhere to start my career in Yorkshire. I'd like to work for an NHS Trust that genuinely supports its people, offers good career development and has a positive working environment. Which employers would you recommend?"

It's a perfectly reasonable question. In fact, it's probably a much better question than the one they might have asked a search engine just a few years ago.

Instead of receiving a list of websites to investigate, our nurse might receive a considered response explaining the relative merits of several employers. The AI assistant could identify organisations known for their development programmes, reference information about staff wellbeing, highlight flexible working arrangements and suggest particular Trusts that appear to match the nurse's priorities.

And here's where things get interesting.

Despite everything you've invested in becoming an employer of choice, your organisation isn't mentioned.

Not because you don't offer those opportunities.
Not because your reputation is undeserved.
And not necessarily because your competitors are better places to work.

You simply weren't part of the information the AI system used to formulate its answer, or there wasn't enough accessible, credible evidence for it to recommend you confidently.

The nurse never visits your website. They never discover your development programmes, watch your employee videos or explore the opportunities you've worked so hard to create. They may never even know that you exist as a potential employer.

And you, in turn, will probably never know that you lost them.

There won't be an abandoned application to investigate, a declining conversion rate to analyse or an unsuccessful candidate survey to explain what went wrong. In your analytics, that individual will be almost entirely invisible.

That's what makes this particular change in recruitment marketing so significant. We're accustomed to measuring the people who find us and what happens after they arrive. We've become increasingly sophisticated at understanding website visitors, tracking applications and improving the journeys that turn interested candidates into employees.

But how do we measure the people who never reach us because an artificial intelligence system didn't include us in the conversation in the first place?



From finding information to receiving recommendations.

For much of the internet's history, search engines have acted as extraordinarily efficient signposts. We'd type a question or a collection of keywords into Google, and it would present us with a selection of websites that might contain the information we wanted.

The responsibility for interpreting that information remained largely with us.

If we wanted to know which employers offered the best graduate development programmes, we'd search for graduate employers, open several websites, perhaps consult a few rankings and reviews, and eventually build our own shortlist. We'd piece together the evidence, make comparisons and draw conclusions.

That process has shaped how organisations approach digital marketing for decades. Search engine optimisation, or SEO, became an essential discipline because appearing prominently in those search results could make the difference between being discovered and being overlooked.

Careers websites were no exception. Recruitment marketing teams worked to improve their visibility for searches relating to jobs, locations, career opportunities and particular professions. They developed content around relevant keywords, improved technical performance, secured inbound links and monitored their positions in Google's search results.

And much of that work remains absolutely essential.

But the arrival of increasingly sophisticated AI assistants is introducing another way for people to find and evaluate information. Rather than asking a search engine to point them towards sources, people can ask an AI system to help them interpret those sources and arrive at a recommendation.

It's a subtle distinction, but its implications are enormous.

Consider the difference between someone searching for "engineering apprenticeships near Leeds" and someone asking an AI assistant, "I'm 18, I've just finished my A-levels and I'm interested in engineering, but I'm not sure university is right for me. Which employers in Yorkshire offer apprenticeships that could lead to a really good career?"

The first query is primarily concerned with finding relevant opportunities. The second invites the AI system to understand a personal situation, evaluate alternatives and offer advice.

In the second scenario, the employer is no longer competing solely for a position in a search results page. They're potentially competing for inclusion in an AI-generated recommendation, where the information available about their organisation may influence whether they're considered at all.

And that information is unlikely to be confined to their current vacancies.

The AI assistant may need to understand what the employer does, where it operates, which opportunities it offers, what career progression looks like, how its apprenticeships work and whether there is credible evidence to support its claims.

A careers website that simply lists vacancies, however attractive its design, may have relatively little to contribute to that conversation.

A careers website that explains the employer's culture, provides meaningful information about development, answers the questions prospective candidates are likely to ask and makes that information accessible to search systems has a much stronger foundation.

Of course, AI recommendations are not inherently accurate, impartial or comprehensive. Different systems may produce different answers, and even the same system may vary its recommendations depending on how a question is phrased or which sources it retrieves.

Nevertheless, the direction of travel is clear: employers must increasingly consider how they're represented not only to the people visiting their websites, but also to the intelligent systems helping those people make decisions.

Your employer brand now has another audience.

There's something particularly fascinating about this development from an employer-brand perspective.

For years, we've encouraged organisations to think beyond the vacancy and consider the wider reputation they have as an employer. We've talked about the importance of authentic employee experiences, compelling employer propositions and the need to demonstrate what makes an organisation a genuinely attractive place to work.

We've also recognised that an employer brand isn't simply what an organisation says about itself. It's the reputation that exists in the minds of its current employees, prospective candidates and wider audiences.

That principle becomes even more relevant in an age of AI-assisted discovery.

When someone asks an intelligent system to recommend an employer, that system may draw upon information from a variety of sources. Some of it will come directly from the organisation's careers website. Other information might originate from employee reviews, industry publications, professional bodies, news reports, educational institutions or the employer's wider digital presence.

The picture that emerges may not be the one the organisation intended to create.

An employer might promote itself as a wonderful place to develop a career, but if its website offers little meaningful evidence about training and progression, that claim gives an AI system relatively little to work with. Another employer might provide detailed accounts of its development programmes, clear information about promotion opportunities and authentic stories from employees whose careers have progressed within the organisation.

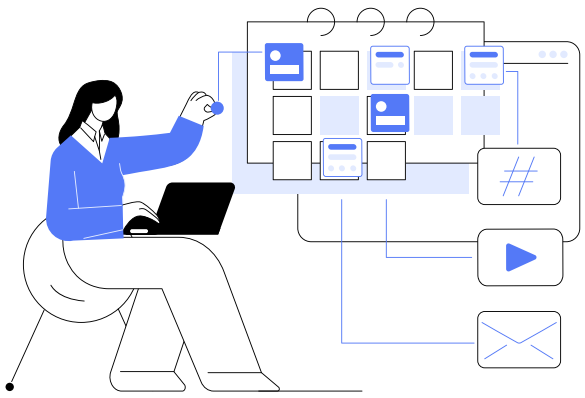
All other things being equal, the second employer has made it easier for an information-retrieval system to find evidence relevant to the candidate's question.

This doesn't mean that AI systems can reliably determine which organisation is the better employer. Nor does it mean that publishing more content will automatically result in a recommendation.

What it does mean is that the quality, clarity, credibility and accessibility of employer-brand information are becoming increasingly important considerations in digital recruitment strategy.

For those of us who have spent years arguing that employer branding is fundamentally about reputation rather than advertising, it's a particularly interesting development.

Because the challenge is no longer simply to communicate your employer brand to potential candidates. It's also to ensure that the information supporting that reputation can be discovered, interpreted and, where appropriate, referenced by the technology candidates increasingly use.



A beautiful website is no longer enough.

None of this diminishes the importance of great design. Quite the opposite.

A careers website still needs to engage visitors, communicate personality, create confidence and make the process of exploring and applying for opportunities as effortless as possible.

There will always be something important about the moment a potential candidate arrives on an employer's website and thinks, "I can see myself working here."

But increasingly, there may be another moment that precedes it.

A moment when the candidate asks an AI assistant for guidance, explores a set of recommendations and decides which organisations are worth investigating.

If we concentrate all our efforts on what happens after someone lands on the website, we risk overlooking an increasingly influential part of the journey.

This is where several emerging disciplines, including Generative Engine Optimisation (GEO), Answer Engine Optimisation (AEO) and Large Language Model Optimisation (LLMO), have begun to attract attention.

The terminology may sound unfamiliar, and much of it is still evolving, but the underlying principle is relatively straightforward. Organisations need to make their digital information as discoverable, understandable and credible as possible to the search and AI systems through which people increasingly access it.

That involves technical considerations, certainly, but it also reaches much further. It requires an understanding of the questions candidates actually ask, the evidence they need to make informed decisions, the structure of the information presented to them and the wider reputation that supports an employer's claims.

Importantly, it isn't a replacement for conventional SEO, and there is no magic formula that guarantees an employer will appear first in an AI-generated response.

It is an additional, evolving dimension of digital visibility that needs to be considered alongside established search, employer branding and candidate-experience principles.

And that is why the conversation about careers websites needs to change.



The question every employer should be asking.

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of this emerging landscape is that it encourages us to approach recruitment communications from a different perspective.

Rather than beginning with the familiar question, "How can we get more people to visit our careers website?", we might begin by asking something more fundamental.

If someone described their ideal employer to an AI assistant, would our organisation be recognised as a credible match?

Would the information available about us explain why we're a good place to work? Would it provide meaningful answers about our culture, our opportunities, our values and the experiences of our people? Would it help an intelligent system distinguish us from employers making similar claims?

And perhaps most importantly, would we know how to find out?

These aren't simply questions for a web developer or an SEO specialist. They touch on recruitment strategy, employer branding, candidate research, content development, digital architecture and the way organisations manage their reputations.

For an employer that has already invested significantly in attracting and engaging talented people, the opportunity is considerable. Much of the information that could help strengthen its visibility may already exist, but it might need to be structured differently, expressed more clearly, supported by better evidence or made more accessible.

For those embarking on a new careers website, there's an opportunity to think about these requirements from the outset, rather than treating AI visibility as something to address after launch.

And for recruitment communications agencies, it raises an equally important question about our responsibilities to clients.

Surely our job isn't finished when we've delivered a beautiful website that performs well and provides an exceptional candidate experience. If we're genuinely working in partnership with an employer to attract the best possible talent, shouldn't we also be helping them understand how candidates discover potential employers in the first place?

That means paying attention to emerging behaviours, challenging established assumptions and anticipating changes that may influence recruitment outcomes long before they appear in traditional website analytics.

After all, the purpose of a careers website has never really been to win design awards, generate traffic or achieve impressive search rankings. Those things can be valuable, but they're ultimately means to an end.

Its purpose is to connect the right people with the right opportunities, while communicating an authentic and compelling reason to become part of an organisation.

If the route to making that connection is changing, our approach needs to evolve with it.

And that brings us back to the nurse sitting at home in Yorkshire.

Somewhere, there's an employer that could offer them an extraordinary career. An employer with supportive colleagues, excellent development opportunities and a working environment in which they could thrive.

The challenge is making sure that when they ask for guidance, that employer has a fair chance of being discovered.

Because the greatest recruitment opportunity you miss may not be the candidate who visits your careers website and decides not to apply.

It may be the candidate who would have loved to work for you, but never knew you were there.

Chapter 1:
The Search Revolution

How artificial intelligence is changing the way people discover information, evaluate opportunities and choose who they want to work for.



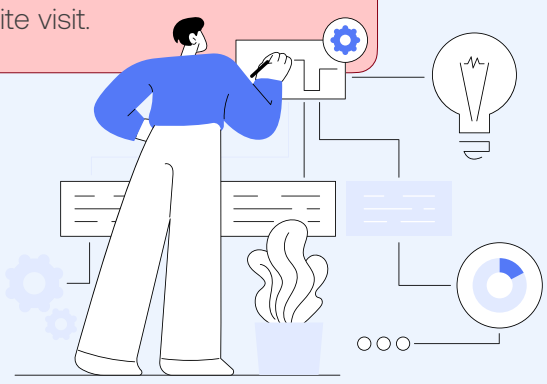
You can't lose an application from a candidate who never knew you existed.

The disappearing candidate

Yesterday's journey	The emerging journey
Google search	Ask AI for Advice
Careers website	AI compares employers
Explore employer	Candidate shortlist
Apply	Selected websites

The invisible candidate

An employer excluded during AI-assisted consideration may never record a website visit.



We didn't stop searching. We started asking better questions.

There was a time, not so very long ago, when finding information on the internet required a certain amount of patience, imagination and persistence. We'd type a handful of words into a search engine, examine the results, open several websites and gradually piece together the information we needed.

If the first search didn't produce what we wanted, we'd try another. We'd change the keywords, add a location or refine the question until we eventually found something useful.

In many ways, we became quite skilled at adapting the way we asked questions to suit the technology available to us. We learnt that searching for "graduate jobs Manchester" was likely to produce better results than typing a long explanation about wanting to find an interesting career with an employer that shared our values.

The technology dictated how we behaved.

What's happening now is rather different. For perhaps the first time in the history of internet search, the technology is becoming sophisticated enough to adapt to the way we naturally communicate.

We no longer have to reduce complex thoughts into carefully chosen keywords. We can explain what we're looking for, provide context, express preferences and ask follow-up questions in much the same way we might speak to another person.

And the implications for recruitment are considerable.

Think about someone who has spent the last fifteen years working in retail management. They've developed considerable experience in managing people, resolving problems, handling budgets and delivering excellent customer service. They're good at what they do, but they've reached a point where they want something different.

Traditionally, their search for a new career might begin with "retail manager jobs" or perhaps "career change jobs near me". The results would inevitably be influenced by the job titles they already knew and the language used by employers advertising vacancies.

But what if they asked an AI assistant:

"I've spent fifteen years managing teams in retail, but I'd like to move into a different industry. I'm good with people, enjoy solving problems and would like to earn around £40,000. I don't have a degree. What other careers could I consider, and which employers might value my experience?"

Suddenly, the conversation becomes much more interesting.

Instead of simply matching job titles, an AI assistant can explore transferable skills, suggest unfamiliar career paths and potentially identify employers that might never have featured in the individual's original search.

It could suggest opportunities in housing, logistics, transport, customer operations, training or public services. It might explain which skills are transferable, what additional qualifications could be useful and why particular industries might offer a good fit.

Not every suggestion will be right, and the individual should certainly verify the advice. But the experience is fundamentally different from scrolling through a list of vacancies.

The candidate is no longer simply searching for jobs. They're exploring possibilities.

And that should interest every organisation trying to attract talented people.

Because if employers can be discovered through the capabilities they value, the cultures they offer and the opportunities they create, recruitment marketing is no longer confined to competing for people already searching for a particular job title.

It has the potential to reach people who might never have considered the organisation, its sector or even the career opportunities it offers.

The numbers suggest this isn't a passing fashion.

Whenever a new technology arrives, there is a tendency for commentators to declare that everything which preceded it is about to become obsolete. We've seen it with social media, mobile applications, virtual reality and countless other developments that were supposedly going to transform our lives overnight.

Some genuinely did change the world. Others found a more modest place within it.

So it's worth approaching the enthusiasm surrounding artificial intelligence with a degree of perspective. The important question isn't whether AI is attracting attention, but whether there is evidence that it is changing established behaviour.

And some of the numbers are difficult to ignore.

According to Ofcom's Online Nation 2025 report, ChatGPT received approximately 1.8 billion visits from the UK during the first eight months of 2025. During the equivalent period in 2024, the figure had been 368 million.

Now, those figures don't tell us how many people were using ChatGPT to research potential employers. They include all sorts of activities, from writing emails and researching holidays to solving technical problems and seeking advice.

But they demonstrate something important. Large numbers of people are becoming comfortable with a different way of accessing information.

The change becomes even more apparent when we examine research published by the UK government's Department for Science, Innovation and Technology in 2026. Its Public Engagement Survey found that 59% of UK adults had used some form of generative AI in the previous three months, with adoption particularly common among people aged between 16 and 44.

Consider what that means for an organisation developing its early careers strategy, recruiting graduates or attempting to engage experienced professionals who may be contemplating their next move.

A substantial proportion of the potential workforce is already familiar with technology that can answer complex questions conversationally.

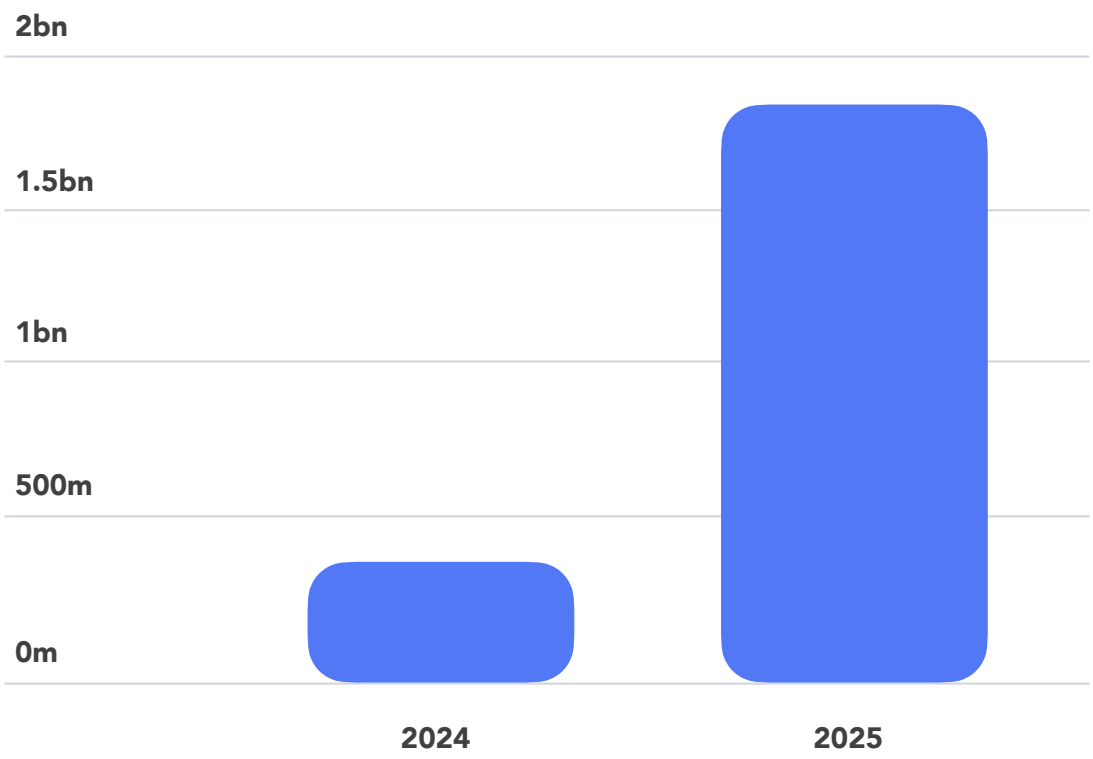
Of course, familiarity doesn't automatically translate into reliance. Many people still prefer traditional search engines, and AI systems remain capable of producing inaccurate or misleading information. In fact, the same government research found that 74% of respondents were concerned that AI-generated information might be inaccurate.

But perhaps that makes the direction of travel even more interesting. Despite legitimate concerns about reliability, adoption has continued to grow.

The more important question for employers is not whether everyone will abandon Google. It's what happens when a meaningful proportion of potential candidates begin using AI alongside traditional search, particularly during those early, exploratory moments when they're deciding which employers are worth considering.

People haven't stopped looking for answers. They've changed where they ask.

1.8 billion
Visits to ChatGPT from the UK in just eight months
That's almost five times the visits recorded during the same period a year earlier.





Even Google is changing the rules.

It's tempting to think of this revolution as a battle between traditional search engines and newer services such as ChatGPT, Claude, Perplexity or Microsoft Copilot.

But that interpretation overlooks something significant.

Google itself is becoming an increasingly AI-driven experience.

For years, we've understood Google primarily as a system that directs people towards websites. Its familiar results page presented a selection of links, accompanied by short descriptions, allowing users to decide where to go next.

Although Google has offered direct answers, featured snippets and knowledge panels for many years, the introduction of generative AI into mainstream search represents a further evolution.

Google's AI Overviews can now synthesise information from multiple sources and present a response directly within the search results. Its AI Mode goes further, allowing people to explore questions through a conversational interface.

According to Google's June 2026 investor presentation, AI Overviews had surpassed 2.5 billion monthly users worldwide, while AI Mode had exceeded one billion monthly users.

Pause for a moment and consider that figure.

We're not talking about an experimental service used by a small group of technology enthusiasts. We're talking about AI-generated information being incorporated into one of the most familiar and widely used activities on the internet.

And this is particularly relevant to careers websites because, for most organisations, Google remains an important source of candidate traffic.

Ofcom reported in December 2025 that 82% of UK adults used Google Search, which handled approximately three billion UK searches a month. It also estimated that around 30% of searches were displaying AI Overviews, with 53% of adults saying they encountered these summaries often.

In other words, even candidates who have never deliberately opened ChatGPT may already be encountering AI-generated answers while carrying out perfectly ordinary searches.

This matters because employers don't necessarily have to wait for candidates to consciously adopt a new technology before their search behaviour begins to change.

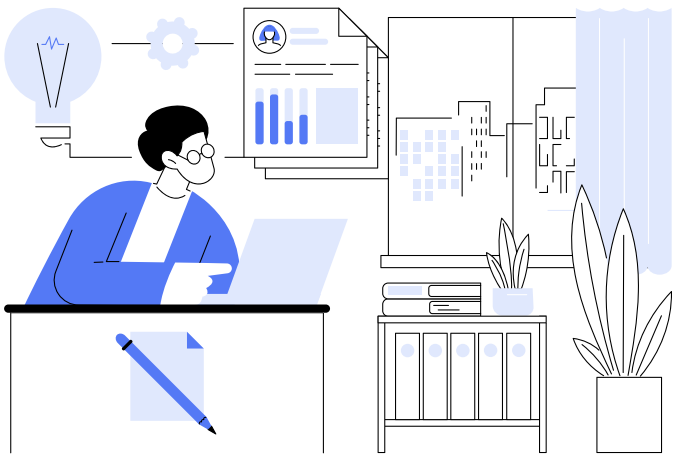
The technology is already finding its way into the services people know.

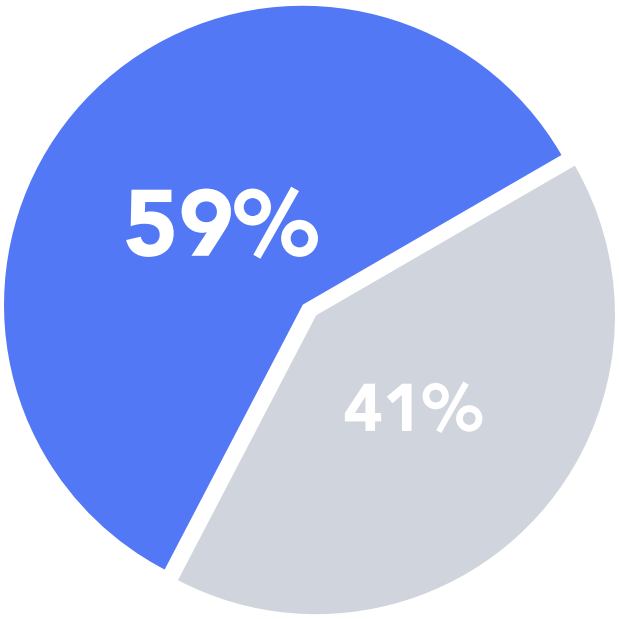
2.5 bn+

Monthly users of Google's AI Overviews worldwide.

And AI Mode has surpassed one billion monthly users.

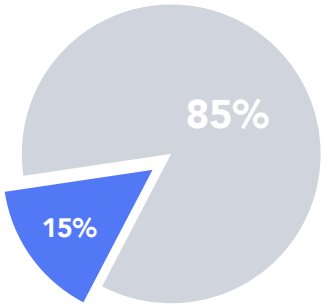
These are Google's reported figures in 2026, demonstrating how AI-assisted search is becoming part of mainstream discovery, not merely an alternative to Google.



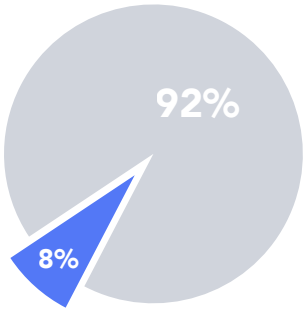


59% Of UK adults had used generative AI in the previous three months.

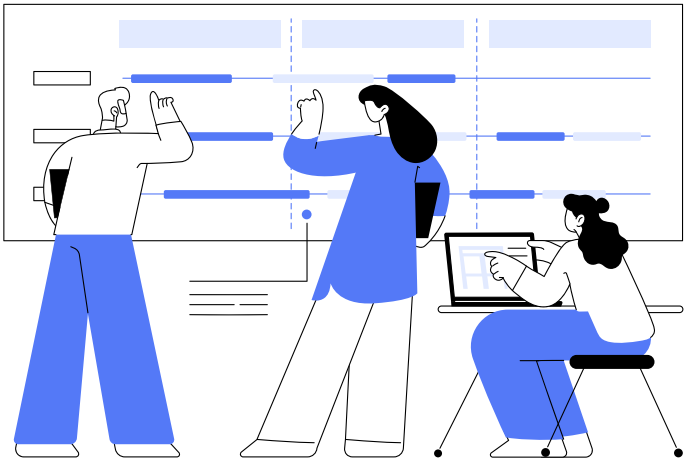
This is especially relevant to recruitment because usage was at least 75% among adults in each surveyed age group below 45.



Clicked a traditional result when there was no AI summary.



Clicked a traditional result when an AI summary appeared.



What happens when the answer replaces the visit?

For organisations investing in digital marketing, one of the most thought-provoking consequences of AI-assisted search is the possibility that someone can obtain much of the information they need without visiting the original website.

Imagine a prospective employee researching flexible working opportunities.

In the past, they might search for "flexible working NHS employers", open several Trust careers websites, look for information about working patterns and compare what they discovered.

An AI-generated response might now bring together information about several employers and provide an initial comparison directly within the search experience.

The individual may still click through to investigate further, particularly if they're seriously considering an employer or want to verify the details. But they might also feel they have enough information to move on to the next question.

The website can influence the answer without necessarily receiving the visit.

And there is evidence that this behaviour is already affecting how people interact with search results.

In July 2025, the Pew Research Center published an analysis of browsing activity from 900 US adults. It examined what happened when Google searches displayed an AI-generated summary and compared this with searches where no such summary appeared.

The findings were striking.

When Google's search results included an AI summary, users were less likely to click through to a traditional search result.

The study also found that only around 1% of visits to a search results page containing an AI summary led to a click on a link within the summary itself. Meanwhile, 26% of visits to pages containing AI summaries ended with the user leaving the browser session, compared with 16% for pages without them.

We need to be careful about how we interpret those findings. The research examined general search behaviour, not recruitment specifically, and the presence of an AI summary doesn't necessarily cause someone not to click. Different kinds of searches attract different behaviours.

Nevertheless, the implications deserve serious consideration.

For years, digital marketing has been built around a relatively straightforward relationship. If we improved our search visibility, we could attract more website visitors. If we attracted more of the right visitors, we could increase our chances of generating enquiries, sales or applications.

But what happens when the search experience itself begins satisfying a greater proportion of people's information needs?

An employer might become more visible within an AI-generated answer while seeing little corresponding increase in website traffic.

Equally, another employer might maintain respectable traditional search rankings but fail to feature prominently in the answers people increasingly rely upon.

This doesn't mean website traffic is becoming irrelevant. Visitors, applications and recruitment outcomes remain essential measures of success.

It means that website analytics may tell us less about the whole journey than they once did.

And that represents a significant challenge for recruitment marketing.

The invisible shortlist.

Let's return to the prospective candidate for a moment, because this is where the consequences become particularly tangible.

Imagine someone who has recently qualified as an accountant. They're ambitious, interested in progressing professionally and would like to work for an organisation where their contribution makes a meaningful difference.

They aren't particularly committed to working in a traditional accountancy practice. They might be interested in public services, housing, education or an organisation involved in delivering social value.

But they don't know what those opportunities might look like.

An AI assistant could potentially help them explore those options, explaining why organisations outside professional services still need skilled finance teams and what different career paths might offer.

It might suggest several housing associations, local authorities or public bodies that appear to offer relevant opportunities and development prospects.

What determines which employers feature in that response?

The answer depends on the AI service, its available information, the exact question asked and, in some cases, the sources retrieved during the conversation.

But we can identify an important principle.

If an employer has provided clear, accessible and credible information about its finance careers, professional development, organisational purpose and working environment, there is more relevant material available for an AI system to discover and potentially use.

If that information is hidden in inaccessible documents, scattered across unrelated pages or simply absent from the public website, the system may have less evidence to draw upon.

And if the employer's entire careers proposition consists of a generic statement about being a great place to work, followed by a list of current vacancies, it's difficult to see how that would help an AI assistant explain why the organisation might suit someone with very specific ambitions.

The potential consequence is what we might call the invisible shortlist.

An AI assistant suggests a handful of organisations for a candidate to investigate. The candidate starts there, perhaps researches two or three employers in more detail, and begins applying.

Other perfectly suitable employers may never enter the conversation.

Not because they performed badly during the recruitment process, but because they weren't discovered during the consideration process.

The distinction is important. We're not suggesting that every AI service produces a fixed shortlist, or that an employer omitted from one answer is somehow excluded permanently. Different prompts and systems can produce different results.

But the possibility that employers can be overlooked before a website visit ever takes place is enough to challenge how we think about digital recruitment visibility.

And it raises an uncomfortable question.

How many potential candidates might we be missing without ever knowing they were interested?

The opportunity hidden inside the disruption.

It's easy to focus on the risks associated with this change, particularly for organisations that have already invested heavily in their digital recruitment infrastructure.

But I think there's another way of looking at it.

For years, recruitment marketing has been constrained to some extent by the limitations of traditional search. Employers have competed for attention around job titles, professional categories, locations and familiar recruitment terminology.

This has tended to favour organisations already well known within their sector, as well as those with sufficient budgets and expertise to compete for prominent search positions.

Yet many excellent employers operate in sectors that prospective candidates simply don't think to investigate.

Take housing associations, for example.

Someone considering a career in digital transformation, finance, marketing, customer experience or project management might initially be drawn towards the private sector, perhaps assuming that these are the organisations offering the most interesting opportunities.

They may never think to search for vacancies within a housing association.

But suppose an AI assistant is asked to identify employers that combine interesting professional opportunities with a strong social purpose, good employee development and the chance to make a positive impact on communities.

Suddenly, housing associations could become highly relevant to the conversation.

The same principle applies to the NHS, local government, education, public infrastructure and many other sectors where the breadth of available careers is not always widely understood.

This is where AI-assisted discovery has the potential to become genuinely beneficial.

Rather than relying exclusively on candidates knowing which industries or organisations to search for, it could help them discover employers through the values, skills, ambitions and working environments they care about.

From a recruitment perspective, that's an exciting prospect.

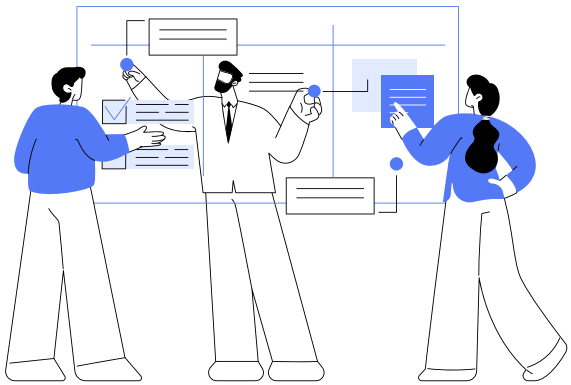
It also aligns with something we've argued for many years at Genius: recruitment should be about recognising capability and potential, rather than simply relying on familiar job titles, career histories and conventional assumptions about suitability.

If the technology helps candidates discover opportunities beyond the boundaries of their existing experience, employers could gain access to audiences they might otherwise struggle to reach.

But there's a condition attached.

Those employers need to make the information that describes their opportunities understandable and discoverable.

An AI assistant cannot reliably communicate the benefits of working somewhere if those benefits aren't adequately explained or substantiated in the information available to it.



From keywords to context

One of the most interesting aspects of conversational search is that it provides far more context about what someone actually wants.

A traditional search for "graduate jobs Yorkshire" tells us relatively little about the individual. We know they're probably interested in graduate opportunities in a particular region, but we don't know what motivates them, which industries interest them or what kind of working environment they would prefer.

Now imagine that same individual asking:

"I'm graduating in psychology this summer. I'm interested in understanding people and making a difference, but I don't necessarily want to become a psychologist. I enjoy working with others and would prefer an employer that offers good training and opportunities to progress. What should I consider?"

That question contains a wealth of information about the candidate's interests, motivations and uncertainties.

A useful AI response might explain potential careers in people management, recruitment, learning and development, healthcare, social care, research or customer experience.

It might also identify organisations where those skills could be valuable.

From the employer's perspective, this represents a significant change in the information that could influence discovery.

Rather than optimising solely for phrases such as "HR graduate jobs" or "psychology graduate careers", employers have a reason to explain the broader capabilities they value, the different routes into their organisation and the opportunities available to people from less conventional backgrounds.

That doesn't make keywords irrelevant. Search engines still rely on many established information-retrieval techniques, and conventional SEO continues to play an important role in making websites discoverable.

But a careers website designed around the questions real candidates ask, rather than solely the keywords employers want to rank for, may provide much richer material for both human visitors and AI-powered search systems.

And there is evidence that more conversational queries are particularly relevant to the emergence of AI-generated answers.

Pew Research Center's 2025 analysis found that only 8% of Google searches consisting of one or two words produced an AI summary. For searches containing ten words or more, that proportion rose to 53%. Searches beginning with question words such as who, what, when or why were even more likely to produce an AI summary, at 60%.

This doesn't mean that candidates are necessarily making longer searches at the same rate, but it highlights the relationship between the way questions are expressed and the likelihood that an AI-generated answer becomes part of the experience.

And when you consider the kinds of questions people naturally ask about their careers, the relevance becomes obvious.

"Which employers offer the best opportunities for career progression?"

"Where could I work if I want to move from retail into another industry?"

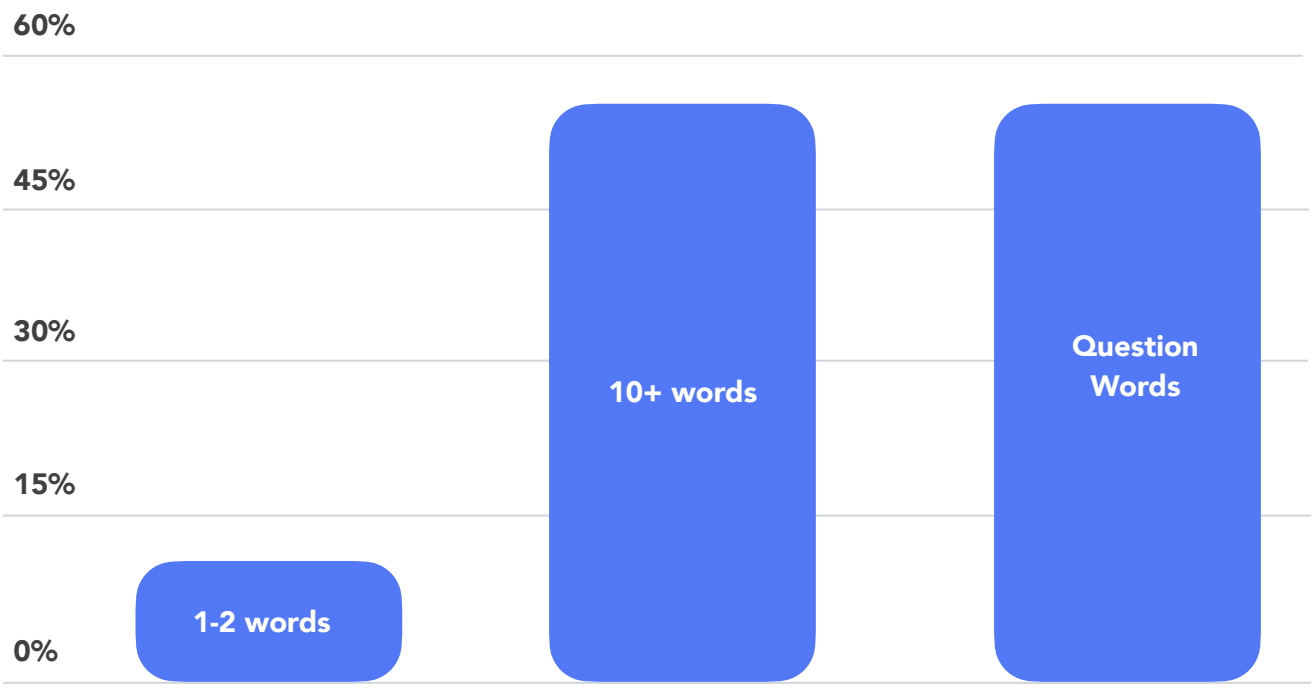
"Which organisations have a reputation for supporting working parents?"

"Can I become an engineer without going to university?"

These aren't simply searches for vacancies.
They're questions about people's futures.

And the employers best placed to contribute to those conversations may be those that have invested in providing genuinely useful answers.

The longer the question, the more likely an AI answer becomes.



Think about the difference between searching "engineering jobs Leeds" and asking "Which engineering employers in Yorkshire offer good progression without a degree?"



Why traditional SEO still matters

At this point, it would be easy to suggest that the days of traditional search engine optimisation are numbered, and that organisations need to abandon established SEO practices in favour of an entirely new discipline.

That would be both premature and misleading.

Google's own guidance, updated in 2026, makes it clear that established SEO principles remain fundamental to visibility within its AI-powered search features. Its recommendations continue to emphasise technically accessible websites, well-organised information and valuable, original content created for people rather than search algorithms.

In other words, the foundations haven't disappeared.

A careers website still needs to be discoverable by search engines, technically sound, easy to navigate and supported by relevant, informative content.

Poorly structured websites, inaccessible information and weak content won't suddenly become effective because someone adds a few references to artificial intelligence.

And there is no special piece of code that guarantees an employer will be recommended by ChatGPT or appear in Google's AI-generated results.

What is changing is the breadth of the challenge.

Traditional SEO has understandably focused heavily on search visibility, ranking positions and the traffic generated by particular queries. In an AI-assisted environment, organisations must also consider how their information is interpreted, whether it provides convincing answers to more complex questions and how it relates to information published elsewhere.

This is where the emerging concepts of Generative Engine Optimisation, Answer Engine Optimisation and Large Language Model Optimisation become relevant.

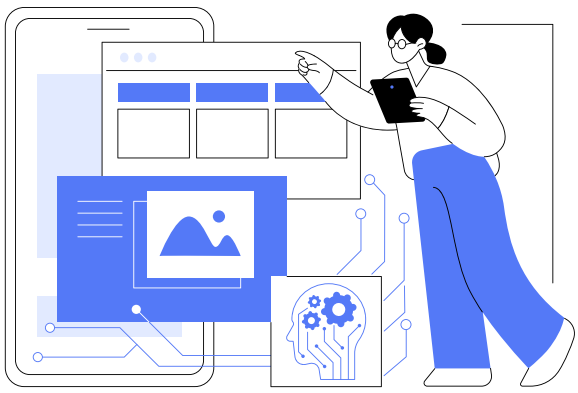
The labels differ, and there is considerable overlap between them, but they share a common ambition: improving the likelihood that an organisation's information can contribute to the answers generated by intelligent systems.

For a careers website, that means combining the established principles of technical SEO with an understanding of candidate behaviour, employer reputation, content credibility and how AI-enabled search systems discover and synthesise information.

The goal isn't to write a website for machines at the expense of people.

It's to create a website whose information is useful to people and can also be reliably understood by the systems helping them find it.

And that should be entirely consistent with the purpose of good recruitment communications.



A new responsibility for recruitment marketing.

Perhaps the greatest mistake employers could make is to treat this development as simply another technical issue for their website supplier.

There will undoubtedly be technical work involved in preparing careers websites for AI-assisted discovery. Search accessibility, structured data, information architecture and content presentation all have important roles to play.

But the real challenge begins long before anyone writes a line of code.

It starts with understanding what potential candidates actually want to know.

What do people ask when they're considering a career change? What concerns might prevent someone from applying to a particular organisation? What assumptions do they hold about an industry? Which questions are most important to graduates, experienced professionals, career returners or people considering opportunities outside their previous experience?

And how effectively does the employer answer those questions?

These have always been valuable considerations for recruitment marketing, but AI-assisted search gives them a renewed importance.

It also invites us to reconsider what constitutes a successful careers website.

Of course, we should continue measuring traffic, engagement, applications, conversion rates and the quality of the candidate experience.

But we also need to become curious about what happens before those measurable interactions begin.

When someone asks an AI assistant about the best employers in our sector, are we mentioned? If we're recommended, what information supports that recommendation? If we're overlooked, are there gaps in our content, our digital presence or the evidence behind our employer proposition?

What are our competitors communicating that we aren't?

And perhaps most importantly, how can we improve our visibility without losing the authenticity that makes a good employer brand credible in the first place?

These aren't questions that can be answered once during a website redesign and then forgotten. AI-powered services evolve, their information sources change, new content is published and the questions candidates ask will continue to develop.

That creates a compelling argument for treating AI visibility as an ongoing part of recruitment communications strategy rather than a one-off technical exercise.

It also changes the role of the agency responsible for creating and maintaining the careers website.

Because designing an excellent digital experience is only part of the job.

We also need to understand how people arrive at the decision to explore that experience in the first place.



The next candidate journey may begin somewhere else entirely.

When we think about the candidate journey, we often imagine a relatively familiar sequence.

Someone becomes aware of an employer, visits its careers website, explores opportunities, finds a vacancy, submits an application and progresses through recruitment.

There are many variations, of course, but the careers website has traditionally been one of the central destinations in that journey.

Increasingly, it may become a destination reached after an individual has already received a considerable amount of advice, compared several organisations and formed an initial impression of where they might want to work.

And that initial impression could be influenced by information assembled and presented through an AI assistant.

For employers, this is both a challenge and an opportunity.

A challenge because they can no longer assume that a well-ranked, well-designed website will automatically secure their place in a candidate's consideration.

An opportunity because intelligent discovery could help people identify organisations and careers they might never previously have encountered.

The important thing is to recognise that search is no longer simply about finding a page containing the right words.

Increasingly, it's about finding answers that address a person's particular circumstances, preferences and ambitions.

For an employer, the ambition should therefore extend beyond appearing in search results. It should be to provide the credible, relevant information that helps candidates discover and evaluate the organisation, whether they're using a conventional search engine, an AI assistant or a combination of the two.

And that brings us to the question at the heart of this white paper.

We spend considerable time and money making sure our careers websites communicate effectively with the people who arrive on them. We carefully consider the design, the language, the navigation, the employer brand and the experience of applying.

But how much attention are we giving to the increasingly intelligent systems that may influence whether those people arrive at all?

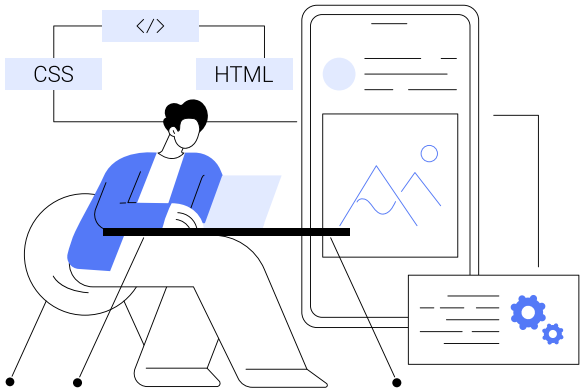
The next great candidate for your organisation might already be out there, asking questions about the kind of employer they want to work for.

They might have exactly the skills, potential and values you're looking for.

They might even be describing your organisation without knowing its name.

The question is whether the information available about you gives AI-powered search systems enough reason to bring you into that conversation.

And to understand how we can improve the chances of that happening, we first need to understand what those systems are actually looking for.



Chapter 2: The Candidate Journey Has Changed

From browsing vacancies to having conversations about the future.



A different kind of journey.

For as long as I've been involved in recruitment communications, we've talked about the candidate journey as though it were a reasonably predictable sequence of events. Someone becomes interested in changing jobs, starts looking for opportunities, discovers an employer, visits their careers website and, if everything goes according to plan, eventually submits an application.

Of course, we all know that the reality is considerably more complicated. People don't always make rational decisions, they rarely investigate opportunities in a particularly orderly fashion, and their reasons for considering a new job can be deeply personal. Nevertheless, we've developed an entire industry around understanding and improving the various stages of this journey, from initial awareness and attraction through to application, assessment, appointment and onboarding.

And we've become remarkably good at it.

We can measure how many people visit a careers website, which pages they explore, how long they spend looking at particular opportunities and where they abandon an application. We can identify which advertising channels generate the most interest and which recruitment campaigns deliver the strongest results. We've developed increasingly sophisticated technology to manage applications, automate communications and make recruitment more efficient.

Yet there's a rather obvious limitation to much of this activity. We're generally measuring people once they've entered an environment we control.

We can follow someone around our careers website, but we know considerably less about the conversations, considerations and decisions that brought them there. We might know that a visitor arrived through Google, for example, but that tells us relatively little about what prompted their interest, what alternatives they've considered or what they've already been told about our organisation.

Artificial intelligence is making this unseen part of the candidate journey particularly interesting, because it offers people an entirely different way to begin exploring their futures.

Rather than starting with an employer, a vacancy or even a particular profession, someone can now begin with a question about themselves.

And that changes rather more than we might initially imagine.



Meet Sarah.
She isn't looking for a job.

Let's imagine someone called Sarah. She's 38, lives in West Yorkshire and has spent most of her working life in retail. For the past seven years she's managed a busy store, leading a team of around twenty people, dealing with customers, managing budgets, resolving staffing problems and generally making sure the business runs smoothly.

She's good at her job and enjoys many aspects of it, particularly the people she works with. But the unsociable hours are becoming difficult, especially with two young children, and she's beginning to wonder whether there's something else she could do.

The problem is that Sarah doesn't really know what that something else might be.

She's never worked outside retail, doesn't have a degree and has always assumed that changing industries would probably mean taking a significant reduction in salary. She doesn't particularly want another store management role, but whenever she's looked at job websites in the past, that's largely what she's been shown.

So, one evening, rather than opening a job board, she decides to have a conversation with an AI assistant.

She explains her background, the things she's good at and the aspects of her current job she'd like to leave behind. She mentions that she enjoys managing people, solving problems and helping customers, but that she'd prefer more predictable working hours. She also explains that she can't afford to start again on an entry-level salary.

The AI assistant suggests several possibilities, some of which she might already have considered, but others that are entirely unfamiliar. It explains how her experience could translate into customer operations, housing management, training, logistics or service delivery. It helps her understand which aspects of her existing experience might be particularly valuable in those environments and where some additional training might be required.

Sarah is intrigued by the suggestion of working for a housing association. She's never really thought about housing as an industry offering interesting careers, and certainly wouldn't have searched for "housing association management jobs" on a conventional job board.

So she asks another question.

"What would it actually be like to work for a housing association, and which ones near me have a good reputation for developing their staff?"

Now the conversation has moved into territory that should make recruitment marketers sit up and take notice.

Because Sarah has gone from having no intention of searching for a particular employer to actively considering an entirely new sector, without necessarily visiting a single careers website.

If the AI assistant has access to suitable information, it may be able to suggest organisations worth investigating, explain the kinds of roles they offer and direct Sarah towards further sources. It might also make mistakes, miss suitable employers or rely on information that is out of date, which is why verification remains important.

But the significant point is that Sarah's initial discovery has been shaped by a conversation about her capabilities and aspirations, rather than a search for a job title.

And somewhere in West Yorkshire, there could be a housing association that would absolutely love to employ her.

It might value her commercial experience, appreciate her ability to manage a team and recognise that the skills she's developed in retail could translate extremely well into supporting customers and communities.

Yet if that organisation's careers website does little more than advertise vacancies under unfamiliar job titles, how would Sarah ever have known?

The opportunity was there all along. What was missing was the connection.

That is one of the most exciting possibilities created by conversational AI. It has the potential to introduce people to careers they didn't know existed and employers they would never have thought to investigate.

For organisations seeking to attract candidates from outside their traditional recruitment pools, that possibility is worth understanding.

The candidate doesn't necessarily know what they're looking for.

One of the assumptions embedded within much of traditional recruitment marketing is that people have a reasonable idea of the job they want.

We optimise websites around job categories, create campaigns promoting particular professions and organise opportunities by department, location or contract type. Our navigation systems are generally designed to help someone who knows what they're looking for find it as quickly as possible.

That makes perfect sense for a candidate who wants to find a nursing vacancy in Leeds or a finance role in Manchester.

But what about the person who knows they want a different future without knowing what that future looks like?

Perhaps they're returning to work after raising a family. Perhaps they're leaving the armed forces, considering a career change in their fifties or looking for opportunities where the skills they've developed through life experience are as valuable as formal qualifications.

Those people don't necessarily think in the language of job descriptions.

They think about the kind of life they'd like, the things they enjoy, the work they're capable of doing and the circumstances in which they'd be happiest.

Someone might want a career that allows them to spend more time with their children. Another might be looking for work that feels socially worthwhile. A graduate might be searching for an employer willing to invest in their development, while an experienced professional might simply want to work somewhere they feel valued.

These are perfectly natural aspirations, but they've never been particularly easy to express through conventional keyword searches.

Conversational AI provides an opportunity to explain them in ordinary language.

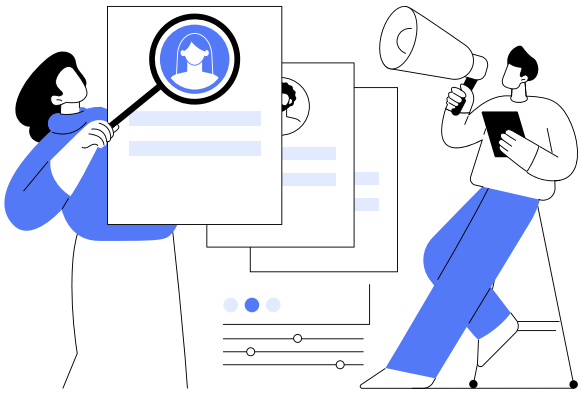
Of course, there are limitations. AI assistants don't truly understand someone's ambitions in the way an experienced careers adviser might, and their suggestions are influenced by the information and assumptions available to them. They should be regarded as tools for exploration rather than infallible sources of careers advice.

Nevertheless, there's something potentially liberating about being able to describe what matters to you rather than having to begin with a predetermined job title.

And for employers, that presents an interesting challenge.

If candidates increasingly explore opportunities through conversations about their skills, values and aspirations, are our careers websites providing the kind of information that would help those conversations lead towards us?

Or are we still assuming that the only people who need to discover our opportunities are those who already know what to search for?



The shortlist may be formed before the first website visit.

The shortlist may be formed before the first website visit

Let's consider another example, this time involving someone who has a much clearer idea of their career direction.

James is a recently qualified accountant who wants to move from a small practice into an organisation where he can develop broader commercial experience. He's interested in progressing towards a senior finance role, but he's also attracted to employers whose work has a positive impact on society.

A few years ago, his search might have begun with a job board, perhaps filtering for finance positions within a reasonable travelling distance. He might have applied to whichever vacancies looked interesting, researched the employers afterwards and made comparisons if he received more than one offer.

Now imagine that James begins by asking an AI assistant to identify organisations that might suit his ambitions.

He explains his qualifications, experience and interests. He asks which sectors offer good opportunities for professional development and which employers appear to invest in their finance teams.

As the conversation progresses, he begins narrowing the options. He's particularly interested in public infrastructure, housing and environmental organisations. He wants to understand the differences between working for a commercial business and an organisation with a strong social purpose.

Eventually, he asks for a handful of employers worth investigating.

By the time James clicks through to a careers website, he may already have developed some expectations about the organisations he's considering. He might believe that one offers better professional development, another has a stronger commitment to sustainability and a third has a particularly attractive working culture.

Those impressions may be well founded, partially accurate or entirely mistaken. But they can still influence where he chooses to spend his time.

And that creates a potentially important change in the role of the careers website.

Traditionally, we've often expected the website to introduce the organisation, explain its employer proposition and persuade visitors to explore opportunities. In this emerging journey, some visitors may arrive having already been introduced to the organisation by an AI assistant.

Instead of asking, "Who are you?", they may arrive asking, "Can you demonstrate that what I've been told about you is true?"

That's quite a different starting point.

Someone who has been told that an employer has excellent career development opportunities may immediately look for evidence of those opportunities. Someone attracted by a reputation for flexible working may want to understand exactly what flexibility means in practice. A candidate who has heard that an organisation invests in its people may expect to find genuine employee experiences rather than generic statements about valuing staff.

The website still has to persuade, but increasingly it may also need to validate.

And there is another implication. If an AI assistant introduces a candidate to five potential employers, perhaps only two or three will ever receive a visit. The others may be eliminated during a conversation that takes place entirely outside their websites.

Those employers won't necessarily know they were considered, what was said about them or why the candidate decided to look elsewhere.

We've spent years worrying about candidates abandoning applications halfway through the process. We may now need to pay greater attention to the candidates who abandon consideration before the application journey has even begun.

The candidate is already using AI. Just not in the way we expect.

There's a tendency in recruitment to discuss artificial intelligence primarily from the employer's perspective. We talk about automated screening, AI-generated job descriptions, intelligent matching and the potential for technology to make recruitment more efficient. We debate whether machines should assess candidates, how algorithms might introduce bias and whether automation risks removing the human judgement that good recruitment depends upon.

These are important conversations, particularly when technology is being used to influence decisions about people's careers and livelihoods.

But while employers have been debating the appropriate role of AI in recruitment, candidates have been discovering their own uses for it.

Some are using it to improve their CVs, others to prepare for interviews, and many are beginning to explore how it might help them understand careers, industries and opportunities that would otherwise be unfamiliar.

LinkedIn's January 2026 research, for example, found that almost 80% of people surveyed felt unprepared to find a job in 2026, while a majority intended to use AI tools in their job searches. The research also found that more than half of respondents globally were looking for a new role, despite widespread concerns that finding employment had become more difficult.

There's something revealing about those findings. When people feel uncertain about their prospects, they naturally look for information, reassurance and practical assistance. AI offers an accessible way to ask questions they may feel uncomfortable raising elsewhere, particularly if they're exploring a career change or aren't sure how their experience compares with what employers require.

More specific evidence comes from the UK government's 2025/26 Public Engagement Survey, which found that 14% of generative AI users in its online sample had used the technology to help with job applications during the previous three months. The same survey found that 55% used AI to generate ideas or inspiration, while 48% used it to summarise or explain information.

Those latter activities aren't necessarily related to recruitment, but they're precisely the kinds of assistance someone might seek when researching unfamiliar employers or investigating a new career.

However, we shouldn't exaggerate the extent to which AI has already replaced traditional job-search channels. An American iHire survey published in 2025 found that just 6.9% of respondents used generative AI platforms to search for opportunities, compared with substantially larger proportions using job boards, professional networking sites and employer websites.

In some respects, that distinction makes the situation more interesting. AI doesn't need to replace job boards or careers websites to influence which employers receive attention. It can become an additional layer of research and advice that shapes a candidate's choices before they use those more familiar channels.

And if we think about how people make other important decisions, the potential significance becomes clearer.

We don't necessarily buy a car from the first website we visit, book a holiday without comparing alternatives or choose somewhere to live without researching the area. We seek recommendations, investigate reputations, ask questions and gradually develop confidence in our decisions.

Choosing an employer is arguably more consequential than many of those purchases. It can affect our income, happiness, health, family life and long-term prospects.

Why wouldn't people use increasingly accessible technology to help them make a more informed choice?





Your careers website is no longer the only voice in the conversation.

There was a time when employers enjoyed considerable control over how prospective candidates first encountered their organisations.

An advertisement might attract someone's attention, followed by a visit to a careers website where the employer could explain its values, introduce its people and present opportunities in a carefully considered way.

Of course, people have always sought information elsewhere. They've spoken to friends, read newspaper articles, consulted professional contacts and, more recently, visited employee review platforms and social media.

An employer brand has never existed solely within the pages of an employer's own website.

But AI introduces a potentially significant additional layer between all those different sources of information and the candidate trying to make sense of them.

Imagine someone considering two employers, both of which claim to offer excellent career development, a supportive culture and flexible working arrangements.

One employer has invested heavily in its branding. Its careers website looks exceptional, with polished photography, engaging animations and confident statements about its commitment to people. Yet when the candidate looks for details about training, progression or flexible working, much of the information is surprisingly vague.

The other employer has a less visually sophisticated website, but provides detailed explanations of its development programmes, genuine employee career stories, transparent information about working arrangements and evidence of the opportunities available.

Which employer would an AI assistant recommend?

We can't answer that confidently, because different AI systems evaluate and retrieve information in different ways. Their responses are not fixed, and there is no guarantee that the employer with the most detailed content will be preferred.

Nevertheless, we can recognise that the second organisation has made more useful information available to support the candidate's question.

That distinction matters because employers have sometimes treated their careers websites primarily as marketing environments. The emphasis has been on creating a compelling impression, supported by attractive design, confident messaging and a clear route towards available vacancies.

There is nothing wrong with that approach, provided the substance exists behind the presentation.

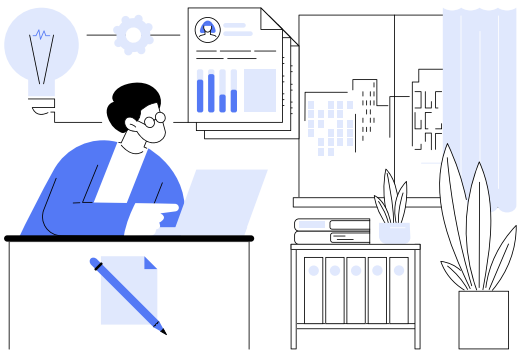
But when candidates can ask AI systems to investigate particular aspects of an employer, broad claims may become less useful than the information supporting them.

A statement about offering outstanding career development is considerably more meaningful when accompanied by details of the programmes available, examples of employees who have progressed and an explanation of how people can access those opportunities.

Likewise, saying that an organisation supports work-life balance is less informative than describing the working patterns available, the policies governing flexibility and how those arrangements operate in practice.

The challenge isn't to abandon creativity or turn careers websites into lengthy policy documents. It's to ensure that the employer's proposition is supported by substance and that the substance can be discovered.

Because a beautifully designed careers website should inspire people to want to work somewhere, but it should also give them good reasons to believe that inspiration is justified.



When AI gets it wrong, reputation becomes even more important.

There's another aspect of the emerging candidate journey that deserves attention, and it's perhaps one of the less comfortable ones.

What happens when the information presented by an AI assistant is inaccurate?

Imagine a prospective candidate asking whether an employer offers hybrid working. The assistant retrieves an outdated recruitment advertisement, an old employee review or a third-party article that no longer reflects the organisation's policies.

It then produces a confident answer suggesting that flexible working is unavailable.

The candidate, who needs some flexibility because of family commitments, decides not to investigate further.

In reality, the employer introduced a comprehensive hybrid working policy eighteen months earlier. It actively encourages flexible arrangements, and many employees now benefit from them.

Unfortunately, that information hasn't been communicated clearly across its careers website or wider digital presence.

The candidate's decision has been influenced by information that is no longer correct.

This is a hypothetical example, but the underlying risk is real. AI-generated responses can reflect outdated sources, misinterpret information or produce unsupported claims. Even when an employer maintains excellent information on its own website, it cannot guarantee that an AI system will retrieve or accurately represent it.

That's why AI visibility shouldn't be understood simply as an exercise in persuading technology to mention an organisation more frequently.

It should also involve understanding how that organisation is being described.

Are AI services presenting accurate information about its working environment? Are its employment benefits being explained correctly? Are its development opportunities visible? Are the sources being referenced current, relevant and credible?

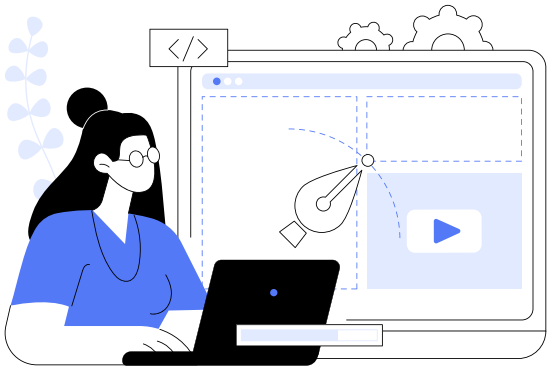
These questions bring us into the territory of employer reputation management, where recruitment communications agencies have an important role to play.

Employers can't control every external source or AI-generated response, nor should they attempt to manipulate independent opinions. But they can improve the quality of the information they publish, correct inaccuracies where possible and monitor how their organisation appears across different discovery channels.

And perhaps we should recognise that this responsibility extends beyond the recruitment team.

Human resources, internal communications, corporate affairs, marketing and digital teams all contribute to the information that shapes an organisation's external reputation.

The careers website is an important part of that picture, but it is no longer sensible to regard it as a self-contained environment whose success can be measured entirely within its own boundaries.



A candidate journey built around questions, not pages.

One of the more fascinating consequences of conversational search is that it encourages us to rethink how we organise information.

For years, careers websites have largely been structured around the needs of the employer. We create sections for different departments, job families, locations, benefits, training, culture and current vacancies. Candidates are expected to navigate this structure, find the relevant information and make sense of how it relates to their circumstances.

Good user experience design makes this process as easy as possible, but the underlying structure is still largely determined by the organisation.

Candidates, however, don't necessarily think in those categories.

Someone approaching retirement might be interested in reducing their working hours without leaving employment altogether. Someone returning from maternity leave might want to know how an employer supports parents. A school leaver might be unsure whether an apprenticeship offers the same long-term prospects as university.

These people have questions that cut across the conventional boundaries of a careers website.

Consider a candidate who asks an AI assistant whether a particular employer would be suitable for someone with a disability.

The answer might require information from several places: workplace adjustments, accessibility, recruitment policies, flexible working arrangements, employee networks and the organisation's wider approach to inclusion.

If that information is fragmented, difficult to find or expressed only through broad statements of commitment, it becomes harder for both the candidate and an AI-powered search system to assemble a useful picture.

But when organisations develop their careers content around genuine candidate needs, explaining how policies work and what people can expect, they make that information more valuable regardless of how someone discovers it.

This is why I think the emergence of AI search should encourage employers to revisit something that has always been central to good recruitment marketing: understanding the audience.

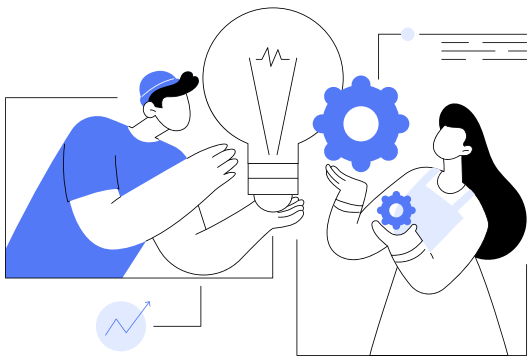
Not simply identifying demographic groups or deciding which media channels will reach them, but understanding what people actually need to know before making a decision about their careers.

What are they worried about? What excites them? What might discourage them from applying? What misunderstandings do they have about the organisation or the industry? What information would help them imagine themselves working there?

These questions should inform the content we create, the structure of our websites and the way we communicate the employer proposition.

And, increasingly, they should inform how we assess whether that information can be discovered and interpreted by AI-powered services.

The irony is that preparing careers websites for intelligent search may ultimately encourage us to create more intelligent content for human beings.



The candidate still needs to feel something.

With so much discussion about algorithms, information retrieval, structured content and artificial intelligence, there's a danger that we lose sight of the emotional nature of choosing an employer.

Recruitment isn't simply a transaction in which someone identifies a vacancy matching their qualifications and submits an application.

People choose organisations for a remarkable variety of reasons. Sometimes it's about salary or progression. Sometimes it's about location, flexibility or job security. And sometimes it's because they encounter a story, an individual or an organisation's purpose that genuinely resonates with them.

Think about the power of hearing an employee explain how their manager supported them through a difficult period, how they progressed from an apprenticeship into a leadership position or how their work makes a difference to someone's life.

Those stories can do something that a list of benefits or a conventional job description rarely achieves. They allow a potential candidate to imagine themselves as part of the organisation.

AI might help someone discover that story. It might summarise it, reference it or explain why it could be relevant to their interests.

But that doesn't mean we should surrender the storytelling itself to the technology.

In fact, the opposite may be true.

If an AI assistant helps a candidate narrow their choices and directs them towards a careers website, the experience they encounter when they arrive becomes even more important. The employer needs to turn curiosity into confidence and confidence into the desire to take the next step.

An AI-generated recommendation might provide the introduction, but it is the authenticity of the employer's proposition, the quality of its communications and the experience it creates that will ultimately help determine whether someone wants to apply.

This is where the disciplines of AI visibility and candidate experience must work together.

There's little value in making an employer highly discoverable if the careers website subsequently disappoints the people who arrive. Equally, there's limited value in creating a wonderful experience that too few relevant candidates discover.

Good recruitment communications needs to address both challenges.



Perhaps we've been measuring the wrong starting point.

For many years, we've treated the arrival of a visitor on a careers website as the beginning of a measurable candidate journey.

We know that isn't literally where the journey starts, but it's often where our most detailed understanding begins. From that point onwards, we can observe behaviour, analyse engagement and identify opportunities for improvement.

Yet if candidates increasingly use AI assistants to explore careers, compare employers and form preferences, much of the early journey may take place outside our visibility.

We might discover that applications from a particular professional group have declined, without realising that competing employers are being recommended more frequently in AI-assisted research.

We might invest in improving the performance of a landing page while overlooking the possibility that candidates are finding answers to their questions elsewhere.

Or we might celebrate improved search rankings without knowing whether our organisation is being included in the AI-generated answers that increasingly accompany certain searches.

None of this means we should abandon established measures. Traffic, conversions, application quality and recruitment outcomes remain essential indicators of effectiveness.

But perhaps it's time to extend our understanding of what success looks like.

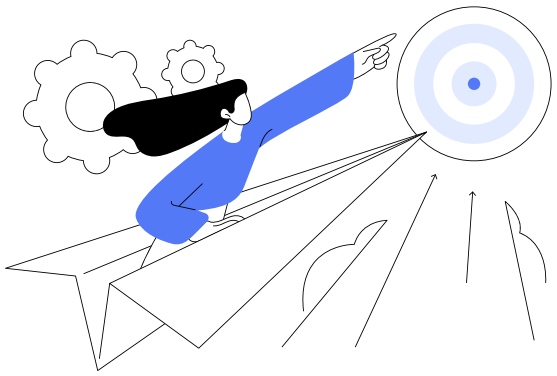
We need to become curious about the questions candidates are asking before they visit us, the information AI systems are using to describe us and the alternatives being presented alongside our organisation.

And we need to understand how those conversations might influence the decisions people eventually make.

This won't be easy to measure. AI responses can vary considerably between systems, users and individual queries, while much of the activity takes place in environments that employers cannot directly observe.

But difficulty is not a particularly good reason to ignore something, especially when it may influence whether potential candidates ever reach the starting point of our existing analytics.

The challenge is to develop sensible, repeatable ways of evaluating our visibility, identifying gaps and monitoring how our position changes over time, without pretending that AI recommendations can be controlled or predicted with certainty.



The future isn't about replacing the journey. It's about understanding where it now begins.

Let's return to Sarah, our retail manager who was contemplating a career change.

By the end of her conversation with an AI assistant, she may have discovered that her experience could be valuable in an industry she'd never previously considered. She might have identified several employers worth investigating and developed a better understanding of the skills she could bring to a new role.

But she hasn't suddenly stopped being a human being with hopes, concerns and responsibilities.

She'll still want reassurance about salary and working hours. She'll want to understand whether the organisation genuinely values people with backgrounds like hers. She may want to hear from employees who've made similar transitions, understand the training available and see whether there are opportunities close to home.

Eventually, if an employer captures her interest, she's likely to want direct, trustworthy information from that organisation.

She may visit its careers website, explore opportunities, speak to someone or submit an application.

In other words, much of the familiar candidate journey remains intact.

What's changed is the route by which she might arrive.

Rather than beginning with a vacancy, she began with a conversation about her future. Rather than searching within an industry she understood, she discovered an unfamiliar sector through the skills she already possessed. And rather than relying entirely on employers to introduce themselves, she asked a third-party technology to help identify which organisations might suit her.

That is a shift recruitment marketers cannot afford to overlook.

It challenges us to think beyond traditional attraction methods and consider how our organisations are represented in the information candidates encounter before reaching us.

It encourages us to develop richer, more useful employer-brand content, grounded in genuine evidence rather than generic promises.

And it asks us to recognise that the most effective careers websites of the future may need to serve two closely related purposes: engaging the people who visit them and providing accurate, accessible information to the intelligent systems increasingly helping those people decide where to look.

The good news is that these objectives needn't compete with one another.

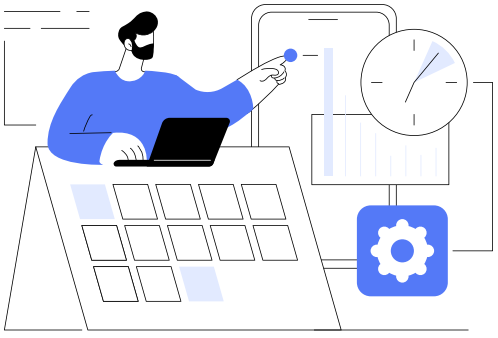
When we understand candidates properly, answer their questions thoughtfully and communicate the employer's proposition with clarity and authenticity, we're already doing much of what good recruitment communications has always required.

The technology may be changing, but the underlying ambition remains remarkably familiar.

We want talented people to discover opportunities that are right for them, understand what makes an organisation worth joining and feel confident enough to take the next step.

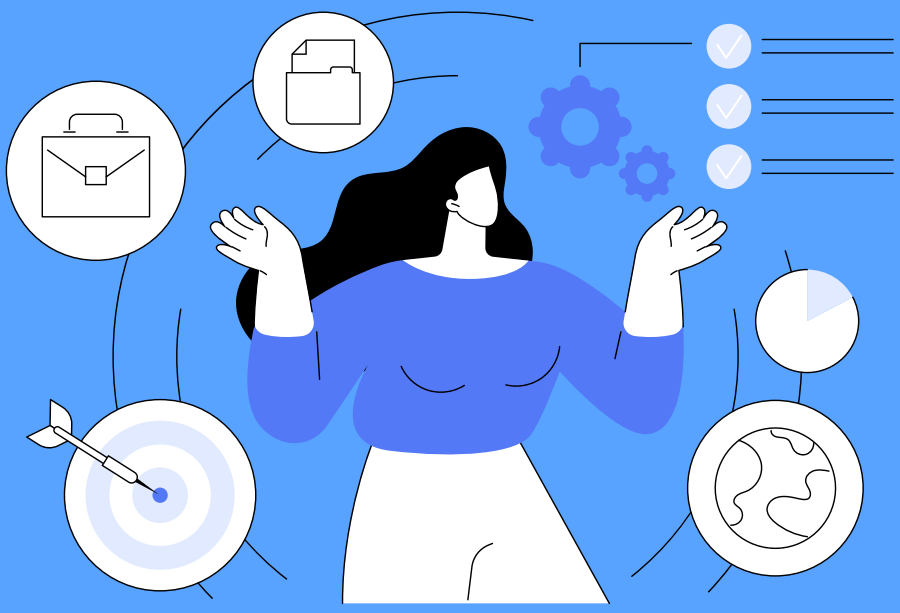
The difference is that the first meaningful conversation about your organisation may now be taking place somewhere you've never had the opportunity to introduce yourself.

And if we want to be part of that conversation, we need to understand how intelligent search systems discover, interpret and choose the information they present.



Chapter 3: Understanding GEO, AEO, LLMO and AI SEO

Why being found by artificial intelligence is about far more than being found by a search engine.



A website that says everything, but tells us very little.

Imagine that you're the Head of Talent Acquisition for a large organisation. You've recently launched a new careers website, and you're understandably pleased with the results.

The design looks exceptional. There's a beautiful video on the homepage, featuring real employees talking about their experiences. The photography feels natural and authentic, the navigation is intuitive, and the whole experience works beautifully on a mobile phone. You've invested considerable time in developing your employer value proposition, and the creative agency has translated it into a compelling digital experience.

Your new website confidently explains that your organisation is a place where people can grow, where individuality is celebrated and where everyone has the opportunity to make a difference.

The launch has gone well. Your colleagues love it, the leadership team is impressed, and early feedback from candidates has been encouraging.

Then someone asks a question that hasn't really featured in any of the project meetings.

"If I asked ChatGPT to recommend employers that offer excellent career development in our sector, would we be one of them?"

It's an interesting question, so you decide to find out.

You open ChatGPT and ask it to identify organisations in your industry that are particularly good at developing their people. You provide a location, explain the kind of career you're interested in and ask for employers with a strong reputation for progression.

Several organisations appear in the response.

Yours isn't one of them.

You try again, changing the wording slightly. You ask about employers offering supportive working environments, then about organisations with excellent learning and development opportunities. A few of your competitors feature regularly, and their development programmes are described in surprising detail.

But your organisation remains conspicuously absent.

Naturally, you're puzzled. You've invested heavily in your employer brand, and your careers website contains plenty of statements about learning, development, culture and progression. You're confident that the opportunities you offer compare favourably with those of your competitors.

So why aren't you being mentioned?

The tempting conclusion is that something must be wrong with the technology. Perhaps ChatGPT hasn't discovered your new website yet. Perhaps Google is favouring your competitors. Maybe there's a technical setting that needs changing, or some special coding that will help AI understand how good your organisation is.

And it's perfectly possible that technical issues are contributing to the problem.

But there's another possibility, and it's one that gets to the heart of what AI optimisation should really be about.

Perhaps your website is excellent at telling people how wonderful your organisation is, but not particularly good at providing the information that would allow an intelligent system to explain why.



There's a subtle but important difference between claiming that you offer excellent career development and describing the opportunities that make that claim meaningful.

"We invest in our people" might be a perfectly reasonable statement, but it doesn't explain what that investment involves. "We help you reach your potential" sounds encouraging, but it doesn't tell a prospective candidate whether you offer professional qualifications, structured mentoring, internal mobility or leadership development.

To someone viewing your beautifully designed website, those statements might contribute to an overall impression. Combined with strong visuals and authentic employee stories, they may create an emotional connection.

But imagine an AI assistant trying to answer a much more specific question: "Which employers in Yorkshire offer structured development programmes for people moving into management?"

The assistant needs relevant information to support its answer. If your website describes your management development programme, explains who can participate, provides examples of employees who've progressed and includes evidence of the opportunities available, there's something substantive to discover.

If your website offers little beyond general statements about growth and opportunity, there may be far less useful information available.

And that is where our understanding of search optimisation needs to evolve.



We've spent years teaching Google what our websites are about.

To understand why terms such as GEO and LLMO have emerged, it's worth remembering what traditional search engine optimisation was originally trying to achieve.

In its simplest form, SEO helps search engines discover web pages, understand their content and assess their relevance to particular searches.

Over the years, the discipline has become increasingly sophisticated. It encompasses technical performance, website architecture, content quality, links, accessibility, user experience and a wide range of other considerations.

For careers websites, we've traditionally focused on making sure that the right opportunities can be found by the right people.

If someone searches for "engineering apprenticeships Leeds", we'd like an employer offering those opportunities to appear prominently. If someone searches for "NHS nursing careers Yorkshire", we'd hope that a relevant NHS Trust's careers website would be easy to find.

And if an organisation has invested in developing a strong employer brand, we'd want people searching for its name to discover useful, accurate information about working there.

None of those ambitions has disappeared.

In fact, one of the most important things to understand about the emergence of AI-powered search is that conventional SEO remains an essential foundation.

Google's own guidance on generative AI search makes this particularly clear. Its AI-powered search features draw on established search infrastructure and ranking systems, and Google continues to recommend the same fundamental practices that underpin effective traditional SEO.

This matters because the growing enthusiasm surrounding AI optimisation has created a rather predictable commercial opportunity. An increasing number of consultants, technology providers and agencies are offering specialist services that promise to make organisations more visible to large language models.

Some of those services are undoubtedly valuable. Others appear to be familiar SEO activities presented under more fashionable terminology, occasionally accompanied by claims that aren't supported by much evidence.

We should be careful not to confuse a new label with an entirely new science.

The significant development isn't that everything we knew about search has suddenly become irrelevant. It's that intelligent search systems can now combine, interpret and present information in ways that change the relationship between a website and the person looking for answers.

Previously, success was often measured by whether a page appeared prominently in search results and persuaded someone to click.

Increasingly, we also need to consider whether the information on that page is useful enough to contribute to an AI-generated answer.

And those aren't necessarily the same thing.



Four acronyms, one underlying ambition.

As with most developments in digital marketing, the emergence of AI-powered search has been accompanied by a proliferation of terminology.

Generative Engine Optimisation, Answer Engine Optimisation, Large Language Model Optimisation and AI Search Engine Optimisation are all expressions you're likely to encounter. Unfortunately, their meanings sometimes overlap, and different organisations use them in slightly different ways.

Rather than becoming distracted by the terminology, it's more useful to understand the ideas behind it.

Generative Engine Optimisation, usually shortened to GEO, is concerned with improving the discoverability and usefulness of content within systems that generate answers using artificial intelligence. Instead of concentrating exclusively on where a website ranks in a conventional search results page, GEO considers whether information from that website can be retrieved, understood and potentially incorporated into an AI-generated response.

For an employer, that might mean improving the information available about its apprenticeships so that an AI-powered search service has relevant material to consider when someone asks about employers offering alternatives to university.

Answer Engine Optimisation, or AEO, places particular emphasis on answering questions clearly and effectively. This isn't an entirely new idea. Search engines have been displaying featured snippets, knowledge panels and direct answers for years, and good websites have long benefited from providing useful responses to common questions.

What makes AEO especially relevant to recruitment is that candidates have an enormous number of questions that aren't necessarily answered by conventional job descriptions.

Someone considering a career in the NHS might want to know whether there are opportunities for progression without becoming a manager. A parent returning to work might be interested in how flexible working operates in practice. A school leaver might wonder whether they could eventually become a qualified engineer without going to university.

These questions deserve thoughtful answers, not simply because AI systems might find them useful, but because they're important to the people considering those careers.

Large Language Model Optimisation, commonly referred to as LLMO, is a broader term that focuses on how organisations and their information are represented in experiences powered by large language models.

This includes considering how AI systems encounter information about an organisation, how they distinguish it from others and what evidence is available to support particular claims.

AI SEO, meanwhile, is often used as an umbrella term for adapting search optimisation strategies to an increasingly AI-driven discovery environment.

There is no universally accepted boundary separating these disciplines. In practice, an effective approach is likely to draw upon aspects of all four.

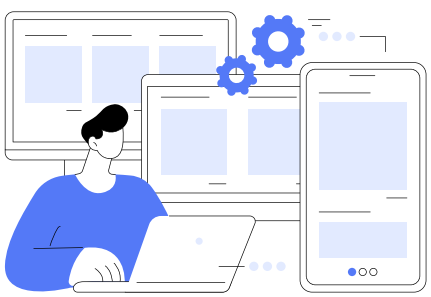
And for recruitment communications, I would suggest that the most useful ambition is considerably easier to understand than the terminology makes it sound.

We want to ensure that when someone asks an intelligent search service a question about careers, employers or opportunities, our organisation has the strongest possible chance of being discovered and accurately represented when it is relevant to the answer.

Not artificially promoted. Not included regardless of whether it is appropriate. And certainly not recommended through misleading information.

Simply discoverable, understandable and credible.

That is a far more sustainable ambition than attempting to manipulate whichever AI technology happens to be attracting attention this month.



How does an AI assistant actually find information about an employer?

To appreciate what makes a careers website useful to AI-powered search, we need to understand a little about what happens when someone asks a question.

The difficulty is that we tend to talk about artificial intelligence as though every system works in essentially the same way.

In reality, they don't.

Some large language models generate responses primarily from patterns learned during their training. Others can retrieve current information from websites, search indexes, databases or connected services. Many contemporary AI assistants combine several approaches, depending on the question being asked and the capabilities available.

This distinction is particularly important when discussing careers and recruitment.

Imagine asking an AI assistant to explain the advantages of completing an engineering apprenticeship rather than attending university. It may be able to provide a useful general answer based on information learned during training.

Now imagine asking which engineering employers in Yorkshire are currently recruiting apprentices for a programme beginning next September.

That question requires current information. Vacancies change, application deadlines move, programmes are introduced or withdrawn, and the accuracy of the response may depend on retrieving up-to-date sources.

One approach commonly used by AI-powered search systems is known as retrieval-augmented generation, or RAG.

The terminology sounds more intimidating than the principle.

Rather than relying entirely on information absorbed during training, a system can retrieve potentially relevant material from external sources and use that material to help construct its response.

Google describes retrieval-augmented generation as one of the techniques underpinning its generative search features, drawing relevant and current pages from its search index to support answers.

Let's return to our hypothetical candidate looking for an engineering apprenticeship.

The system may need to identify employers offering appropriate opportunities, understand their locations, investigate their programmes and establish whether the information it retrieves is relevant to the candidate's circumstances.

It might draw upon careers websites, job advertisements, apprenticeship information, educational institutions and other sources.

The resulting response could explain which organisations appear to offer suitable programmes, provide some context about the opportunities and include links to supporting material.

That description is necessarily simplified, and different services may approach the task in different ways. But it illustrates why the information employers make available matters.

If an organisation's apprenticeship programme is clearly described on an accessible page, with accurate locations, entry requirements, qualifications and application dates, a search system has relevant information it may be able to retrieve.

If the only reference to the programme is a line of text embedded in an image, a long-expired PDF or a promotional video with no accompanying explanation, that information may be harder to discover and interpret reliably.

And if the programme isn't described publicly at all, no amount of clever optimisation can make that missing information available.

This is the first principle of effective AI visibility.

Before we can persuade technology to understand what makes an employer attractive, we need to make sure there's something meaningful for it to understand.

The difference between information and evidence.

Let's return to our fictional employer with the beautifully designed careers website.

Its homepage proudly announces that people are at the heart of everything it does. Further down the page, there's a statement about supporting personal development, accompanied by an attractive photograph of colleagues attending a meeting.

Nothing about that is necessarily wrong. Indeed, those messages may genuinely reflect the organisation's values.

But consider what happens when a prospective candidate asks an AI assistant which employers provide particularly good opportunities for professional development.

The assistant may need to distinguish between organisations making broadly similar claims.

And that's where evidence becomes important.

Imagine that a competing employer has developed a dedicated section of its careers website explaining how its learning and development programmes work. It describes the professional qualifications available, introduces the mentoring scheme, explains the process for applying for internal vacancies and includes several detailed accounts from employees who've progressed through the organisation.

One employee talks about joining as an apprentice and eventually becoming a team leader. Another describes moving from an operational role into project management, while a third explains how the organisation supported them in gaining a professional qualification.

The stories are supported by specific details, rather than simply expressing enthusiasm for the employer.

Now there's something for a search system to work with.

If a candidate asks about opportunities for progression, the organisation has published information directly relevant to that question. If they ask whether employees can change careers internally, there's a genuine example demonstrating that possibility. If they ask about professional qualifications, the website explains what support is available.

Of course, there is no guarantee that an AI service will retrieve those particular pages, treat them as authoritative or recommend the employer as a result.

But the organisation has made its proposition considerably easier to investigate.

And that leads to an important distinction between optimising a website for search and optimising the information within it for informed decision-making.

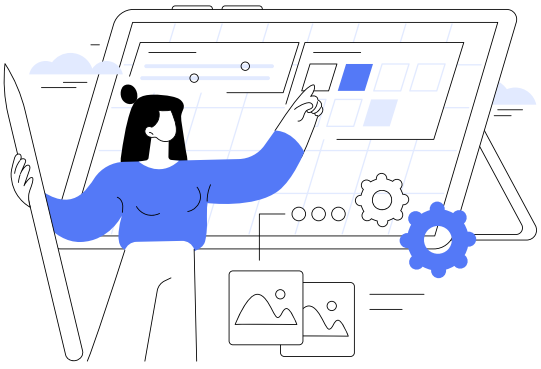
A traditional approach might begin by asking which keywords we want a particular page to rank for.

A more expansive approach might begin by asking what a prospective candidate genuinely wants to know, what evidence would help answer their question and how that information can be made accessible across relevant discovery channels.

The two approaches aren't mutually exclusive. In fact, they're most effective when they work together.

But the second encourages us to think more deeply about the substance of our employer communications.

And from a recruitment marketing perspective, that can only be a good thing.



Why the most important content might not be on your website

One of the more uncomfortable realities of employer branding is that organisations don't have complete control over their own reputations.

We can carefully craft an employer value proposition, create beautiful advertising and develop compelling careers content, but we cannot dictate what employees, former employees, journalists or other organisations say about us.

Nor should we expect to.

A credible employer brand reflects the experiences people actually have, rather than simply the messages an organisation chooses to promote.

This becomes particularly relevant when we consider how AI-powered search services can draw information from multiple sources.

Imagine a candidate asking whether a particular employer has a reputation for supporting its people.

The organisation's careers website may contain information about wellbeing programmes, flexible working, employee networks and learning opportunities. Those sources could provide useful context.

But other information might also be available. There may be employee reviews, industry awards, published staff surveys, news coverage or comments within professional communities.

Some of that information may support the employer's claims. Some may contradict them. And some may be inaccurate, outdated or unrepresentative.

An AI assistant might encounter any combination of those sources, depending on how it retrieves information and which material it considers relevant.

That makes the wider digital presence of an employer increasingly important.

Suppose a housing association has developed a highly regarded apprenticeship programme. It has helped dozens of young people begin successful careers, and several apprentices have progressed into permanent professional roles.

The organisation has excellent stories to tell, but has never published them in any meaningful way.

Meanwhile, another housing association has documented its apprenticeship programme extensively. Its careers website explains the opportunities, local colleges have published articles about the partnership, employees have shared their experiences and relevant professional bodies have recognised its work.

It's reasonable to suggest that the second organisation has created a richer body of publicly discoverable information.

That doesn't automatically make it the better employer, and it certainly doesn't guarantee preferential treatment from AI systems.

But it does make the organisation's activities easier to discover, corroborate and explain.

And this is where AI visibility begins to overlap with the wider disciplines of public relations, employer branding, content strategy and reputation management.

What people say about an employer has always mattered.

Increasingly, we must also consider how accessible and reliable that information is to the systems people use to investigate it.



Can we make an employer more understandable to machines?

At this stage, some of the discussion begins to sound quite technical. And there are important technical considerations, particularly around how websites are built, how their information is structured and how search systems are permitted to access their content.

But the underlying principle is familiar.

A well-designed careers website should be organised in a way that makes sense.

Visitors should be able to understand where they are, find relevant information and move naturally between related topics. Job opportunities should be presented consistently, with clear titles, locations, working arrangements and application requirements.

These same qualities can help search systems interpret a website's content.

Consider how we describe a vacancy.

To a human visitor, the page might clearly display a job title, salary, location and closing date. But behind the scenes, developers can also use structured data to describe that information in a standardised, machine-readable format.

One commonly used standard is Schema.org's JobPosting vocabulary, which allows eligible vacancy pages to identify details such as the role, employer, location, employment type and other relevant characteristics.

Google provides specific guidance on using this structured data for job listings, including the need to ensure that it accurately reflects information visible to candidates.

This can help search engines interpret vacancies and support relevant search features.

However, we should be clear about what structured data can and cannot do.

Adding JobPosting markup to a careers website doesn't guarantee that an AI assistant will recommend the employer, nor does it automatically make the organisation more authoritative.

It simply provides a clearer technical description of information that should already exist on the page.

The same principle applies more broadly.

Clear navigation, descriptive headings, accessible content, logical internal links and accurate information about the organisation can all contribute to making a website easier to discover and understand.

And sometimes the problems are surprisingly ordinary.

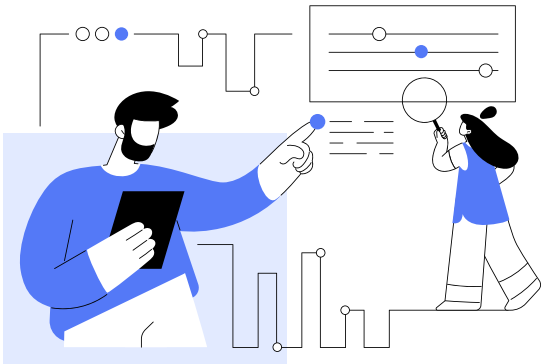
A website may contain important information that only becomes visible after complex interactions. Another may rely heavily on images to communicate text. A third might inadvertently block particular search crawlers or contain outdated pages that contradict current information.

OpenAI's publisher guidance, for example, explains that websites wishing to be included in ChatGPT search summaries and snippets should ensure that its search crawler, OAI-SearchBot, is not being blocked from accessing the relevant content.

That is a practical technical consideration, but it shouldn't be confused with a guaranteed route to AI visibility.

Allowing a search system to discover information simply makes discovery possible. It doesn't determine whether the information will be used or recommended.

And this distinction is worth remembering whenever someone offers a quick technical solution to what is fundamentally a much broader communications challenge.



There is no magic piece of code.

Whenever a new digital discipline emerges, there's an understandable desire to discover the secret that makes it work.

With traditional SEO, organisations sometimes became preoccupied with keyword density, backlinks or technical tricks that promised to improve rankings. Some practices delivered short-term results, while others were eventually recognised as attempts to manipulate search systems rather than improve the usefulness of websites.

AI optimisation is already attracting similar thinking.

There are suggestions that particular phrases will make language models favour a website, that specialist files can guarantee inclusion in AI responses or that content should be rewritten into rigid formats designed primarily to influence machine-generated answers.

The reality is considerably less convenient.

Google's 2026 guidance explicitly advises website owners to concentrate on valuable, original content and established SEO fundamentals rather than supposed GEO or AEO shortcuts. It specifically discourages unnecessary AI-oriented files, artificial mentions and mechanical content tactics presented as guaranteed optimisation methods.

This is an important point for employers and for the agencies advising them.

There are legitimate technical improvements that can strengthen a website's accessibility to search systems. There are also meaningful content strategies that can make an organisation's information more useful, credible and relevant.

But there is no universally recognised optimisation technique that guarantees an employer will be prioritised by every large language model.

Different services use different models, retrieval methods and information sources. Their responses change as systems evolve, new information becomes available and users ask different questions.

Even the same candidate asking a slightly different question may receive a different set of employer recommendations.

And in many ways, that is exactly what we'd expect.

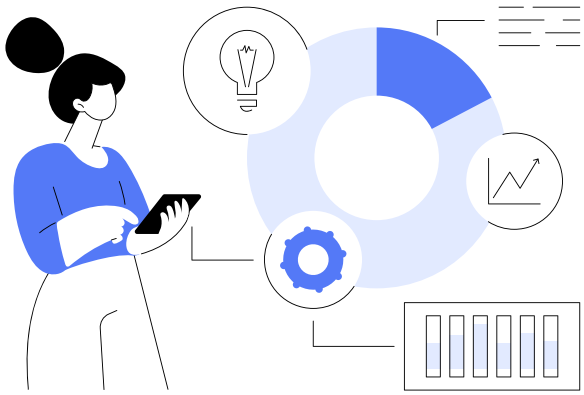
If someone asks for employers offering excellent apprenticeships in Yorkshire, a useful response should be different from the one given to someone seeking flexible senior management roles in London.

The purpose of intelligent search should be to respond to the needs of the individual, not simply reward the employer that has invested most heavily in optimisation.

So our ambition shouldn't be to persuade AI to recommend an organisation regardless of whether it's appropriate.

It should be to ensure that when an organisation genuinely has something relevant to offer, the information supporting that proposition is available, understandable and credible.

That is a far more sensible foundation for an ongoing AI visibility strategy.



The next evolution of employer reputation.

Perhaps the most significant implication of all this is that we need to think about employer visibility as something broader than the performance of a single website.

A careers website remains central to the process, but the information that shapes people's perceptions of an employer exists across a much wider digital environment.

There are corporate websites, employee stories, professional networks, industry publications, educational institutions, news articles, reviews and recruitment advertising.

In some organisations, those different channels are managed by entirely separate teams, each with its own priorities, budgets and measures of success.

The careers website might be managed by talent acquisition, while the corporate website belongs to marketing. Public relations handles external communications, learning and development manages information about training, and individual departments publish their own content about the work they do.

From an internal organisational perspective, those arrangements may be perfectly logical.

But a candidate trying to understand an employer doesn't necessarily recognise those boundaries.

And neither should we assume that an AI-powered search service will restrict its research to whichever website the recruitment team happens to control.

If someone asks about career progression, it may encounter information produced by learning and development, professional bodies or employees themselves. If they ask about organisational values, relevant sources might include corporate communications, public reports and external commentary.

That means effective AI visibility requires a more joined-up approach to recruitment communications.

It requires organisations to think carefully about the information available across their digital presence, the consistency of the messages being communicated and the quality of the evidence supporting those messages.

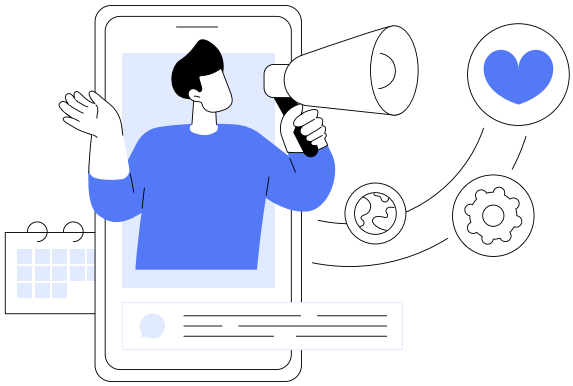
And perhaps most importantly, it requires a commitment to keeping that information accurate and relevant as circumstances change.

A careers website launched three years ago may still look perfectly attractive, but the organisation it describes could have changed considerably. New development programmes may have been introduced, flexible working arrangements revised, apprenticeship opportunities expanded or entirely new career pathways created.

If those developments haven't been communicated effectively, candidates and AI-powered discovery systems may be working with an incomplete picture.

This is why I would argue that AI optimisation shouldn't be treated as a one-off exercise carried out during a website build.

It is better understood as an ongoing process of improving how an organisation is represented, discovered and understood.



For the first time, we can begin to measure the conversation.

One encouraging development is that the tools available for understanding AI visibility are becoming more sophisticated.

In February 2026, Microsoft introduced an AI Performance report within Bing Webmaster Tools, providing website owners with information about how their content is cited in AI-generated responses across supported Microsoft experiences, including Copilot.

That represents a notable change in the kind of information available to organisations.

Traditionally, search performance reporting has concentrated on impressions, rankings, clicks and website traffic. AI visibility introduces different questions, particularly whether content is being referenced as a source within generated answers.

Microsoft's reporting allows website owners to examine citation activity, identify which pages have been referenced and explore the broader retrieval queries associated with that activity.

It doesn't tell an employer exactly why an AI assistant selected one source rather than another, and citation counts shouldn't be interpreted as a measure of endorsement or recommendation.

But it does offer a way to begin understanding how published information is being used within some AI-powered search experiences.

Google has also introduced reporting specifically concerned with performance in its generative AI search features, providing another means of examining visibility beyond conventional search results.

These developments matter because they begin to make a previously difficult question more measurable.

Are we simply publishing careers content and hoping intelligent systems discover it, or are we developing evidence about how our information appears across AI-powered discovery environments?

For recruitment communications agencies, that opens up an interesting opportunity to provide more meaningful ongoing support.

Instead of concentrating exclusively on conventional SEO performance, we can begin monitoring the questions candidates are likely to ask, assessing how employers are represented in the resulting answers and identifying where the underlying information could be improved.

We can investigate which career opportunities, development programmes and employer-brand messages are easy to discover, and which appear to be poorly represented.

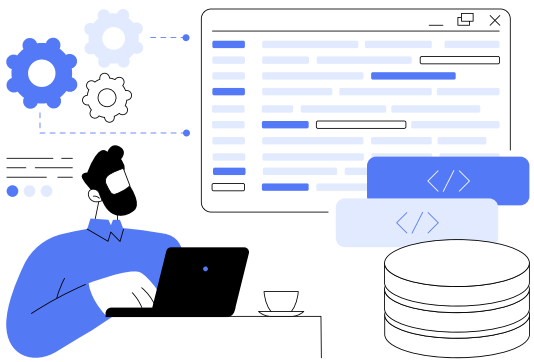
We can compare how an employer is described alongside relevant competitors, while recognising that AI responses are variable and any assessment needs to be repeatable and interpreted cautiously.

Most importantly, we can connect those findings to a practical programme of content improvement, technical development and reputation building.

It won't produce a single, perfectly reliable ranking number that tells us whether an organisation is winning the AI search competition.

But it can help us understand whether we're making progress.

And that is a much more useful conversation to have with a client than promising to make their website number one in ChatGPT.



The real challenge is understanding what makes you worth recommending.

Let's return one final time to our fictional Head of Talent Acquisition.

The organisation has an excellent careers website, a compelling employer proposition and genuinely attractive opportunities for people to develop their careers.

But when someone asks an AI assistant to recommend suitable employers, the organisation isn't consistently appearing.

What should happen next?

The first instinct might be to commission a technical audit, which could certainly be useful. There may be problems with search accessibility, structured data, page architecture or the way information is presented.

But if we stop there, we risk overlooking the more important opportunity.

We should also investigate the questions prospective candidates are asking.

What do people want to know about career development in this sector? What kinds of opportunities are they seeking? Which concerns influence their decisions? And how clearly does the organisation communicate the information needed to answer those questions?

Perhaps the employer offers a fantastic internal development programme, but nobody has thought to explain it properly on the careers website.

Perhaps employees have remarkable stories about career progression, but those stories have never been documented.

Perhaps the organisation offers genuinely flexible working arrangements, but the information exists only within an internal HR policy.

Or perhaps its employer proposition is simply too similar to those of its competitors, relying on familiar statements about valuing people, supporting development and creating an inclusive culture without explaining what makes those commitments distinctive.

These aren't problems that can be solved solely through code.

They require research, insight, creative thinking, content strategy and a genuine understanding of recruitment.

And that's why the emergence of AI-powered search should be seen as an opportunity to improve employer communications, rather than simply introduce another layer of technical optimisation.

Because if we do the work properly, the benefits extend far beyond artificial intelligence.

A candidate visiting the website will find clearer information. An employee considering internal progression will better understand the opportunities available. A school leaver researching apprenticeships will have more useful guidance. A career changer will be able to see how their existing skills could transfer into an unfamiliar environment.

And search systems, whether conventional or AI-powered, will have a richer and more reliable source of information to discover and potentially reference

In other words, the work that makes an employer easier for AI to understand can also make it easier for people to understand.

That is surely the outcome we should be aiming for.

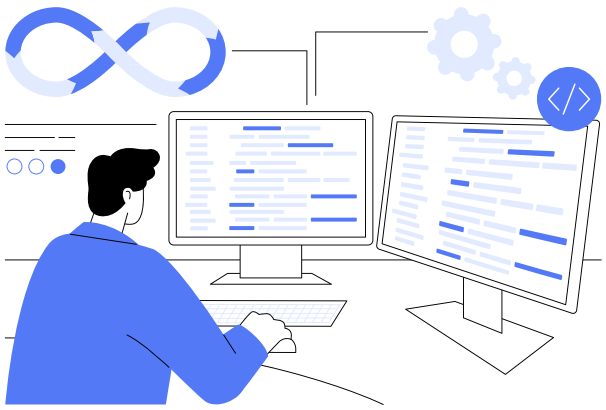
A new kind of visibility requires a new kind of thinking

We've spent decades helping organisations become more visible to people searching for jobs.

We've developed sophisticated tools, improved digital experiences, refined search strategies and built careers websites capable of communicating employer brands to audiences across the world.

There is no such thing as being permanently ranked number one in ChatGPT.

Different questions, available sources and model behaviours can produce different employer recommendations. AI visibility needs to be assessed across a consistent sample of relevant questions, rather than a single answer.



A new kind of visibility requires a new kind of thinking.

We've spent decades helping organisations become more visible to people searching for jobs. We've developed sophisticated tools, improved digital experiences, refined search strategies and built careers websites capable of communicating employer brands to audiences across the world.

Those achievements remain important, and there is no reason to abandon them. But the emergence of AI-powered discovery introduces an additional challenge that requires us to think a little differently about what being visible actually means.

Traditionally, we've concentrated on helping employers appear prominently when someone searches for a particular job, profession or organisation. We've worked to improve rankings, attract visitors and create experiences that encourage suitable candidates to apply.

But what happens when someone doesn't begin by searching for a job?

What happens when they describe their ambitions, explain their circumstances and ask an intelligent system which employers might offer the kind of future they're looking for?

Suddenly, the challenge extends beyond making a website discoverable for particular keywords. We also need to consider whether the information available about an employer provides meaningful answers to the questions being asked.

That requires clarity, credibility and context. It means explaining not simply what opportunities exist, but why they matter, who might benefit from them and what makes the organisation genuinely distinctive.

It encourages employers to develop richer content, supported by authentic employee experiences and evidence that can be independently understood.

And it asks recruitment communications agencies to combine technical expertise with candidate insight, employer-brand strategy and a more consultative approach to digital visibility.

The terminology surrounding this emerging discipline will undoubtedly continue to evolve. GEO, AEO, LLMO and AI SEO may eventually become familiar parts of our marketing vocabulary, or perhaps they'll simply be absorbed into the broader practice of search optimisation.

In truth, the terminology isn't particularly important.

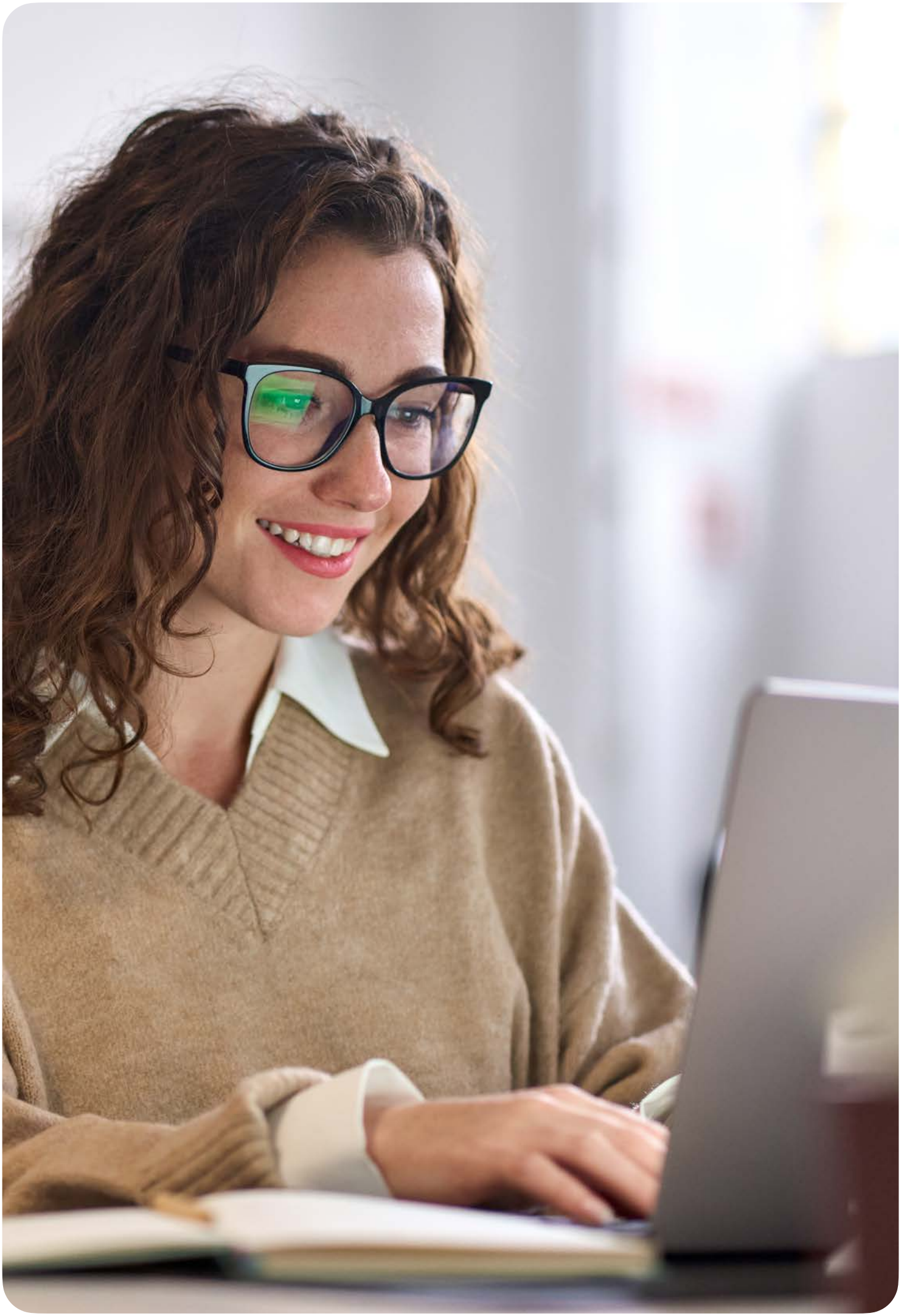
What matters is recognising that the relationship between candidates, employers and the technology connecting them is changing.

And if we're serious about helping organisations attract the right people, we need to understand that relationship rather than simply react to it.

Because the objective has never really been to impress a search engine, nor should it become an exercise in impressing an artificial intelligence model.

The objective remains exactly what it has always been: helping the right people discover the right opportunities, and giving them compelling reasons to explore what an employer might offer.





The challenge is turning understanding into action.

There's something encouraging about the conclusions we've reached so far.

For all the complexity surrounding artificial intelligence, much of what makes an employer more discoverable comes back to the principles of good recruitment communications.

Understanding candidates. Answering their questions. Communicating opportunities clearly. Demonstrating what makes an organisation a genuinely attractive place to work.

These are hardly revolutionary ideas.

What's changing is the importance of making that information available in ways that increasingly sophisticated search systems can discover, interpret and use.

And this is where the conversation needs to move from theory into practice.

Imagine an organisation with an excellent reputation, outstanding employee development programmes and a genuinely compelling employer proposition. It has invested in creative content, authentic employee stories and a careers website that looks exceptional.

Everything appears to be in place.

But imagine that much of its most important information is buried within downloadable documents, promotional videos or interactive experiences that automated search systems struggle to access.

The organisation may have created an extraordinary experience for the people who arrive on its website, while inadvertently making some of its most valuable information difficult to discover elsewhere.

Equally, an employer might have a technically excellent website, with pages that are easy for search systems to retrieve, yet provide very little useful information about the opportunities it offers.

Neither situation is ideal.

The most effective careers websites need to combine the emotional engagement of great design with the clarity, accessibility and structure that allow information to be understood.

And achieving that balance requires considerably more than adding a few lines of code or asking someone to insert additional keywords.

It requires us to reconsider how careers websites are planned, how their information is organised and how their content connects with the wider recruitment experience.

It also means recognising that the decisions made during website development can influence discoverability long after the site has launched.

How vacancies are published, how career pathways are explained, how employee stories are presented and how information is kept up to date all deserve careful consideration.

Not simply because artificial intelligence might encounter that information, but because the quality and accessibility of those communications ultimately determine how effectively people can understand the opportunities available.

And that brings us to the next question.

If we accept that a careers website needs to engage human visitors while making its information accessible to intelligent discovery systems, how should we actually build it?

What does good technical structure look like? How should we present vacancies, employer-brand content and career opportunities? And how can we ensure that exceptional creative design and effective discoverability work together rather than compete?

That's where we'll turn our attention next.

Because making an employer worth discovering is only half the challenge.

We also need to make sure it can be found.



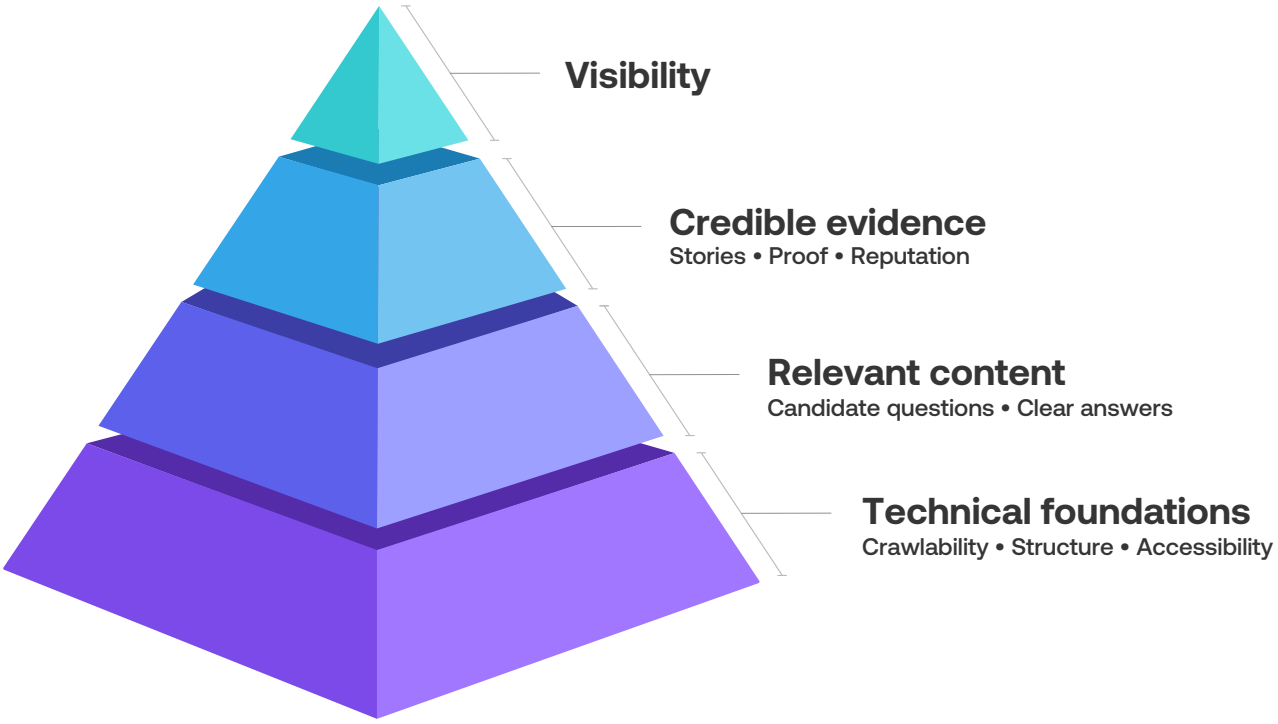
Chapter 4: Building a Careers Website That AI Can Understand

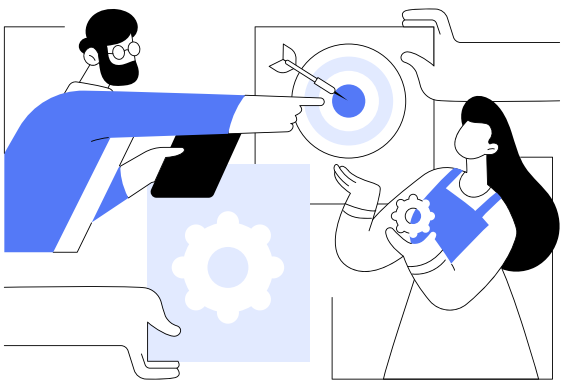
Why the way your website is built matters just as much as what it says.



The AI Discoverability Pyramid

You can't optimise your way to credibility if your website doesn't provide the evidence. And you can't make that evidence discoverable if the technical foundations prevent search systems from accessing it.





The most beautiful careers website nobody can find

Imagine walking into a beautifully designed library. The architecture is extraordinary, the lighting is perfect, and the shelves are filled with thousands of fascinating books. There are comfortable places to sit, wonderful illustrations on the walls and knowledgeable staff who can help you explore everything the library has to offer.

There's just one rather unfortunate problem.

None of the books has a title, the shelves aren't labelled, and there's no catalogue explaining where anything can be found.

You might enjoy spending an afternoon wandering around, occasionally discovering something interesting by chance. But if you were looking for a particular subject, you'd probably find the experience frustrating.

Now imagine asking someone else to visit the library on your behalf, find information about a specific topic and return with a useful summary.

Without a catalogue, recognisable structure or any reliable way of identifying the information they need, the task becomes considerably more difficult.

It's an imperfect analogy, but it captures something important about how we should approach careers website development in the age of artificial intelligence.

For years, we've quite rightly concentrated on making websites attractive, engaging and intuitive for the people who visit them. We've developed sophisticated user interfaces, created immersive digital experiences and invested in the creative presentation of employer brands.

And none of that should change.

But increasingly, we also need to think about how information is organised behind the experience. Not simply how it appears to someone looking at a screen, but how it can be discovered, interpreted and connected with other relevant information by search engines and AI-powered systems.

A beautifully designed website with poorly structured or inaccessible information is rather like our extraordinary library without a catalogue.

Everything might be there, but finding the right thing could be unnecessarily difficult.

And when candidates increasingly rely on intelligent search to help them investigate employers, that difficulty has consequences.



Two visitors, two very different experiences

Let's consider a fictional organisation called Northbridge Group. It's a successful business employing several thousand people across the UK, with opportunities ranging from engineering and operations to finance, customer services and technology.

Northbridge has recently invested in a new careers website, and the results are impressive.

The homepage opens with an engaging video showing employees at work. As visitors scroll, animated sections introduce the organisation's values, while interactive elements reveal stories about different career opportunities. A beautifully designed section explores life at Northbridge, and photographs of real employees help communicate the personality of the organisation.

From a candidate experience perspective, the website is excellent.

Now imagine two visitors arriving.

The first is Emma, a prospective candidate who's been considering a career in engineering. She discovers Northbridge through a social media campaign and visits the careers website on her laptop.

She watches the video, explores the engineering section and discovers an interesting account of someone who joined the organisation as an apprentice and progressed into a senior technical role. She's impressed by the opportunities and decides to investigate the company's current vacancies.

The experience has worked exactly as intended.

The second visitor isn't a person at all.

It's an automated system attempting to retrieve information about employers that offer engineering apprenticeships in Yorkshire. Depending on the service involved, this might be a conventional search crawler, an AI search crawler or another component of an information-retrieval system.

It approaches Northbridge's website with a rather different set of requirements.

It isn't impressed by the animation or the colour palette. It doesn't experience the emotional impact of a beautifully edited film in the way Emma does. Instead, it needs access to information that helps establish what opportunities Northbridge offers, where those opportunities are available and why the organisation might be relevant to the question being asked.

And here's where Northbridge has a problem.

Much of the important information about its apprenticeship programme is embedded within a promotional video. The accompanying text consists of a few short statements about exciting opportunities and building a better future. Details about the qualifications available, programme duration and locations are contained in a downloadable brochure, while information about the application process is revealed through an interactive component that may not be easily accessible to every automated retrieval system.

The website hasn't necessarily done anything technically wrong, and modern search engines can interpret many complex web pages. But the information is fragmented across formats and interactions that may make reliable retrieval more difficult.

Emma can find her way through the experience because she understands its visual language and can explore it interactively.

An automated system may not have the same opportunity.

This is the first important consideration when designing careers websites for intelligent discovery: we need to distinguish between the presentation of information and the accessibility of that information.

The best digital experiences should deliver both.

What does an AI search system actually see?

When we talk about a search engine or AI assistant discovering a website, it's tempting to imagine it looking at the page in much the same way we do.

In reality, the process is considerably more complicated.

Search engines use automated software, commonly known as crawlers, to discover pages and retrieve their content. They then process that information in different ways, building indexes and other systems that help determine which sources may be relevant to particular searches.

Some AI-powered services can draw upon those indexes, while others use their own crawlers, external search providers or combinations of different retrieval methods.

And different technologies have different capabilities when it comes to interpreting a website.

Some can process JavaScript-rendered content, for example, while others may retrieve only the information immediately available in the page's initial response. Some can work with documents or multimedia, but that doesn't mean every relevant detail within those formats will be consistently available to every search system.

This is why it's dangerous to assume that because something is visible to a human visitor, it must also be accessible to every automated service.

Google's guidance for AI-powered search specifically emphasises the importance of making key information available in textual form, ensuring that websites can be crawled and providing clear internal links between relevant pages. It also makes clear that there is no special AI-only technical requirement for appearing in AI Overviews or AI Mode beyond the established requirements for Google Search.

That's an important distinction.

We're not suggesting that careers websites need to abandon creative design or become collections of plain text designed to satisfy machines.

Rather, the design should be supported by a technically sound structure that makes important information available independently of the visual experience.

If a beautiful animation introduces an apprenticeship programme, the essential information about that programme should also be presented in accessible text.

If an employee video tells an inspiring story about career progression, a written account or transcript can make those details easier to find, while also benefiting people who cannot watch or hear the video.

And if interactive components allow candidates to explore different career pathways, the underlying information should ideally remain accessible through clearly identifiable pages and links.

The creative experience can still be extraordinary.

But the information behind it needs to be equally well considered.



Your website needs a language that machines can understand.

Imagine that Northbridge has a vacancy for a maintenance engineer at one of its manufacturing facilities.

The careers website presents the opportunity beautifully. The page includes an engaging introduction, information about the working environment and a clear explanation of the role. The salary, location, working pattern and application deadline are all visible.

For a human visitor, the information is relatively easy to understand.

But web developers have another way of describing this information that can help search engines interpret it more consistently.

It's called structured data.

The principle is straightforward. Rather than relying entirely on a search system to work out what every piece of information represents, we can provide a machine-readable description using a recognised vocabulary.

For job vacancies, one of the most important standards is Schema.org's JobPosting vocabulary.

It allows developers to identify information such as the job title, employer, location, description, employment type and application deadline in a standardised format.

Google supports JobPosting structured data as part of its job search experiences, with specific requirements for how that information should be implemented. Importantly, it should appear on individual job vacancy pages and accurately reflect the content that candidates can actually see.

In practical terms, this means a vacancy shouldn't simply look like a job advertisement. Its underlying technical structure should also make clear that it is one.

And the distinction is relevant to recruitment because job information is unusually dynamic.

A vacancy may be advertised for only a few weeks. Its closing date may change, its location may be updated, or the position may be withdrawn when a suitable candidate is appointed.

If the website displays information that differs from its structured data, or if an expired vacancy continues to appear available, the result can be confusing for search systems and frustrating for candidates.

Imagine someone being directed towards what appears to be a fantastic opportunity, only to discover that applications closed three months ago.

It's hardly the introduction to an employer we'd want to create.

And if an AI assistant has relied on outdated vacancy information, the disappointment may be compounded by the fact that the candidate believed they were receiving current guidance.

This is why accurate job data, effective content management and reliable integration between the careers website and applicant tracking system are so important.

It's not simply a question of ensuring vacancies appear on the website.

It's about making sure the information people and search systems encounter is correct, current and consistent.



A careers website shouldn't be a collection of disconnected pages.

A careers website shouldn't be a collection of disconnected pages

Let's return to Northbridge's apprenticeship programme.

The organisation has an excellent story to tell, but the information is spread across several parts of its website.

There's a short reference to apprenticeships on the homepage, a downloadable brochure explaining the qualifications available, a video featuring a former apprentice and a vacancy page advertising the next intake.

Somewhere else, perhaps on the corporate website, there's a news article celebrating an apprentice who recently won an industry award.

Each piece of information has value.

But imagine how much more useful the experience could become if these elements were connected within a coherent information structure.

A dedicated apprenticeship page could explain the programme, describe the opportunities available and introduce the different pathways candidates can pursue. It could link to individual engineering, technical and business apprenticeship pages, each providing more detailed information about qualifications, locations, working arrangements and progression.

The employee story could sit alongside the relevant programme, providing real evidence of what the experience involves. The industry award could be referenced as further evidence of the organisation's commitment to developing apprentices.

Current vacancies could then connect naturally to the wider information, allowing someone to understand the opportunity before deciding whether to apply.

This creates a better experience for human visitors, but it also establishes clearer relationships between different pieces of information.

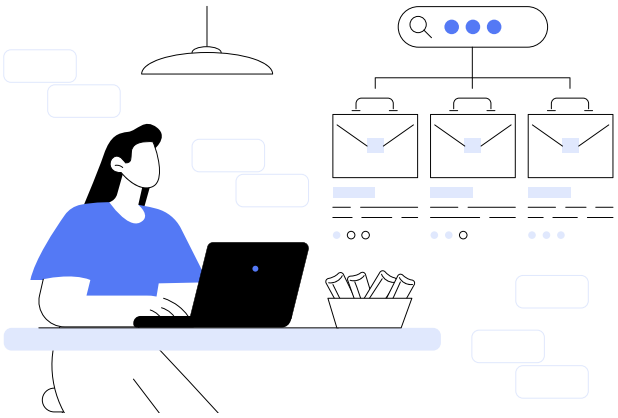
Search systems can follow internal links, identify related subjects and discover pages that answer more specific questions.

Google explicitly recommends making content easy to find through internal links as part of its guidance for both conventional and AI-powered search.

The important principle is that a careers website shouldn't simply be a collection of pages arranged around an internal organisational chart.

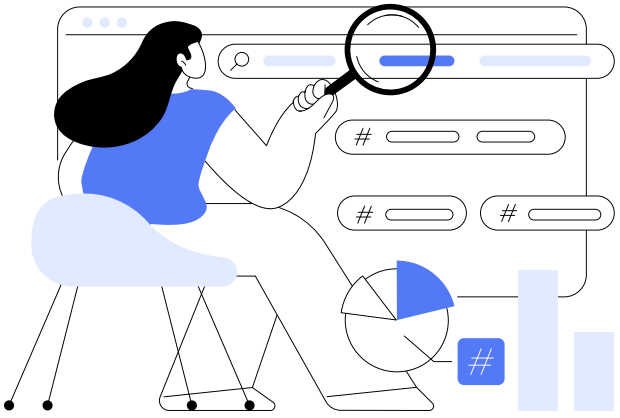
It should be a connected source of information that helps candidates explore careers in ways that make sense to them.

And when that information is organised thoughtfully, it becomes easier for intelligent systems to discover and interpret as well.



Google says you don't need special AI markup to appear in AI Overviews.

Its published guidance confirms that established SEO foundations remain relevant, including crawlability, useful content and accessible information.



Why the pages nobody thought to create might matter most.

There's another interesting consequence of thinking about careers websites in this way.

Traditionally, the structure of a website is largely determined during its initial design and development. We agree on the main sections, create templates for different types of content and organise the navigation around what the organisation wants to communicate.

That remains a perfectly sensible approach, but it can sometimes overlook the questions prospective candidates are actually asking.

Imagine someone who is interested in working for Northbridge but doesn't have a university degree.

They've heard that the organisation employs engineers and technical specialists, but they assume those roles require formal academic qualifications.

So they ask an AI assistant whether there are routes into engineering that don't involve attending university.

Northbridge may offer an excellent apprenticeship programme and several alternative entry routes, but unless those opportunities are clearly explained, the assistant may have limited information to use when answering the question.

The organisation might benefit from publishing a genuinely useful guide explaining how someone can begin an engineering career without a degree, what qualifications are available, how apprenticeships work and what progression might look like.

Notice that this isn't simply a matter of inserting additional keywords into an existing page.

It's about identifying a real question that prospective candidates may have and creating content that answers it properly.

The same principle could apply to someone returning to employment after a career break, a parent interested in flexible working or an experienced professional considering a move into an unfamiliar sector.

For years, we've talked about designing websites around the needs of users. AI-assisted discovery gives us another reason to take that principle seriously.

Because the questions candidates ask AI systems are often more detailed, personal and exploratory than the short keyword searches around which many careers websites were originally organised.

And those questions can reveal opportunities to create genuinely useful information that might otherwise have been overlooked.

This is where candidate research becomes particularly valuable.

Instead of guessing what information people need, employers can investigate the questions, assumptions and concerns that shape career decisions. They can examine candidate feedback, speak to employees who have recently joined, explore the experiences of unsuccessful applicants and identify where people struggle to understand the organisation's opportunities.

The resulting insight can inform new content, improved navigation and more meaningful explanations of the employer proposition.

And that brings us back to the importance of consultation.

Building a website that intelligent search systems can understand isn't simply a technical exercise carried out after the designs have been approved.

It begins with understanding the people the organisation wants to reach.



The danger of the disappearing vacancy.

There is a particular challenge associated with careers websites that makes them different from many other forms of digital content.

Jobs expire.

A corporate website might contain information about the organisation's history, products or services that remains broadly relevant for years. A careers website, by contrast, often publishes large volumes of content that changes almost daily.

Vacancies are created, amended, withdrawn and filled. Application deadlines come and go, while new opportunities replace old ones.

From a recruitment management perspective, this is completely normal.

But from a search visibility perspective, it creates complications.

Imagine an employer advertising an exciting graduate opportunity. The vacancy is published on its careers website, appears in search results and begins attracting interest.

After three weeks, the position closes and the vacancy page is removed.

A few months later, someone asks an AI assistant about graduate opportunities with that employer.

Depending on the information available and the system's retrieval behaviour, it may encounter references to the old vacancy or fail to discover useful information about the organisation's wider graduate programme.

The candidate may receive an outdated impression of what's available, or perhaps no useful information at all.

This is where the distinction between a vacancy and a career opportunity becomes important.

A vacancy is temporary. The employer's commitment to recruiting and developing graduates may be ongoing.

So rather than relying entirely on individual job advertisements to communicate what the organisation offers, it makes sense to develop permanent, informative pages describing graduate careers, apprenticeships and other recurring opportunities.

Those pages can explain the programmes, provide employee stories, describe typical requirements and offer guidance about when applications are usually invited.

Current vacancies can then be linked to this more enduring information.

When an individual position closes, the vacancy itself should be updated appropriately, and its structured data should no longer advertise an opportunity that isn't available. Google provides detailed guidance on expired job listings, including removing expired structured data, updating the relevant expiry information or returning the appropriate response when a page is removed.

But the wider career information can remain available.

From a candidate perspective, this is valuable because someone might discover an employer months before they're ready to apply.

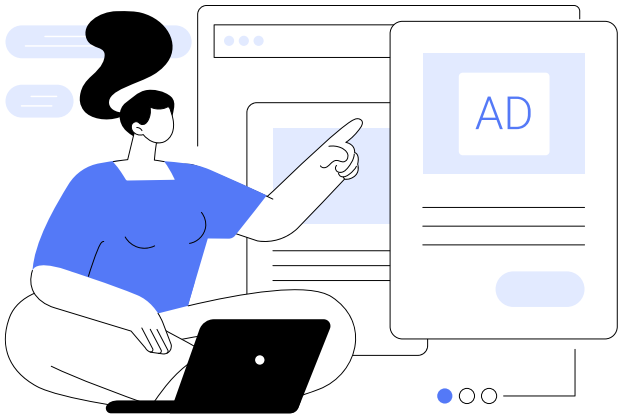
From a search perspective, it provides a more stable body of information about the organisation's opportunities.

And from an employer-brand perspective, it encourages us to recognise that a careers website should do considerably more than display a constantly changing list of jobs.

It should help people understand the careers they could build.

The most persuasive content may be something you haven't published yet.

An employee's career journey, a real apprenticeship success or an explanation of how flexible working operates might answer a candidate's question better than another generic employer-brand statement.



When your ATS becomes part of your search strategy.

Most employers understandably regard their applicant tracking system as the technology responsible for managing vacancies, applications, assessments and recruitment workflows.

It's the operational engine that keeps recruitment moving.

But when we consider AI-powered discovery, the relationship between the ATS and the careers website takes on additional significance.

Think about the information contained within a typical vacancy.

There's a job title, description, department, location, salary, working arrangement, closing date and a range of other details that determine whether an opportunity is suitable for a particular candidate.

That information often originates within the ATS before being published to the careers website.

If the integration between the two systems is poorly designed, the public-facing vacancy information may be incomplete, inconsistent or difficult for search systems to interpret.

Sometimes the job advert sits entirely within an external recruitment platform, separated from the employer's main careers experience. In other situations, vacancies are displayed through embedded components or interfaces that provide a convenient user experience but may create additional challenges for automated discovery.

None of these approaches is necessarily wrong. External ATS platforms and embedded vacancy systems can work effectively, provided they're implemented with appropriate attention to search accessibility, navigation and data consistency.

But employers need to understand how those decisions affect the public presentation of their opportunities.

A well-integrated careers website can provide accessible, individual vacancy pages, consistent job information and a clear route from discovering an opportunity through to applying for it.

It can also connect live vacancies with the wider employer-brand content that gives those opportunities meaning.

Imagine a candidate discovering a customer services vacancy at a housing association.

The vacancy page could link naturally to an explanation of the organisation's purpose, introduce employees working within customer services and describe the opportunities for training and progression.

Suddenly, the job advertisement becomes part of a much richer candidate experience.

And because those relationships are established within a coherent website structure, the relevant information may also be easier for search systems to discover.

This is particularly relevant for organisations considering a new ATS or careers website. The decisions made about platform architecture, data feeds, page structures and application journeys can influence digital visibility long after the initial implementation.

It's another reason why recruitment technology and recruitment communications shouldn't be treated as entirely separate disciplines.

The way vacancies are managed affects the way they're presented. And the way they're presented can influence how easily candidates find them.



Accessibility isn't just a compliance requirement.

One of the most encouraging developments in digital design over recent years has been the growing recognition that accessibility should be a fundamental consideration rather than an afterthought.

For careers websites, this is particularly important.

People exploring employment opportunities have a wide range of needs, abilities and circumstances. Some use screen readers or keyboard navigation. Others need clear language, accessible forms, captions, sufficient colour contrast or the ability to adjust how information is presented.

Good accessibility is about ensuring that people aren't unnecessarily excluded from opportunities because of the way a website has been designed.

And many of the practices that make websites more accessible to people can also improve the clarity and structure of information for automated systems.

Consider a careers website where important text is embedded within images. A sighted visitor may have no difficulty understanding it, but someone using a screen reader could struggle if there isn't an appropriate text alternative.

Similarly, a video containing important information about an employer's culture may be less accessible to someone with a hearing impairment if it lacks captions or a transcript.

Clear headings, meaningful links, logical page structure and accessible text all make digital content easier to navigate and understand.

These qualities can also help search engines process information more effectively.

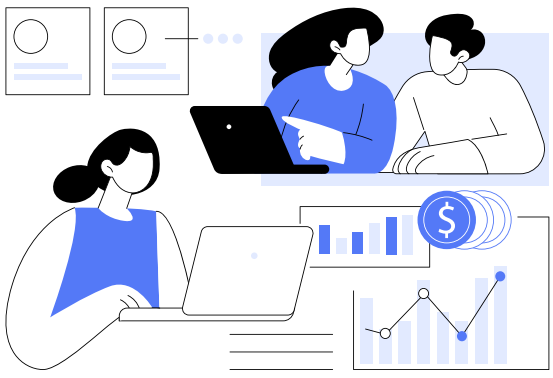
But we should be careful not to suggest that accessibility compliance automatically guarantees AI visibility, or that search optimisation is a substitute for accessibility testing.

The two disciplines have different objectives, and accessible websites still require thoughtful technical implementation, content strategy and ongoing maintenance.

Nevertheless, there is an important overlap.

When we develop careers websites that are inclusive, understandable and usable by a wider range of people, we often create better-organised information in the process.

And that is another example of how designing for human needs and improving automated discoverability can support one another.



The information behind the experience needs to be trustworthy.

Let's return to Northbridge.

The organisation has now addressed many of the technical issues affecting its careers website. Its pages are easier to discover, its vacancy information is more consistently structured and its apprenticeship programmes are clearly described.

But there's still a problem.

Some of its information is out of date.

The careers website promotes a leadership development programme that was replaced two years ago. An employee story describes a working arrangement that no longer exists, while the corporate website contains a different explanation of the organisation's approach to flexible working.

A downloadable recruitment brochure still refers to a previous employer brand, and several pages contain salary information that hasn't been reviewed for some time.

To a candidate exploring the website casually, these inconsistencies might not be immediately obvious.

But when information is retrieved from different parts of the organisation's digital presence and combined into a single answer, contradictions can become more significant.

Imagine an AI assistant attempting to explain Northbridge's approach to flexible working.

One source says that employees can work remotely three days a week. Another says the organisation operates primarily from its offices, while a third describes a policy introduced several years earlier.

Which information should the assistant rely upon?

It may attempt to resolve the contradiction, retrieve additional sources or present an answer that doesn't accurately reflect the employer's current position.

The important point is that making information accessible is only half the challenge.

It also needs to be accurate.

For organisations with multiple websites, departments and content owners, this creates a governance issue.

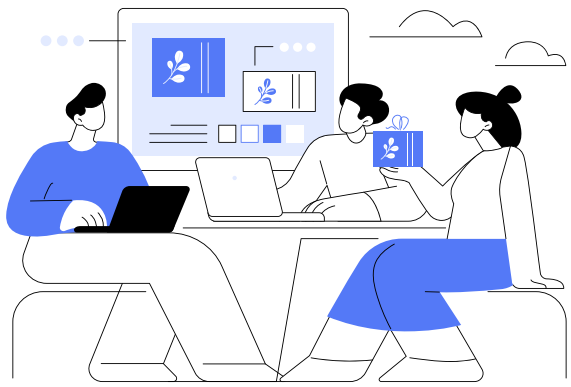
Who is responsible for keeping careers information current? How frequently are benefits and development programmes reviewed? What happens when a policy changes? Are old recruitment materials updated or removed? And how do we ensure that information presented through the ATS, careers website and wider digital channels remains consistent?

These questions may sound less exciting than the creative possibilities of AI-powered search, but they're fundamental to building a trustworthy digital presence.

And they're particularly important in recruitment, where inaccurate information can affect people's decisions about their careers.

An employer shouldn't want to be recommended because an AI assistant has discovered an outdated or exaggerated claim.

It should want to be discovered because the information available about its opportunities provides a fair and accurate picture of what candidates can expect.



The search engines have started telling us what matters

One of the most useful developments for organisations trying to understand AI visibility is that the major search providers are beginning to explain more clearly how their systems interact with website content.

Google's guidance continues to emphasise established SEO fundamentals, including crawlability, valuable content, clear site architecture and accurate structured data. It explicitly states that there are no additional technical requirements for appearing in AI Overviews or AI Mode beyond those already associated with Google Search.

OpenAI has published guidance explaining how website owners can manage access for its search crawler, OAI-SearchBot. Allowing that crawler to access relevant public content can help make the information available for inclusion in ChatGPT search summaries and snippets, although this does not guarantee that the website will appear in a particular response.

Microsoft, meanwhile, introduced AI Performance reporting in Bing Webmaster Tools in February 2026, allowing website owners to investigate how often their content is cited in supported AI-generated experiences.

These developments are significant because they reinforce the distinction between making content technically available and ensuring that it is useful enough to be referenced.

There is little point allowing a search crawler to access a website if the content offers few meaningful answers to the questions people ask.

Equally, there is limited value in developing exceptional content if technical barriers prevent relevant search systems from discovering it.

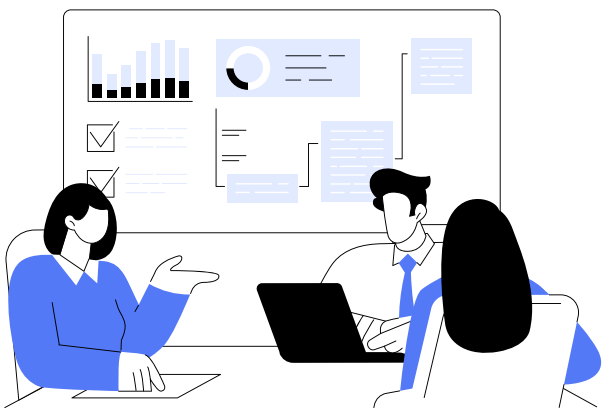
Both considerations matter.

And for a careers website, the challenge is particularly interesting because the information being published is often more complex than a straightforward description of a product or service.

We're communicating opportunities, cultures, values, skills requirements, working arrangements, development programmes and experiences that may differ considerably across an organisation.

Making that information accessible and understandable requires a combination of technical expertise and thoughtful recruitment communications.

Which brings us to an important question about the role of the agencies responsible for creating these websites.



Shouldn't your web agency be thinking about all of this?

Imagine commissioning a new careers website today.

You meet with several agencies, each of which presents an impressive portfolio of previous work. They explain their approach to user experience, show examples of engaging employer-brand content and demonstrate how their designs work across desktop and mobile devices.

They talk about accessibility, search engine optimisation, integrations and application conversion.

All important considerations, of course.

But how many would begin by asking which questions prospective candidates are likely to pose to AI assistants?

How many would investigate whether your employer's development programmes, working arrangements and career opportunities are currently being represented accurately within AI-generated answers?

And how many would consider how your website architecture, vacancy data, content strategy and wider digital reputation could work together to improve your visibility across these emerging discovery channels?

These questions shouldn't replace the established requirements of good website design and development.

But increasingly, they deserve to sit alongside them.

Because an employer doesn't commission a careers website simply to own a beautiful piece of digital design.

It commissions one because it wants to attract the right people, communicate what makes the organisation worth joining and help candidates make informed decisions about their futures.

That objective doesn't end when the website goes live.

The audience continues to change, the organisation develops new opportunities, recruitment priorities evolve and the technology people use to discover information becomes more sophisticated.

A genuinely consultative agency should be helping its clients respond to those changes.

That means reviewing how information is presented, investigating changes in candidate behaviour, identifying gaps in content and recommending improvements that strengthen both the candidate experience and the employer's wider digital visibility.

It means recognising that a careers website is not a finished product but a continuously evolving recruitment communications platform.

And it means accepting that the responsibility for its success extends beyond the creative and technical delivery of the original project.



A great careers website should be an intelligent source of information.

Perhaps the most useful way to think about the future of careers website development is to stop regarding the website simply as a destination and begin treating it as an authoritative source of information about working for an organisation.

It's a relatively small change in perspective, but it has considerable implications.

A destination is somewhere we want people to visit.

An information source is something we want people, search engines and AI-powered services to be able to discover, understand and use.

The two objectives are entirely compatible.

A great careers website should still inspire people when they arrive. It should communicate the employer's personality, celebrate its people and create an engaging experience that helps candidates imagine themselves becoming part of the organisation.

But behind that experience should be a coherent body of information explaining the careers available, the skills required, the development opportunities offered and the realities of working there.

That information should be accurate, accessible, clearly structured and connected in ways that make sense to both candidates and search systems.

Current vacancies should be presented consistently and kept up to date. Employee stories should provide genuine insight into the organisation. Career pathways should be explained in sufficient detail to help people understand how they might progress.

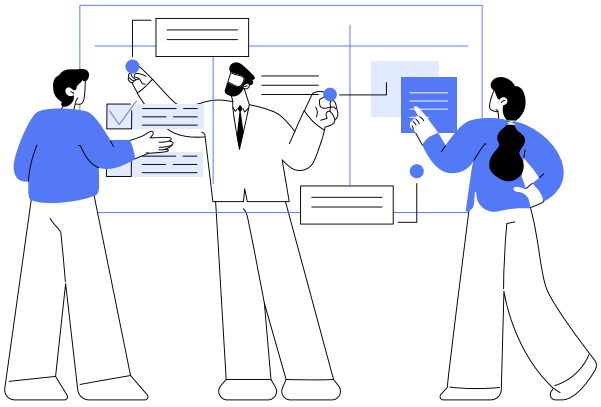
And the questions candidates are likely to ask should influence the content the organisation chooses to publish.

In many ways, this is what good careers website development should always have involved.

What AI-assisted discovery does is make the consequences of getting it wrong potentially more significant.

Because the information on a careers website may now influence not only someone who has already decided to visit, but also an earlier conversation in which they're still deciding which employers deserve their attention.

That is an important opportunity for organisations willing to take their digital recruitment strategy seriously.



The difference between launching a website and building a competitive advantage.

Let's imagine that Northbridge has now completed a more comprehensive review of its careers website.

It has improved the accessibility of important information, introduced a clearer structure for its career programmes and ensured that vacancy data is presented consistently. It has also developed richer content explaining the organisation's culture, development opportunities and the experiences of its people.

The website still looks exceptional, but it now offers considerably more substance behind the design.

Would those improvements guarantee that Northbridge appears whenever someone asks an AI assistant to recommend an employer?

Of course not.

AI-powered search systems are continually evolving, their responses depend on the questions people ask, and no organisation can control every source or algorithm influencing the information presented.

But Northbridge is now in a much stronger position.

Its opportunities are easier to investigate. Its claims are supported by clearer evidence. Its vacancy information is more reliable, and its website provides a more useful resource for candidates who want to understand what working there might involve.

And importantly, these improvements are valuable regardless of how someone discovers the organisation.

A candidate arriving through Google will benefit. Someone following a link from social media will benefit. An employee considering internal progression will benefit. And an AI search system retrieving relevant information will have a richer, more coherent source to draw upon.

That is what makes this approach commercially interesting.

We're not simply optimising for a particular search engine or anticipating the next development in artificial intelligence.

We're improving the quality and discoverability of the employer's recruitment communications across multiple channels.

But there's one further consideration, and it's perhaps the most important of all.

A technically excellent careers website can make information easier to discover, but technology cannot manufacture a compelling employer reputation.

It cannot turn vague promises into genuine development opportunities or create authentic employee experiences where none exist.

And if an organisation wants to be recommended for its culture, values, flexibility or commitment to developing people, those qualities need to be supported by something more substantial than a well-structured web page.

Which leads us naturally to the next challenge.

We've talked about how candidates are changing the way they search, how intelligent systems discover information and how careers websites can be developed to support that discovery.

But what happens when those systems begin comparing the claims employers make about themselves?

What happens when several organisations all describe themselves as inclusive, supportive, innovative and committed to their people?

And how does an employer make its proposition distinctive, credible and worth recommending?

Because ultimately, making your website easier for artificial intelligence to discover is only the beginning.

Making your organisation worth discovering is where the real work starts.

Chapter 5: Your Employer Brand Is Only as Visible as Its Evidence

Why being a great place to work is no longer enough if you can't demonstrate it.



Everybody's a great place to work. Apparently.

Spend a little time exploring careers websites and you'll begin to notice something rather curious. Despite the enormous differences between organisations, industries and the people they employ, an extraordinary number of employers seem to describe themselves in remarkably similar ways.

They're passionate about their people, committed to developing talent and dedicated to creating inclusive environments where everyone can thrive. They celebrate individuality, encourage innovation, value collaboration and offer exciting opportunities to make a difference.

Some promise to help you become the best version of yourself. Others invite you to bring your whole self to work, unlock your potential or join a family of like-minded colleagues who are changing the world.

And perhaps they genuinely mean every word.

The difficulty is that, after visiting a dozen or so careers websites, it becomes increasingly difficult to remember which employer said what.

We've developed an entire language of employer branding that, despite its positive intentions, has become so familiar that much of it risks losing its meaning.

Now imagine asking an AI assistant to recommend organisations that offer excellent career development, genuinely support their employees and provide a positive working environment.

If every employer makes broadly the same claims, what exactly distinguishes one from another?

That's an interesting question, and it highlights something that has concerned me about employer branding for many years. We've sometimes become so focused on communicating what organisations want to be known for that we haven't paid enough attention to demonstrating whether those qualities are genuinely reflected in the experiences of their people.

There's an important difference between an employer value proposition and an employer reputation.

A proposition describes what an organisation promises to offer. A reputation reflects what people believe about it, informed by what they see, hear and experience.

The two should be closely connected, of course, but they aren't necessarily the same thing.

And in a world where AI-powered services can help candidates investigate employers using information from multiple sources, that distinction could become increasingly significant.

Because a compelling claim may attract someone's attention, but evidence is what helps them decide whether to believe it.



The employer with everything to offer, but nothing to prove it

Let's imagine a fictional housing association called Westhaven Homes.

Westhaven employs around 1,500 people across Yorkshire and has spent many years developing a genuinely supportive working environment. It offers flexible working arrangements, invests in professional qualifications and encourages employees to explore opportunities beyond their existing roles.

Its leadership team is proud of the organisation's culture, and with good reason. Several people who joined in relatively junior positions now hold senior management roles. Others have changed careers internally, moving from customer services into housing management, finance or technology.

The organisation also operates a mentoring programme and provides financial support for employees undertaking relevant professional qualifications.

There are some excellent stories to tell.

Unfortunately, hardly any of them appear on the careers website.

Instead, Westhaven's employer-brand content consists of several beautifully designed pages explaining that people are its greatest asset, that development is encouraged and that employees have the opportunity to make a meaningful difference to local communities.

The photography is excellent, the language is polished and the overall impression is positive.

But the substance is surprisingly thin.

Now imagine that a candidate called Rebecca is considering moving from the private sector into an organisation with a stronger social purpose.

She's particularly interested in employers that encourage professional development, offer opportunities for internal progression and recognise the importance of balancing work with family responsibilities.

She asks an AI assistant to recommend housing associations that might suit her.

Westhaven would be an excellent match.

But when an AI search service attempts to investigate the organisation, there may be relatively little publicly accessible information explaining the programmes and opportunities that make Westhaven such an attractive employer.

A competitor, meanwhile, has published detailed information about its leadership development programme, interviews with employees who've progressed internally, a comprehensive explanation of its flexible working arrangements and accounts of the professional qualifications it supports.

That competitor has made its offer easier to investigate.

It doesn't necessarily follow that an AI assistant will recommend the competitor or overlook Westhaven. Different systems retrieve and assess information in different ways, and there is no guarantee that detailed content will result in inclusion in an AI-generated response.

But Westhaven has created an entirely avoidable disadvantage.

It has something genuinely valuable to offer, yet hasn't made that value sufficiently visible.

And perhaps that's one of the most frustrating aspects of this emerging challenge. An employer can be doing all the right things internally while failing to communicate them effectively externally.

The opportunity isn't necessarily to become a better employer overnight.

It's to become considerably better at demonstrating the employer you already are.

A reputation isn't something you write. It's something you earn.

One of the enduring misconceptions surrounding employer branding is that it begins with creating a proposition.

An organisation commissions research, conducts workshops, develops a set of values and eventually arrives at a carefully worded statement describing why someone should want to work there.

That statement is translated into advertising, a visual identity, a tone of voice and a new careers website.

And a new employer brand is launched.

Except, of course, the organisation already had an employer brand long before anyone commissioned the project.

It existed in the experiences of its employees, the opinions of former colleagues, conversations between friends and the impressions formed by people who had applied for vacancies.

Some of those experiences were positive, others less so, but together they contributed to the organisation's reputation as an employer.

The formal employer-brand project didn't create that reputation. At its best, it helped the organisation understand, articulate and communicate it more effectively.

This distinction has always mattered, but it becomes particularly relevant when considering how people use AI to research employers.

An AI assistant may encounter the employer's own statements, but it may also retrieve employee reviews, published surveys, independent articles, news coverage or information from professional organisations.

These external sources won't necessarily provide an accurate or representative picture. An individual employee review might reflect an unusual experience, an outdated policy or a grievance that says little about the organisation as a whole.

Nevertheless, employers can't assume that their carefully crafted proposition will be the only information considered when someone asks what it's really like to work for them.

And perhaps that's entirely reasonable.

If someone is considering committing several years of their working life to an organisation, they have every right to seek information beyond the organisation's own marketing material.

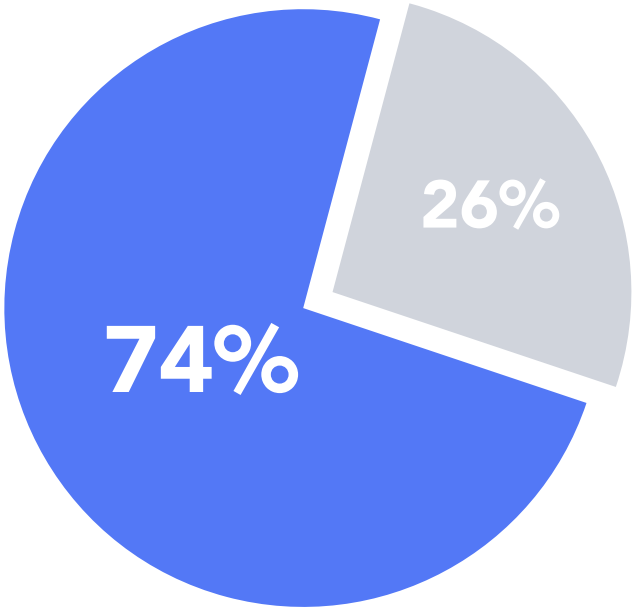
We encourage people to research important purchases, compare alternatives and consult independent opinions. Choosing an employer is considerably more consequential than buying a new television or booking a holiday.

Why wouldn't candidates want to investigate the evidence behind what they're being told?

The emergence of AI-assisted research simply provides another way of bringing that information together.

And for employers, the response shouldn't be to become defensive about what intelligent systems might discover.

It should be to make sure their employer proposition is an authentic reflection of the organisation, supported by information that can withstand reasonable scrutiny.



74% of UK adults were concerned that information produced by AI might be inaccurate.

AI is becoming more widely used, but credibility and verification still matter enormously.



The statistics behind the need for credibility.

There is evidence that candidates have long approached employer claims with a healthy degree of scepticism.

Glassdoor's widely cited 2017 research found that 83% of job seekers said they were likely to research company reviews and ratings when deciding where to apply. Although the research predates the current generation of AI assistants, it illustrates how deeply independent employer research was already embedded in job-seeking behaviour.

The significance isn't that every candidate now relies on review platforms, or that employee ratings provide a definitive measure of workplace quality.

It's that candidates have been looking beyond employer-controlled communications for years.

AI has the potential to make that research more accessible, allowing individuals to ask questions and receive summaries without necessarily investigating each source separately.

But the underlying motivation hasn't changed.

People want to know whether an organisation is what it claims to be.

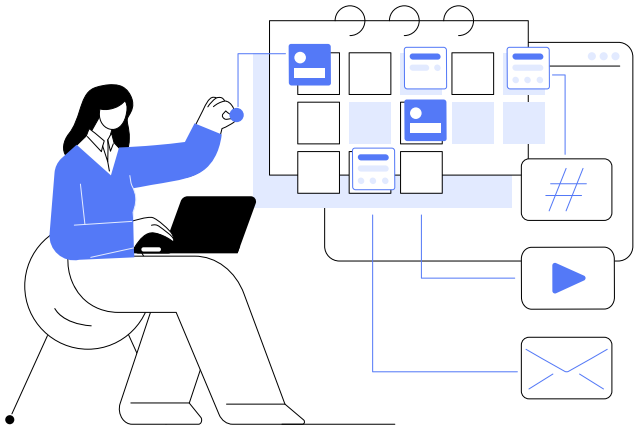
And that should encourage employers to think more carefully about the quality of the information they publish.

Google's own guidance on helpful and reliable content emphasises original information, first-hand experience, expertise and trustworthiness. It encourages publishers to create information that genuinely benefits users rather than producing material primarily to influence search rankings.

That guidance is concerned with Google's search systems, rather than establishing a universal rule governing every large language model. Nevertheless, it reinforces an important principle for organisations developing their digital presence.

Useful, credible and original information has value.

And in recruitment, some of the most compelling original information an employer possesses is the genuine experience of its people.



The most valuable content might already be sitting at the desk next to you.

Let's return to Westhaven Homes.

The organisation has decided to take a closer look at the information available about its careers.

During a meeting, someone from HR mentions that an employee called David recently celebrated twenty years with the organisation.

David originally joined Westhaven in a relatively junior customer services position. Over the years, he's worked in several departments, completed professional qualifications supported by the organisation and eventually progressed into a senior operational role.

His career is a wonderful example of the opportunities Westhaven provides.

Yet until that meeting, nobody had thought of documenting it.

So the communications team arranges to interview David.

Rather than simply asking him to say how wonderful Westhaven is, they explore his career in detail. They ask what attracted him to the organisation, which opportunities helped him progress, what challenges he encountered and how managers supported his development.

They discover that one of the most important moments in his career came when he expressed an interest in moving into a different department.

His manager encouraged him to explore the opportunity, even though losing David would create an immediate challenge for the team.

Westhaven subsequently supported him through a professional qualification and provided the experience he needed to develop in his new role.

It's an engaging story, but it's also something more valuable.

It's evidence.

When Westhaven claims that it encourages internal mobility, David's experience helps demonstrate what that means in practice. When the organisation explains that managers support employee development, the story provides a concrete example of that commitment.

And when someone asks whether Westhaven offers opportunities to progress without following a conventional career path, David's experience is directly relevant.

The story could be presented through a beautifully produced video, supported by photography and a written interview. It could connect to information about the organisation's development programmes and explain how other employees might explore similar opportunities.

Importantly, the essential information should be available in accessible text rather than relying entirely on the video.

Now the content serves several purposes.

It gives prospective candidates a genuine insight into what working at Westhaven might involve. It celebrates an employee's achievements and provides useful information for existing colleagues who may be considering their own development.

And it creates a credible, discoverable account of the opportunities the organisation offers.

That is a much more valuable contribution to employer visibility than adding another paragraph promising that employees can reach their potential.

Specificity is the enemy of empty promises.

There's something revealing about the language employers use when they're trying to appeal to everyone.

The broader the claim, the less distinctive it tends to become.

"We offer excellent development opportunities" could describe almost any organisation. "We support flexible working" sounds encouraging, but tells a candidate very little about what might be possible.

"We're committed to diversity and inclusion" expresses an important principle, but doesn't explain how that commitment influences people's experiences.

None of these statements is necessarily insincere. The problem is that they require the reader to fill in the gaps.

And an AI system attempting to answer a detailed question may encounter the same limitation.

Consider two employers describing their approach to apprenticeships.

The first says that apprentices are an essential part of its future and that the organisation provides a supportive environment where young people can learn, develop and succeed.

The second explains that its engineering apprenticeship lasts four years, combines practical experience with a nationally recognised qualification and provides structured mentoring from experienced engineers. It describes the departments apprentices rotate through, the support available during their studies and the career opportunities that may follow successful completion.

Both employers might have equally strong programmes.

But the second has made it considerably easier for someone to understand what the opportunity involves.

And if a candidate asks an AI assistant which employers offer structured engineering apprenticeships with recognised qualifications and mentoring, the second organisation has provided more directly relevant material.

This is where I think recruitment communications needs to become more confident about specificity.

We don't necessarily need longer careers websites filled with increasingly elaborate descriptions of how wonderful employers are.

We need better information.

We need to explain what development actually looks like, how flexibility operates, what employees can expect from their managers and how people with different backgrounds can build successful careers.

We should also be prepared to acknowledge where opportunities vary.

An organisation may offer hybrid working within certain professional roles but require employees in operational or customer-facing positions to work on site. Pretending that everyone enjoys the same flexibility may create an attractive impression, but it isn't particularly helpful or accurate.

Explaining the differences openly is far more valuable.

Because ultimately, candidates don't need every employer to promise everything.

They need enough reliable information to identify the employer that's right for them.



Sometimes the most persuasive story isn't a perfect one.

There's another aspect of authenticity that employers sometimes find difficult.

We have a natural tendency to present our organisations in the best possible light. Recruitment marketing, like most forms of marketing, is generally concerned with highlighting strengths and encouraging positive perceptions.

That's understandable.

But sometimes the most compelling employee stories are those that acknowledge challenges rather than pretending they don't exist.

Imagine someone joining a large NHS Trust after qualifying as a nurse.

The first year of professional practice can be demanding. There are new responsibilities, unfamiliar situations and moments when even the most capable individuals may question their confidence.

A careers website could describe the Trust as a supportive environment where new nurses are encouraged to develop.

Or it could introduce a nurse who talks openly about how challenging their first few months were, how a preceptorship programme helped them build confidence and how the support of experienced colleagues made a meaningful difference.

The second account might initially appear less polished.

But it tells a much more useful story.

It acknowledges something the candidate may already be worried about and explains how the employer responds.

A prospective nurse doesn't necessarily expect an organisation to promise that every day will be easy. They want reassurance that when things become difficult, they won't be left to cope alone.

That kind of honesty can establish credibility in a way that generic positivity rarely achieves.

And it gives intelligent search systems more informative material to work with.

If someone asks which NHS employers support newly qualified nurses through their first year, a detailed explanation of a preceptorship programme, supported by genuine employee experiences, is more relevant than a broad statement about valuing people.

This isn't an argument for turning careers websites into collections of personal difficulties or negative experiences.

It's an argument for recognising that authenticity is often more persuasive than perfection.

And that the most useful employer-brand content frequently comes from understanding what matters to candidates, rather than simply deciding what the organisation wants to say.



When your employees become your strongest evidence.

For many employers, the richest source of credible careers content is already within the organisation.

There are people who've progressed through different roles, changed careers, returned to work after raising a family, gained qualifications, joined from unfamiliar industries or overcome challenges with the support of colleagues.

Their experiences can provide valuable insight into what the organisation actually offers.

But these stories need to be approached carefully.

An employer shouldn't simply select a handful of enthusiastic employees and ask them to repeat the organisation's marketing messages.

The value lies in understanding the genuine experience.

What made someone join? What surprised them? Which opportunities have mattered most? How has the organisation supported their ambitions? What would they tell someone considering a similar career?

Sometimes the answers may reveal areas where the employer's proposition could be improved.

Perhaps an employee explains that development opportunities exist, but aren't always easy to discover. Another might describe a supportive manager while acknowledging that the organisation's formal policies could be clearer.

Those insights are valuable too.

They help employers understand the difference between what they intend to offer and what people actually experience.

And they can inform improvements to both the organisation and its communications.

This is where research becomes an essential part of employer branding.

Employee interviews, candidate research, focus groups and workplace insight can uncover the evidence behind an organisation's reputation.

Rather than simply asking people whether they agree with a set of proposed employer values, we can explore the experiences that make those values meaningful.

And when those experiences are documented responsibly, with employee consent and appropriate context, they become valuable material for careers websites, recruitment campaigns and wider digital communications.

There's a further advantage.

Original employee stories are inherently distinctive.

Two organisations may both claim to value development, but they cannot share exactly the same employee experiences, opportunities or organisational history.

The more effectively an employer communicates those genuine differences, the less it needs to rely on generic claims that could appear on almost any careers website.

And the more distinctive and informative that content becomes, the better placed it may be to answer the questions prospective candidates ask.



Your reputation extends far beyond your careers website.

Of course, even the richest careers website exists within a much larger information environment.

An employer's reputation is influenced by what happens across its organisation and by what people say about those experiences.

A prospective candidate might encounter information through employee review platforms, local news, professional bodies, educational institutions, social media or conversations with people they trust.

An AI assistant capable of retrieving external information may encounter some of those same sources.

And this creates an important challenge for employer-brand strategy.

Imagine that Westhaven publishes an excellent account of its apprenticeship programme. It describes the qualifications available, introduces current apprentices and explains how the scheme creates opportunities for people who might otherwise struggle to enter the housing sector.

It's a strong piece of content.

Now imagine that a local college publishes an article about its partnership with Westhaven, describing how students have progressed into apprenticeships. A professional housing organisation features the programme as an example of good practice, while several former apprentices share their experiences through their own professional networks.

These independent references can help make the programme more visible across the wider digital environment.

They also provide additional context beyond the employer's own claims.

That doesn't mean third-party mentions automatically make content authoritative, or that AI systems will treat every external reference as an endorsement.

But when credible sources independently discuss an organisation's activities, there is a broader body of information available for people and retrieval systems to investigate.

And this is where traditional public relations, community engagement, partnerships and employer branding begin to overlap with AI visibility.

The objective shouldn't be to manufacture mentions or generate artificial endorsements. Those tactics risk undermining the very credibility organisations are trying to establish.

It should be to ensure that genuinely worthwhile activities are being communicated to relevant audiences through appropriate, trustworthy channels.

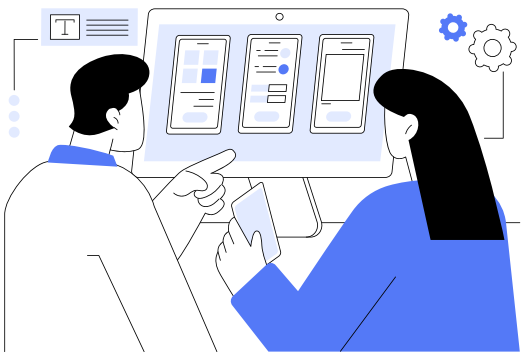
If an employer is doing remarkable work with apprenticeships, it makes sense to share that information with educational institutions and professional communities.

If employees are achieving extraordinary things, their stories deserve to be told.

And if an organisation is investing meaningfully in workforce development, inclusion or community impact, there may be opportunities to communicate those activities beyond the careers website.

In many cases, this is work that good recruitment communications agencies have been doing for years.

AI-assisted discovery simply adds another reason to connect those activities within a coherent strategy.



What happens when the evidence contradicts the promise?

Let's imagine a less comfortable scenario.

An organisation has developed a careers website built around its commitment to employee wellbeing. Its employer proposition places considerable emphasis on supportive management, flexibility and creating an environment where people can thrive.

The website includes polished videos and enthusiastic employee testimonials.

But elsewhere, prospective candidates encounter a substantial number of negative employee reviews describing concerns about workload, management practices and the availability of support.

How should the employer respond?

The temptation might be to focus on improving the visibility of its positive content, publishing more employee stories and attempting to ensure that favourable information appears more prominently.

But that approach risks treating a reputation problem as a search optimisation problem.

And the distinction matters.

Negative reviews aren't necessarily representative, and some may be inaccurate or reflect experiences that have since changed. Employers should have opportunities to provide context, respond appropriately and correct factual errors where possible.

Nevertheless, if repeated concerns point towards genuine organisational issues, the answer isn't simply to produce more persuasive communications.

It's to investigate the underlying experiences.

An employer brand cannot sustainably promise something the organisation consistently fails to deliver.

And in an environment where candidates have access to increasingly sophisticated research tools, contradictions between the employer's claims and people's experiences may become easier to discover.

This is another reason why AI visibility should be regarded as part of a wider reputation strategy rather than a purely technical exercise.

Improving the information available about an employer can be valuable, but it must be accompanied by an honest understanding of the organisation itself.

Sometimes the most important recommendation emerging from an employer-brand review won't be to create a new webpage.

It might be to improve an internal process, clarify a policy or address an employee concern.

Because the strongest employer reputation is built on the experiences people actually have, not simply the messages published about those experiences.



Credibility is becoming a competitive advantage.

It's interesting to consider how this development might affect smaller or less familiar employers.

Traditionally, well-known organisations have enjoyed an obvious advantage in recruitment. Their names are familiar, their advertising budgets are often substantial and prospective candidates may already have a reasonably clear impression of what they do.

Smaller organisations, particularly those operating outside the most recognisable sectors, can struggle to attract attention.

But conversational AI could create opportunities for employers whose strengths aren't necessarily reflected in their brand recognition.

Imagine a small engineering business in Yorkshire that employs fifty people.

It isn't a household name and has never invested heavily in recruitment advertising. Its careers website is relatively modest, and most of its appointments have historically come through personal recommendations or local networks.

Yet the company offers exceptional training, has a strong record of retaining employees and provides opportunities for apprentices to develop into highly skilled engineers.

Now imagine that it begins documenting those opportunities properly.

It explains its apprenticeship programme, introduces experienced engineers who mentor new recruits and publishes detailed accounts of people who've progressed through the business.

It works with local colleges, participates in relevant industry initiatives and maintains clear information about the opportunities it offers.

There's no guarantee that an AI assistant will suddenly recommend the business ahead of larger competitors.

But it now has a stronger opportunity to be discovered through the qualities that make it relevant to a particular candidate.

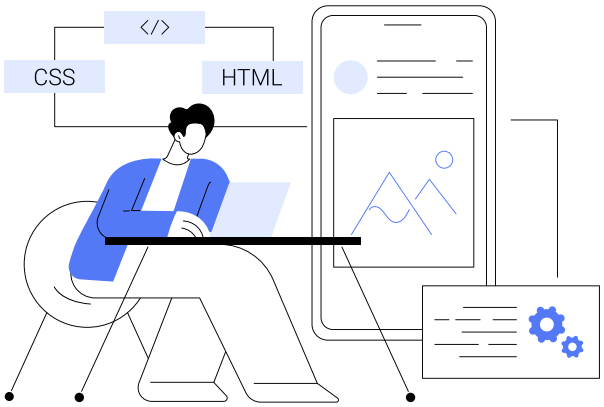
Someone seeking a smaller employer with practical training, close mentoring and long-term development opportunities might find those characteristics particularly attractive.

And that is an important possibility.

If AI-assisted discovery becomes better at connecting people's individual preferences with relevant information about employers, organisations may have opportunities to compete on the substance of what they offer rather than simply their size or reputation.

But to benefit, they need to make that substance visible.

An exceptional opportunity that nobody outside the organisation knows about is, from a recruitment marketing perspective, an opportunity being wasted.



The danger of creating content simply to satisfy AI.

Of course, there's another temptation we should resist.

Once employers recognise that detailed, informative content may improve their discoverability, it would be easy to assume that the answer is simply to publish more of it.

We could create hundreds of articles answering every conceivable question about working for the organisation. We could use generative AI to produce endless pages about career development, workplace culture, employee benefits and professional opportunities.

We could optimise each page around particular search phrases and hope that sheer volume improves our chances of appearing in AI-generated answers.

But that would miss the point entirely.

There is already enough generic content on the internet.

What candidates need is information that helps them make better decisions.

Google's guidance on people-first content specifically warns against producing large volumes of material primarily to attract search traffic. Instead, it encourages original information, first-hand experience and content that leaves people feeling they've genuinely learned something useful.

That is a sensible principle for recruitment communications.

An employer doesn't need fifty articles explaining why professional development is important. It needs clear information about the development opportunities it actually offers.

It doesn't need endless pages making general observations about work-life balance. It needs to explain what working arrangements are available, how they operate and what candidates can reasonably expect.

And it certainly doesn't need fabricated employee testimonials or AI-generated stories presented as genuine experiences.

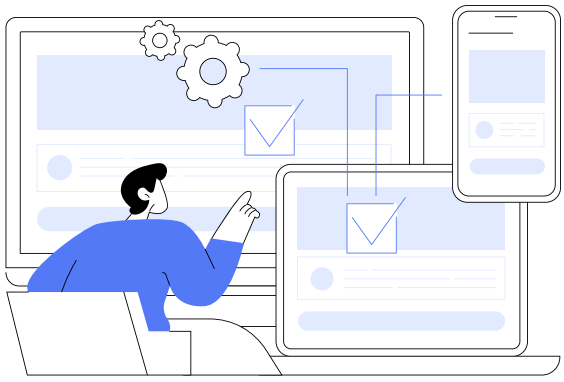
The objective isn't to create an enormous volume of content for machines to consume.

It's to create a body of authentic, relevant information that helps people understand the organisation and its opportunities.

Sometimes that might involve a detailed article or guide. Sometimes an employee interview, a short video or a clear explanation of a particular policy will be more appropriate.

The format should follow the information need.

And the information should be worth publishing even if an AI search engine never discovers it.



The Employer Evidence Gap

The Claim

"We invest in our people."

A familiar employer-brand promise, but difficult to evaluate alone

The Evidence

- Funded qualifications
- Real career stories
- Mentoring programme
- Internal progression routes

Turn the promise into discoverable proof

↓

Employer Evidence Proposition

A credible, accessible explanation of what makes the employer genuinely distinctive.



From employer value proposition to employer evidence proposition.

Perhaps it's time we introduced another way of thinking about employer branding.

For years, we've worked with organisations to develop their employer value propositions, identifying the qualities, experiences and opportunities that distinguish them from competitors.

A well-researched EVP remains an important foundation of effective recruitment communications.

But what if we asked employers to go one stage further?

What if, alongside defining what makes the organisation an attractive place to work, we also considered how each important claim could be supported by accessible, credible evidence?

Imagine Westhaven's employer proposition includes a commitment to career development.

Rather than simply featuring that commitment within its messaging, the organisation could identify the experiences, programmes and information that demonstrate what development actually means.

It might document its training opportunities, explain its professional qualification support, publish examples of internal progression and introduce employees who've built careers across different departments.

If flexibility is another important part of the proposition, the organisation could explain its policies, describe the different arrangements available and provide realistic examples of how employees balance their responsibilities.

If community impact is central to its identity, it could demonstrate how particular roles contribute to the organisation's wider purpose, supported by meaningful examples of the work being delivered.

This isn't about turning every employer-brand statement into a formal research paper.

It's about ensuring that the promise and the proof are connected.

We might think of it as an Employer Evidence Proposition: not a replacement for the EVP, but the supporting body of information that makes its claims credible, distinctive and discoverable.

And it would have value far beyond AI search.

Recruitment teams could use the information in candidate communications. Hiring managers could draw upon it during interviews. Employees could better understand the opportunities available internally, while careers advisers and educational institutions could use it to help people explore relevant professions.

The careers website would become a richer, more authoritative resource, supporting better-informed decisions throughout the candidate journey.

For AI-powered search systems, it would also create a more substantial source of relevant information to retrieve and potentially reference.

And importantly, the work would remain valuable as the technology evolves.



The employer brand is no longer simply what you say about yourself.

Let's return to Rebecca, the candidate considering a move into housing.

She's had a conversation with an AI assistant about the kind of organisation she'd like to join, and several potential employers have been suggested.

Westhaven is among them.

She explores the organisation's careers website and discovers a detailed account of David's career progression, information about professional qualifications and a clear explanation of the organisation's approach to flexible working.

She also finds evidence of Westhaven's involvement with local communities and reads about several employees who've moved into new roles internally.

Much of what she discovers corresponds with the things she was hoping to find.

And that's the point at which employer-brand communications begin to do their most valuable work.

They help someone move from being interested in an organisation to believing that it might genuinely be right for them.

The AI assistant may have introduced Westhaven, but it hasn't made Rebecca's decision.

The quality of the information, the credibility of the experiences being shared and the extent to which the organisation's opportunities align with her ambitions will all influence what happens next.

And that should remind us of something important.

The purpose of improving AI visibility isn't simply to secure more mentions in generated answers.

It's to help relevant candidates discover employers that genuinely offer what they're looking for.

That requires organisations to understand their strengths, communicate them accurately and provide enough evidence for people to make informed decisions.

It also requires a willingness to acknowledge that not every employer will be right for every candidate.

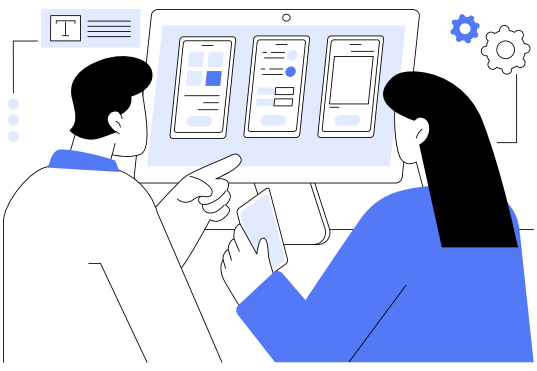
A smaller organisation might offer exceptional opportunities for people who value close working relationships and broad responsibilities, while a larger organisation might provide more structured development programmes and specialist career pathways.

Neither proposition is inherently better.

The important thing is making the differences clear.

Because successful recruitment has never been about persuading the greatest possible number of people that an organisation is wonderful.

It's about attracting the people for whom that organisation offers the right opportunity.



The organisations that will be discovered are those willing to be understood.

The organisations that will be discovered are those willing to be understood

Perhaps the most significant lesson emerging from this chapter is that AI visibility cannot be separated from employer credibility.

We've seen how technically well-structured careers websites can make information easier to discover. We've explored how AI-powered search services may retrieve and combine material from different sources.

But none of those technical capabilities can compensate for an absence of meaningful information.

If an employer wants to be recognised for offering excellent career development, it should be able to explain what those opportunities involve.

If it wants to be known as an inclusive organisation, it needs to demonstrate how inclusion influences the experiences of its people.

And if it wants candidates to believe that working there will provide a rewarding and supportive environment, its claims should be grounded in something more substantial than carefully chosen adjectives.

This isn't simply about satisfying artificial intelligence.

It's about respecting the intelligence of the people we're trying to recruit.

Candidates deserve accurate information, honest insight and meaningful evidence about the organisations they're considering.

And when employers provide that information, they create something that benefits everyone involved.

They help candidates make better-informed decisions, strengthen the credibility of their employer brands and provide more useful material for the increasingly sophisticated systems through which people discover career opportunities.

There's no guarantee that doing so will result in a particular AI assistant recommending the organisation, but it creates a far stronger foundation than relying on generic claims or attempting to manipulate search results.

And perhaps this is where the greatest opportunity for recruitment communications agencies lies.

Our responsibility should extend beyond creating attractive expressions of employer propositions. We should be helping clients investigate what makes them distinctive, uncover the experiences that support those qualities and communicate the resulting evidence in ways that are engaging, accessible and discoverable.

That means bringing research, employer branding, creative storytelling, technical development and search strategy together.

It means treating a careers website not merely as a place to advertise vacancies, but as a credible source of information about what working for an organisation actually means.

And it means recognising that the work doesn't end when the website launches, because an employer's reputation and the information supporting it will continue to evolve.

For years, we've encouraged organisations to think carefully about what they want prospective candidates to believe about them.

Perhaps the emergence of AI-assisted discovery gives us an opportunity to ask a more useful question.

What can we demonstrate that gives candidates a genuine reason to believe it?

Because ultimately, a great employer brand shouldn't depend on how convincingly an organisation can describe itself.

It should be supported by the experiences, opportunities and evidence that make the description true.

And in an age when intelligent systems are increasingly helping people investigate employers, that evidence may become one of the most valuable assets an organisation possesses.

Chapter 6: From Google Rankings to AI Visibility

How do you measure whether your employer is part of the conversation when the conversation is happening somewhere you cannot see?



Everything looks wonderful. Until you ask a different question.

Imagine you're sitting in a quarterly recruitment marketing review. The atmosphere is positive, the presentation is polished, and the figures appear to tell a reassuring story.

Your careers website is performing well. Organic traffic has increased, several important search terms have improved their Google rankings, and the number of people arriving at the site through unpaid search remains healthy. Your recruitment advertising is delivering visitors at an acceptable cost, while improvements to the application journey have helped increase conversion rates.

The agency presents a familiar collection of charts, explaining which pages have performed particularly well and where further improvements might be made.

By most conventional measures, the website is doing exactly what it was designed to do.

Then someone from the leadership team asks a question.

"We've been hearing quite a lot about people using ChatGPT to research employers. Do we know whether we're being recommended?"

There's a slight pause.

The agency explains that the careers website is well optimised for Google, that the technical SEO is in good shape and that the organisation continues to rank prominently for several important recruitment searches.

All of which is encouraging, but doesn't really answer the question.

The director tries again.

"If someone asked an AI assistant which employers in our sector offer the best opportunities for career development, would we appear in the answer?"

Nobody knows.

It's not that the agency has done anything particularly wrong. It has been measuring the things organisations have traditionally expected it to measure. Rankings, impressions, traffic, engagement and conversions have formed the basis of digital marketing reporting for years, and they remain extremely important.

The difficulty is that the question has changed.

We're no longer simply asking how effectively a website attracts people who are searching for information. We're also asking how an organisation is represented within systems that may provide that information directly, potentially influencing which employers a candidate decides to investigate.

And those two things aren't necessarily reflected in the same reports.

This is where the emergence of AI-powered search begins to challenge some of our most familiar assumptions about digital recruitment performance.

Because an employer could be doing rather well according to conventional SEO measures while remaining largely invisible in the AI-generated conversations that matter to its prospective candidates.

Equally, an organisation could be cited within AI-generated answers without receiving anything like the volume of website traffic that would traditionally accompany a comparable level of search visibility.

For recruitment marketers, that creates an interesting problem.

How do we measure something that may influence candidate decisions without producing an obvious, measurable visit to our website?



We've become very good at measuring the people who arrive

One of the great advantages of digital recruitment marketing has always been our ability to measure performance.

Compared with many traditional advertising channels, careers websites offer an extraordinary amount of information about how people respond to our communications.

We can see how many visitors arrive, where they come from, which pages attract the most interest and how individuals progress towards an application. We can identify underperforming content, investigate technical problems and understand whether particular recruitment campaigns are generating worthwhile results.

And when a website is integrated effectively with an applicant tracking system, we can begin connecting those activities with recruitment outcomes.

That should always remain a central ambition.

After all, there's limited value in generating enormous quantities of website traffic if the visitors aren't interested in the opportunities available, or if the application process discourages suitable candidates from continuing.

At Genius, we've always believed that recruitment communications should ultimately be judged by the quality of the connections they create between employers and potential employees, rather than simply the volume of activity they generate.

But even the most sophisticated website analytics have an unavoidable limitation.

They primarily describe what happens within the journeys we can observe.

Imagine someone researching the best employers for engineering graduates. They ask an AI assistant for recommendations, receive a list of organisations and spend several minutes discussing which might offer the strongest professional development opportunities.

The assistant mentions five employers.

Three are described in considerable detail, with references to their graduate programmes, training opportunities and career pathways. Two receive only passing mentions.

Our candidate decides to investigate the first three.

The other two never receive a visit.

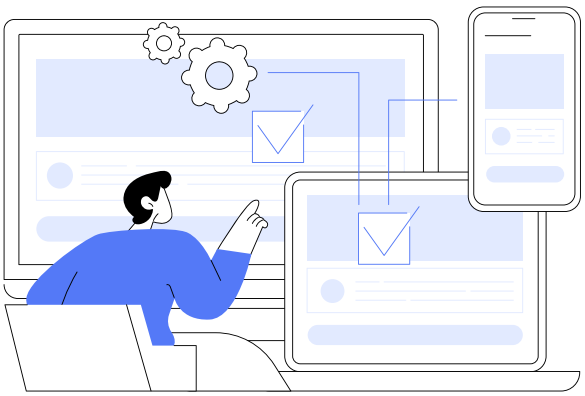
From the perspective of those employers' website analytics, nothing has happened. There is no abandoned session, no failed conversion and no obvious indication that they were considered and subsequently overlooked.

But something has happened.

A candidate has made a decision about which organisations deserve further investigation, and that decision has been influenced by information presented outside the employers' own digital environments.

The traditional analytics report has no straightforward way of capturing that moment.

And if we continue to judge recruitment visibility entirely through the behaviour of people who reach our websites, we risk overlooking an increasingly important part of the candidate journey.



The Candidate Discovery Iceberg

Your analytics can tell you who arrived. But what about everyone who considered you and never came?



Website traffic

Applications

AI research

Employer comparisons

Recommendations

Candidate perceptions

Invisible consideration

The curious business of being seen without being visited

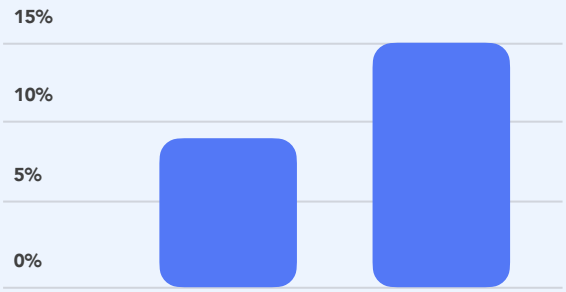
This isn't simply a theoretical concern.

In July 2025, the Pew Research Center published an analysis of Google search behaviour involving 900 adults in the United States. Researchers examined how people responded to search results containing AI-generated summaries, comparing their behaviour with searches where no such summary appeared.

The findings were striking.

When an AI summary appeared, users clicked a traditional search result in just 8% of visits to the results page. When no AI summary appeared, that figure was 15%.

Perhaps even more interestingly, only around 1% of visits to search results containing an AI summary led to a click on one of the sources cited within that summary.



15% Clicked a traditional result when there was no AI summary.
8% Clicked a traditional result when an AI summary appeared.

These findings concern general search activity rather than recruitment specifically, and we shouldn't assume that someone researching a potential employer behaves in exactly the same way as someone looking up a historical fact or checking a straightforward piece of information.

Nevertheless, the research highlights a significant possibility.

A website's content may contribute to someone's understanding of a subject without that person ever visiting the website itself.

For an employer, that means the information published on its careers website could potentially influence a candidate's impression of the organisation even when the interaction doesn't generate a measurable visitor.

Imagine a prospective nurse asking an AI-powered search service which NHS employers offer particularly good support for newly qualified staff.

The response might reference a Trust's preceptorship programme, summarise information about professional development and explain why the organisation could be worth investigating.

The candidate might remember that Trust, mention it to a friend or add it to a shortlist of potential employers.

But they might not immediately click through to the careers website.

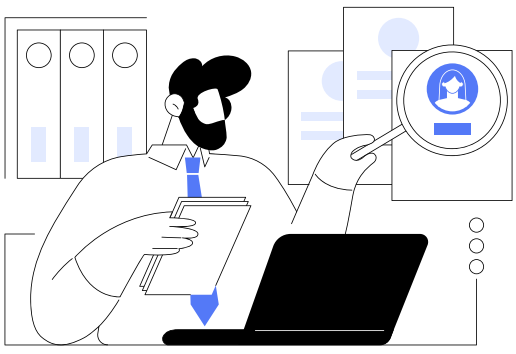
And if they eventually visit several days later by typing the organisation's name directly into Google, the original influence of the AI response may be difficult to establish.

This creates something of a measurement dilemma.

The employer's information may have contributed to the decision, yet the conventional data may attribute the eventual visit to another source entirely.

It doesn't mean traditional attribution has suddenly become useless. It means that understanding the complete candidate journey may require us to look beyond the final click.

And that has always been a sensible principle in recruitment marketing, even if AI is making the need more apparent.



The employer that appeared everywhere except where it mattered.

Let's imagine a fictional organisation called Northbridge Healthcare, which operates hospitals and specialist services across several regions of England.

Northbridge has invested significantly in recruitment communications. Its careers website attracts healthy organic traffic, its vacancies appear prominently in relevant searches and its employer-brand content receives encouraging engagement.

The recruitment team is particularly proud of its development programmes for newly qualified nurses.

It offers structured preceptorship support, opportunities to gain specialist experience and several pathways into more senior clinical roles.

Yet the organisation has noticed that applications from newly qualified nurses aren't growing as strongly as expected.

Naturally, the team begins investigating.

The first reports show nothing particularly alarming. Google rankings remain healthy, and traffic to the nursing careers pages is broadly stable.

But during a discussion about changing candidate behaviour, someone suggests conducting a different sort of exercise.

Instead of examining search rankings, why not ask a selection of AI-powered services the kinds of questions newly qualified nurses might ask?

The team develops a set of realistic scenarios.

A nurse looking for their first permanent position in the North of England. Someone interested in developing a career in emergency medicine. Another candidate who wants to understand which hospitals offer the strongest support during the transition from student to registered professional.

They begin testing these questions across several AI services.

What they discover is interesting.

Northbridge appears in some responses, particularly when its name is included in the question. But when the prompts ask for recommendations without naming a particular employer, several competitors are mentioned more frequently.

One competitor is repeatedly associated with structured preceptorship programmes. Another is recognised for specialist clinical development, while a third is referenced in relation to employee support and professional progression.

Northbridge's own programmes compare favourably with those being described.

The problem appears to be that the organisation hasn't communicated them particularly effectively.

Its preceptorship information sits within a lengthy PDF. Several employee stories refer to development opportunities without explaining the programmes involved, while the careers website contains relatively little detail about the support available to newly qualified nurses.

The team can't prove that these content differences caused Northbridge's absence from particular AI responses. The systems may be drawing on other information, and the results themselves can vary.

But the exercise has revealed a genuine communications weakness that wasn't obvious from conventional SEO reporting.

The website has been successfully attracting people searching for nursing vacancies.

It hasn't been particularly effective at explaining why Northbridge might be an excellent place to begin a nursing career.

And those are two quite different ambitions.

We need to start asking the questions candidates are asking.

One of the most useful starting points for measuring AI visibility is also one of the simplest.

We need to understand the questions prospective candidates are likely to ask.

Not the keywords our website currently ranks for, or the phrases appearing in our recruitment advertising, but the real questions people might use when exploring employers through an AI assistant.

A newly qualified nurse may be interested in preceptorship, career progression, working patterns and the availability of professional support.

An experienced engineer might want to know which employers invest in emerging technologies, offer opportunities to work on interesting projects or support people moving into leadership roles.

Someone returning to employment after raising a family could be interested in flexible working, refresher training and organisations with a positive reputation for supporting career returners.

And a school leaver might simply want to know which employers offer an alternative to university while providing the prospect of a rewarding long-term career.

The questions will vary considerably depending on the audience.

That's why an effective AI visibility exercise should begin with candidate insight rather than a generic collection of prompts downloaded from the internet.

Imagine conducting research with a group of graduates, asking them to describe how they would investigate potential employers.

Some might already have a shortlist of well-known organisations. Others may be more interested in values, location or the opportunities available to develop particular skills.

When asked what they'd say to an AI assistant, they might produce questions that are substantially different from the search terms employers have traditionally optimised for.

And that information is valuable in its own right.

It helps us understand how people think about their careers, what they need to know and which factors influence their decisions.

Once we've identified a meaningful collection of questions, we can begin exploring how different AI-powered services respond.

But we need to approach that process with care.



Why one ChatGPT search tells you almost nothing.

There's something rather appealing about the idea of opening ChatGPT, asking it to recommend employers in your industry and treating the response as a definitive assessment of your organisation's AI visibility.

It's quick, it's easy, and it produces an answer that appears remarkably convincing.

Unfortunately, it isn't particularly reliable as a measurement exercise.

AI-generated answers can vary depending on the wording of a question, the context supplied, the model being used, the information retrieved and the service's current behaviour.

A candidate asking for employers with excellent career progression might receive different recommendations from someone asking for supportive employers offering professional development, even though the questions appear to be exploring similar qualities.

Location matters, too.

An employer might be highly relevant to someone looking for opportunities in Yorkshire but entirely unsuitable for someone seeking a similar career in London.

And the same question asked on different occasions may produce different results.

This creates an important distinction between conventional search rankings and AI-generated recommendations.

A traditional search result can change, of course, but an SEO specialist can usually examine a reasonably well-defined search term, location and set of ranking conditions.

Conversational search introduces far more variables.

A question can contain a candidate's experience, ambitions, preferences, qualifications, location and personal circumstances, all of which may influence the response.

And unlike conventional search rankings, AI-generated answers don't necessarily present a stable, ordered list of results that can be treated as a universal hierarchy.

This means that any meaningful assessment of AI visibility needs to involve repeated, controlled testing.

For Northbridge Healthcare, we might develop a collection of questions representing different nursing audiences and career interests. We'd record how the organisation appears across relevant AI services, whether competitors are mentioned and which sources are referenced.

We'd then repeat the exercise under comparable conditions, preserving the exact wording of prompts wherever possible and documenting the services, models, dates and other relevant settings.

The objective wouldn't be to declare that Northbridge ranks fourth in ChatGPT.

It would be to establish a more defensible understanding of how frequently the organisation appears within a defined set of relevant questions, how accurately it is described and whether its visibility changes over time.

That's a much more useful foundation for improving performance.



A new way to think about share of voice.

For decades, advertising and public relations professionals have used the concept of share of voice to understand how prominently an organisation appears within a particular market.

The principle is familiar. If several brands are competing for attention, it's useful to know how much of the available visibility each is receiving.

A similar concept can be applied to AI-generated employer discovery, provided we're careful about what the figures actually mean.

Imagine that Northbridge identifies one hundred relevant candidate questions, covering career development, training opportunities, working arrangements and employer recommendations.

It tests those questions across a defined selection of AI-powered services, repeating the exercise to reduce the influence of individual responses.

The resulting analysis might reveal that Northbridge is mentioned in 28% of the recorded answers, while one of its competitors appears in 46%.

Those are hypothetical figures, but they illustrate the sort of information an employer might find useful.

The immediate temptation would be to conclude that the competitor is considerably more visible.

And within that particular set of tests, that may be a fair observation.

But it wouldn't necessarily mean the competitor is recommended to 46% of real candidates, or that Northbridge has a 28% share of all AI-assisted employer searches.

The figures would describe the results of a controlled sample, not the behaviour of the entire candidate population.

That distinction matters because it's easy to create impressive-looking dashboards from data that doesn't support the conclusions being drawn.

A credible AI visibility report should explain what has actually been measured, how the questions were selected and what the results can reasonably tell us.

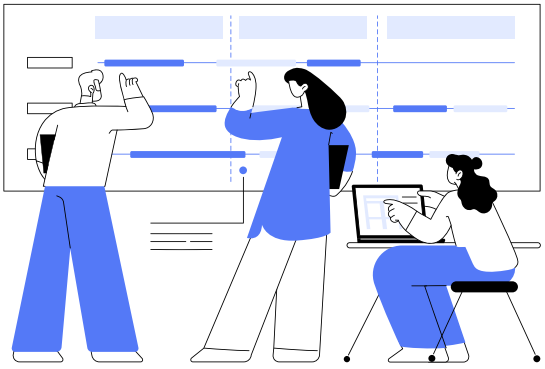
It should also distinguish between different types of appearance.

An employer might be mentioned as a possible option without being recommended. It might be cited as a source of information or discussed in response to a negative question about workplace experiences.

Those outcomes aren't equivalent.

Being mentioned isn't necessarily positive. Being cited doesn't necessarily mean being endorsed. And appearing first in one answer doesn't establish a meaningful ranking across the wider AI search landscape.

The objective is to understand not simply whether an organisation appears, but the context in which it appears and whether that context is relevant to the employer's recruitment ambitions.



Being mentioned, being cited and being recommended are different things.

This distinction deserves particular attention because it will become increasingly important as employers begin receiving reports about their AI visibility.

Imagine asking an AI assistant which organisations offer engineering apprenticeships in Yorkshire.

One employer might appear in the answer because the assistant has identified a relevant apprenticeship programme.

Another might be referenced through an article published by an educational institution, while a third might be mentioned as an example of a large engineering business operating in the region.

All three organisations have appeared, but the significance of those appearances is different.

Now imagine asking which employers offer particularly good training and progression opportunities.

The assistant might describe an employer's programme favourably and provide evidence supporting its relevance.

That is closer to a recommendation, although it still shouldn't be interpreted as an objective judgement that the employer is better than its competitors.

And then there's the issue of citations.

AI-powered search services increasingly provide links to the sources used in their answers. For website owners, those citations offer a valuable opportunity to understand whether their published information is being referenced.

Microsoft took an important step in February 2026 when it introduced AI Performance reporting within Bing Webmaster Tools.

The reporting allows website owners to examine citation activity across supported Microsoft AI experiences, including Copilot and Bing's AI-generated summaries. It identifies which pages have been cited, how citation activity changes over time and the broad retrieval phrases associated with those references.

This is a significant development because it moves AI visibility measurement beyond manually testing prompts.

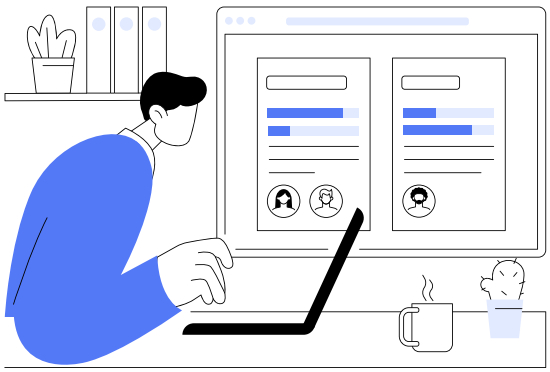
For the first time, organisations have access to an official reporting environment specifically designed to help them understand how some of their content is being referenced within AI-generated answers.

But Microsoft is careful about what the figures represent.

A citation count doesn't establish that a website is authoritative, important or highly ranked. Nor does it demonstrate that the content contributed to a candidate visiting the website or applying for a job.

It tells us that the website was visibly referenced within a supported AI experience.

And that is useful information, provided we interpret it appropriately.



A website can be cited by an AI assistant without being recommended as an employer.

Microsoft explicitly distinguishes citation activity from rankings or authority in its AI Performance reporting.



The search engines are beginning to open the curtains.

For organisations trying to understand AI visibility, 2026 has brought an encouraging development.

The major search providers are beginning to offer more detailed reporting about how websites appear within AI-generated search experiences.

In June 2026, Google announced dedicated generative AI performance reports within Search Console, with worldwide rollout completed by 31 August 2026.

These reports allow eligible website owners to examine impressions associated with Google's generative AI search features, including AI Overviews and AI Mode, and investigate which pages are receiving visibility.

Microsoft's AI Performance reporting provides a complementary perspective by concentrating on citations within its supported AI experiences.

Neither tool gives an employer a complete picture of everything happening across AI-powered search.

They don't reveal every question a candidate has asked, every recommendation produced by every AI service or all the reasons particular organisations were included in responses.

Nevertheless, they represent a meaningful step forward.

Consider what this could mean for Northbridge.

Its traditional SEO reporting already shows which careers pages attract visitors through Google. Now the recruitment team may also be able to examine which pages are receiving impressions within Google's generative AI search features.

It could investigate whether its apprenticeship content is being cited within supported Microsoft AI experiences and identify broader subjects associated with those citations.

Perhaps its nursing careers pages have strong conventional search performance but relatively little measurable AI citation activity.

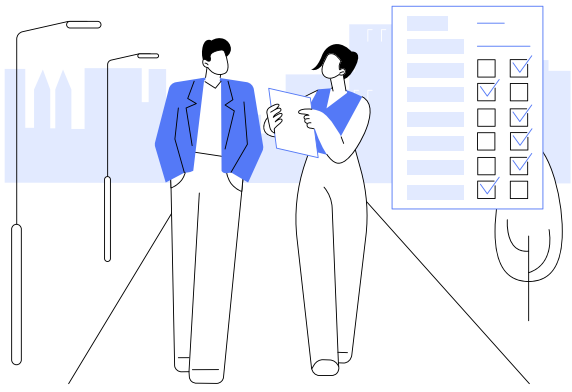
Perhaps an employee story about progressing from an apprenticeship into management receives more AI visibility than anyone expected.

Or perhaps a detailed guide explaining the organisation's preceptorship programme begins appearing in relevant retrieval activity after the content has been improved.

None of those observations proves that a particular content change caused the visibility, because AI-generated search behaviour can be influenced by changes in user demand, retrieval systems and numerous other factors.

But the information provides a starting point for intelligent investigation.

And that's an improvement on simply guessing.



What should an AI visibility report actually tell an employer?

If I were responsible for recruitment at Northbridge, I wouldn't be particularly interested in receiving a monthly report announcing that we'd achieved a certain number of AI mentions without explaining what those mentions meant.

I'd want to understand whether the organisation was becoming more visible to the kinds of candidates we were trying to attract.

I'd want to know whether prospective nurses looking for supportive early-career environments were likely to encounter relevant information about our preceptorship programmes.

I'd want to understand whether engineering graduates could discover the opportunities we provide, whether experienced professionals could investigate our development pathways and whether candidates searching for flexible working arrangements were finding accurate information.

And I'd want to know how our visibility compared with relevant competitors.

A useful report might therefore examine a defined collection of candidate questions across several AI services, recording when Northbridge appears, how it's described and which sources support the answer.

It would distinguish between positive recommendations, neutral references and potentially misleading descriptions.

It would also examine citation activity, where reliable reporting is available, alongside conventional search performance and the traffic arriving from identifiable AI referral sources.

Most importantly, it would translate the findings into meaningful recommendations.

If Northbridge is rarely mentioned in conversations about nursing development, perhaps the content explaining its training programmes needs improvement.

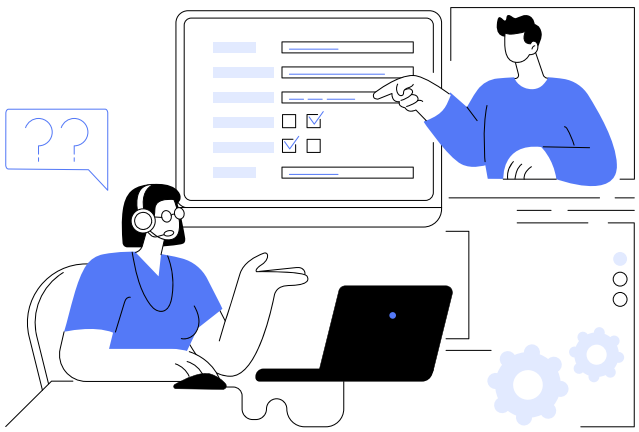
If AI responses repeatedly reference outdated information about working arrangements, the organisation may need to update its careers website and address inconsistencies elsewhere.

If a competitor appears frequently in discussions about apprenticeships, it may be worth investigating the publicly available evidence behind those references.

The purpose of reporting should be to identify opportunities for improvement, rather than simply produce an attractive dashboard.

And that brings us to a distinction that I think is fundamental to the future of recruitment marketing.

We should be measuring AI visibility not as an end in itself, but as part of understanding whether the right candidates can discover the right opportunities.



What about the candidates who actually arrive?

Of course, visibility matters only because of what it may eventually contribute to recruitment.

An employer isn't trying to become famous among large language models. It wants to attract relevant candidates, help them understand its opportunities and encourage those who are suitable to apply.

So we need to connect AI visibility, wherever possible, with the familiar measures of recruitment success.

Some of this can already be done through conventional analytics.

When candidates click links from AI services, those visits may be identifiable through referral information or appropriate tracking parameters. Employers can examine the pages those visitors explore, whether they engage with particular careers content and whether they subsequently begin or complete an application.

That information can help establish how identifiable AI-referred visitors behave compared with people arriving from other channels.

But there are limitations.

Not every AI-influenced journey produces an identifiable referral. A candidate might discover an employer through ChatGPT, then visit its website directly several days later. Another might ask an AI assistant for advice, search Google for the employer's name and arrive through a conventional search result.

In those cases, the original influence may never appear in the website's referral data.

This is why direct candidate research becomes so valuable.

Imagine adding a thoughtfully designed question to an appropriate stage of the recruitment process, asking candidates how they first became aware of the employer and which sources influenced their decision to apply.

Some may identify job boards, social media, colleagues or recruitment advertising. Others might mention ChatGPT, Google AI, Copilot or another AI-powered service.

That information would be self-reported, of course, and it wouldn't provide perfect attribution. People don't always remember every source that influenced their decisions, and their journeys may involve several different channels.

Nevertheless, it could reveal patterns that website analytics alone would miss.

An employer might discover that a growing proportion of graduate applicants use AI assistants to compare organisations, even though relatively few applications are attributed directly to AI referral traffic.

That would be strategically important.

Not because AI deserves all the credit for those applications, but because it would demonstrate that the technology is becoming part of the decision-making process.

And that is exactly the kind of insight recruitment marketers should want to understand.



The danger of chasing an impressive but meaningless number.

Whenever new measurement tools emerge, it's tempting to reduce success to a single figure.

SEO has sometimes suffered from this tendency. Organisations become preoccupied with ranking first for a particular keyword, even when that keyword generates little relevant traffic or contributes relatively little to recruitment outcomes.

AI visibility could easily develop the same problem.

Imagine an agency promising that it can increase an employer's AI mentions by 200%.

That sounds impressive.

But what if most of the additional mentions relate to questions that have little relevance to the organisation's recruitment requirements?

What if the employer appears in responses about industries it doesn't operate in, or is referenced in contexts that don't help potential candidates understand its opportunities?

And what if the agency has achieved the improvement by changing the questions used in its own measurement process?

The number might look wonderful, but it wouldn't tell us much about genuine progress.

The same problem arises when organisations talk about being ranked first in ChatGPT.

Unlike a conventional search engine results page, an AI-generated answer doesn't necessarily provide a stable ordering of employers. The wording, context and structure of the response may change from one interaction to another.

An employer might appear first in one answer, fifth in another and not at all in a third.

There is no single, universal ChatGPT ranking position for an organisation.

And any agency suggesting otherwise should be expected to explain precisely how its measurement works.

A credible approach needs to establish a consistent set of relevant questions, use repeatable testing methods and report results within the limitations of the available evidence.

It should distinguish observable performance from assumptions about why that performance has changed.

And it should remain firmly connected to the employer's actual recruitment objectives.

Because if Northbridge wants to attract more newly qualified nurses, improving visibility within relevant nursing career discussions is likely to be considerably more valuable than increasing generic mentions of its corporate brand.

The quality of visibility matters just as much as the quantity.



What if your competitors are telling a better story?

One of the most commercially interesting opportunities created by AI visibility measurement is the ability to investigate how employers are represented alongside their competitors.

Traditionally, competitor analysis has concentrated on recruitment advertising, website experiences, search rankings and the relative strength of employer-brand communications.

We might examine which organisations appear prominently for particular job searches, how their careers websites compare and what messages they're using to attract talent.

AI-powered discovery introduces another dimension.

Imagine Northbridge discovering that a competing healthcare organisation is consistently referenced in conversations about supporting newly qualified nurses.

Naturally, the recruitment team wants to understand why.

It may be tempting to conclude that the competitor has somehow discovered a secret optimisation technique.

But the explanation could be much more straightforward.

Perhaps the competing organisation has published a detailed guide to its preceptorship programme, including the support available during the first twelve months of employment.

Perhaps it has documented the experiences of several newly qualified nurses, explaining how they developed confidence, gained specialist skills and progressed into permanent roles.

Perhaps relevant professional organisations have published information about its training programmes, providing additional independent sources.

Or perhaps the organisation simply has a stronger established reputation in that particular area.

The important thing is to investigate the evidence rather than assume the answer.

If Northbridge discovers that its own programme is equally compelling but less clearly communicated, that's a genuine opportunity for improvement.

It can develop richer content, explain the programme more effectively and make the relevant information accessible through its careers website.

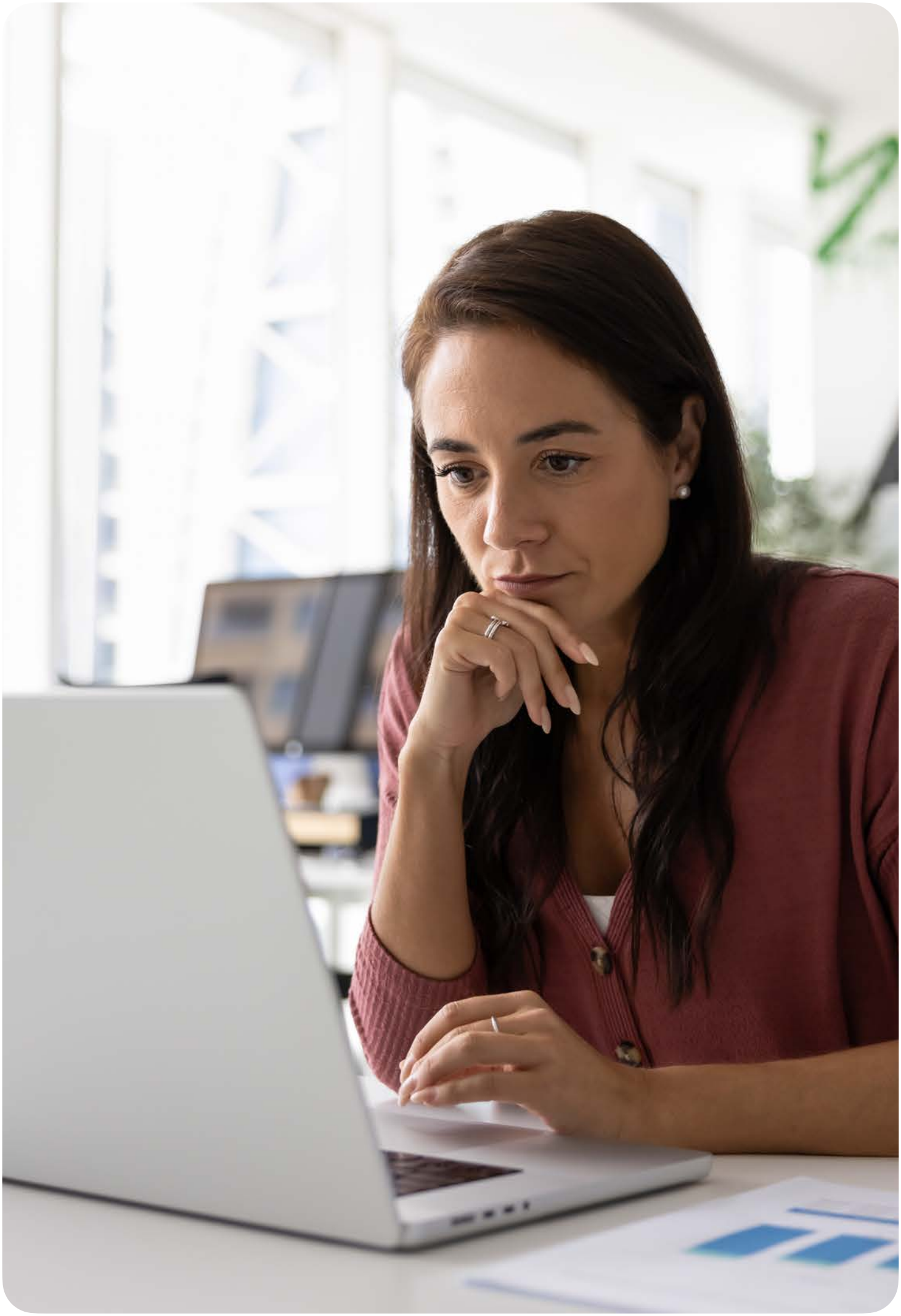
But if the competitor genuinely offers opportunities Northbridge doesn't provide, that is a different kind of finding.

It may indicate a need to reconsider the employer proposition, rather than simply changing the communications.

And that's where competitive AI visibility analysis becomes more than a digital marketing exercise.

It can provide useful intelligence about how organisations are perceived, which attributes appear to distinguish competitors and where an employer might need to strengthen either its communications or the experiences it offers.





The audit that becomes a conversation.

Let's imagine that Northbridge commissions a comprehensive review of its AI visibility.

The initial assessment examines the organisation's careers website, its technical accessibility, the quality of its employer-brand content and how it appears across a defined selection of AI-powered discovery services.

The findings reveal several opportunities.

Some of the organisation's most compelling development programmes are poorly explained online. Important employee stories are available only through video, with limited supporting text. Certain career pathways lack dedicated information pages, while several external sources contain outdated descriptions of working arrangements.

The AI testing also suggests that relevant competitors are more frequently mentioned in particular conversations about professional development and early-career support.

Rather than presenting these findings as evidence that Northbridge is failing, a good consultancy would use them to begin a more constructive discussion.

What makes the organisation genuinely distinctive? Which opportunities are most important to prospective candidates? What information is currently missing, and what evidence could help demonstrate the strength of the employer proposition?

Perhaps the research team needs to speak to recently appointed nurses about why they chose Northbridge.

Perhaps the careers website would benefit from clearer explanations of training programmes, supported by authentic employee experiences.

And perhaps there are opportunities to collaborate with professional bodies, educational institutions or other credible organisations to communicate initiatives that are already delivering meaningful results.

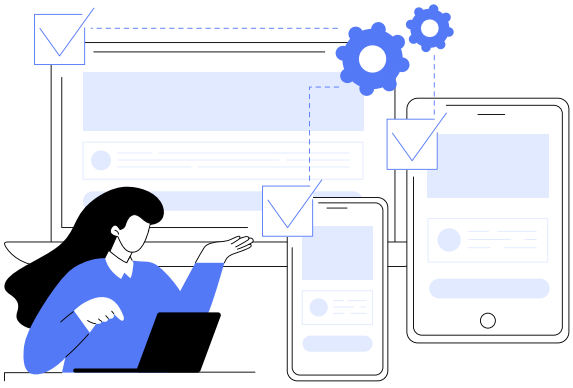
The technical team might also identify improvements to site architecture, vacancy data and search accessibility.

All of these activities could contribute to a more coherent and discoverable employer presence.

The important thing is that the audit doesn't end with a score.

It becomes the starting point for a programme of continuous improvement.

And that is where the commercial relationship between an employer and its recruitment communications agency begins to evolve.



Why this can't be a one-off exercise.

One of the most tempting ways to approach AI optimisation is to treat it like a conventional website improvement project.

Commission an audit, identify the problems, make the changes and declare the website optimised.

Unfortunately, AI-powered discovery doesn't lend itself particularly well to that approach.

The systems themselves are evolving rapidly. New models are introduced, retrieval methods change and the information available to them is constantly being updated.

Candidate behaviour is changing too.

The questions people ask about careers today may not be identical to those they ask in twelve months' time, particularly as new technologies, industries and working arrangements influence employment expectations.

And employers themselves are rarely static.

New development programmes are introduced, benefits change, departments expand, recruitment priorities shift and opportunities emerge in locations that weren't previously part of the organisation's plans.

A careers website that accurately reflects the employer today may gradually become less representative if its content isn't maintained.

The same applies to its wider digital presence.

A professional publication might feature a new employee development initiative. A local college could announce an apprenticeship partnership, or an outdated third-party page might continue circulating information that no longer reflects the organisation's policies.

All of these developments can influence the information available to candidates and, potentially, the sources retrieved by AI-powered search.

This is why AI visibility is better understood as an ongoing process rather than a completed project.

The employer needs to establish a baseline, identify relevant opportunities for improvement and monitor what happens as its content, reputation and the wider discovery environment evolve.

And crucially, it needs someone who understands what the results mean.

A technical specialist may be able to explain why a page isn't being crawled. An SEO professional can investigate search visibility, while a content strategist can assess whether information is sufficiently clear and comprehensive.

But understanding whether the employer is being represented effectively to potential candidates requires knowledge of recruitment, employer branding and the decisions people make when considering their careers.

That's why the most valuable approach brings these disciplines together.



The agency relationship needs to change

For years, many organisations have approached careers website development as a relatively defined project.

The agency receives a brief, conducts discovery, develops the creative proposition, designs and builds the website, completes testing and eventually launches the finished product.

There may be ongoing hosting, technical maintenance and occasional content updates, but the substantial work is generally regarded as complete once the site goes live.

And that model has served many employers perfectly well.

But if the way candidates discover employers is continually evolving, perhaps we need to reconsider what constitutes a finished careers website.

A website can be technically complete while the opportunity to improve its effectiveness remains considerable.

It may be beautifully designed and provide an exceptional user experience, yet fail to answer important questions that prospective candidates are asking through intelligent search systems.

It may have excellent conventional SEO performance while its employer proposition is poorly represented within AI-assisted career discussions.

And it may contain valuable information that becomes less accurate or relevant as the organisation develops.

This creates a strong argument for a more consultative, ongoing relationship.

Rather than viewing the careers website simply as something an agency builds and maintains, we should think of it as a recruitment communications platform whose effectiveness needs to be reviewed and improved continually.

That doesn't mean endless redesigns or unnecessary technical interventions.

It means combining candidate insight, search intelligence, content development and performance measurement to identify where relatively modest improvements could make a meaningful difference.

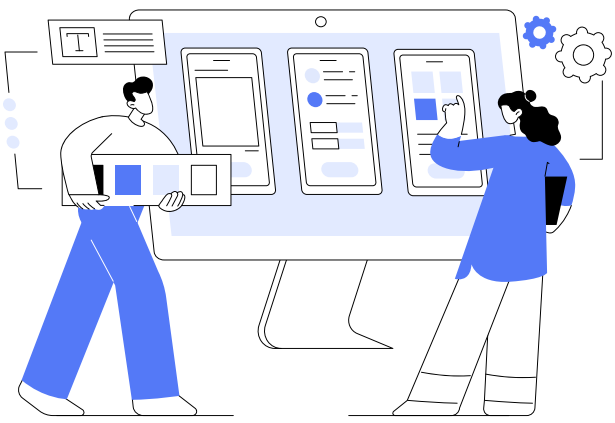
Sometimes the most valuable recommendation might be a new employee story.

Sometimes it could be a clearer explanation of career progression, an improvement to the way apprenticeship opportunities are presented or an update to inaccurate information.

At other times, there may be more substantial technical work required to improve accessibility, structured data or the integration between the careers website and the ATS.

The important thing is that recommendations should be driven by evidence rather than simply by the availability of new technology.

And the success of that relationship should ultimately be judged by whether the employer is becoming better at connecting with relevant candidates.



We need to measure what we couldn't see before.

Let's return to our quarterly recruitment marketing meeting.

The next time the leadership team gathers, the familiar website performance figures are still there.

Organic traffic, search rankings, candidate engagement, applications and conversion rates remain essential parts of the discussion.

But there is now an additional perspective.

The recruitment team has identified a meaningful collection of questions prospective candidates ask when researching employers. It has examined how Northbridge appears across relevant AI-powered services and established an initial understanding of which career opportunities are well represented and which require improvement.

It has also begun reviewing official AI search reporting where available, investigating citation activity and generative search impressions alongside conventional performance measures.

The findings aren't presented as a definitive league table of AI recommendations.

They're presented as evidence of how Northbridge's information is being discovered and represented within a changing search environment.

Perhaps the team discovers that improvements to its nursing development content coincide with more frequent mentions in relevant AI tests. It cannot claim the content changes caused those results, but the pattern is worth monitoring.

Perhaps the organisation begins receiving more identifiable referral traffic from AI services, or candidates increasingly mention conversational AI when asked how they researched potential employers.

Again, none of this proves a direct causal relationship between a particular optimisation activity and an application.

But collectively, the information helps create a more complete picture of the candidate journey.

And when those findings are connected with recruitment outcomes, the organisation can begin making better-informed decisions about where to invest.

That's what effective measurement should achieve.

Not simply tell us whether the numbers have gone up, but help us understand what is happening, why it might matter and what we should do next.



The greatest risk is measuring yesterday's journey

There's something rather ironic about the way recruitment marketing has developed.

We've invested enormous resources in understanding candidate behaviour, improving digital experiences and using data to make recruitment more effective.

Yet the very sophistication of our existing measurement systems can sometimes encourage us to concentrate on the things we're already able to observe.

If website traffic is healthy, applications are increasing and search rankings remain strong, it's tempting to assume that everything is working as intended.

And perhaps it is.

But those measures don't necessarily reveal changes taking place earlier in the candidate journey.

They don't tell us whether an employer is being considered by someone exploring a career change through an AI assistant.

They don't show how a candidate's perception might be influenced by an AI-generated comparison of several organisations.

And they don't reveal how many people never visit a careers website because the employer wasn't included in the information they encountered elsewhere.

We shouldn't exaggerate this risk. Conventional search, job boards, professional networks, recruitment advertising and direct employer discovery will continue to play important roles.

Nor should we assume that AI-assisted search is inherently better or that every candidate wants technology to recommend an employer on their behalf.

But we should recognise that the landscape is becoming more complex.

And as the ways people discover employers evolve, our understanding of recruitment visibility needs to evolve with them.

The most forward-thinking organisations won't abandon the measures they've spent years developing.

They'll expand them.

They'll continue monitoring search rankings, website traffic and application performance while developing a clearer understanding of how their employer brands are represented within AI-powered discovery.

They'll investigate the questions candidates are asking, the information being retrieved and the evidence supporting the recommendations people encounter.

And they'll use those insights to improve the quality, clarity and accessibility of their recruitment communications.

Because the real opportunity isn't simply to become more visible to artificial intelligence.

It's to understand more completely how people discover, evaluate and choose potential employers.

That is an ambition worth pursuing, regardless of which technology eventually becomes the dominant way of searching for information.

And perhaps the most useful question we can ask at our next recruitment marketing review isn't simply whether more people visited our careers website.

It's whether we're doing everything we reasonably can to ensure the right people have the opportunity to discover us in the first place.

After all, you can only measure the candidates who arrive. But you can begin to understand why others never did.

And that's where a new understanding of recruitment visibility begins.

Chapter 7: The New Role of the Recruitment Communications Agency

Why the future belongs to agencies that understand more than websites.



The website is finished. But is the job?

There's a moment in almost every website project when the months of planning, research, design and development finally come together. The testing is complete, the content has been approved, the final technical issues have been resolved and everyone gathers around their screens to see the finished website go live.

It's a satisfying moment.

For the client, there's the excitement of seeing an idea become reality. For the agency, there's the pride of delivering something that represents the organisation in a compelling and engaging way. The design looks wonderful, the navigation works beautifully and the careers experience is a considerable improvement on what existed before.

There may even be a celebratory lunch, a few congratulatory emails and a LinkedIn announcement thanking everyone involved.

And then, quite naturally, attention moves elsewhere.

The agency begins concentrating on its next project, while the employer returns to the everyday pressures of recruitment. Vacancies need advertising, applications need managing, interviews need arranging and hiring managers need supporting.

The careers website has been delivered, and everyone considers the project a success.

But I've often wondered whether that moment, rather than representing the end of the project, should be regarded as the beginning of something much more interesting.

After all, the reason an employer commissioned the website wasn't simply because it wanted a new website.

It wanted to attract talented people. It wanted to communicate what made the organisation an attractive place to work, reach audiences it might previously have struggled to engage and create an experience that encouraged suitable candidates to apply.

The website was the means of achieving those ambitions, not the ambition itself.

And those objectives don't suddenly disappear when the website goes live.

The organisation will continue to evolve. New career opportunities will emerge, the expectations of candidates will change and the technologies people use to discover employers will develop.

A careers website that appears perfectly suited to its purpose on launch day may need to adapt considerably over the following years.

This has always been true to some extent, of course. But the emergence of AI-powered search makes the need for ongoing thinking particularly apparent.

Because if the way people discover potential employers is changing, surely the responsibilities of the agencies helping employers attract those people need to change as well.



We've become very good at building what we're asked to build.

Imagine a large organisation approaching an agency with a brief for a new careers website.

The existing site is several years old, looks dated and doesn't communicate the employer's personality particularly well. The application experience could be improved, the content needs refreshing and the organisation wants to appeal to a broader range of potential candidates.

It's a familiar starting point.

The agency responds with a detailed proposal explaining its approach to discovery, user experience, creative development and technical delivery. It presents examples of previous work, introduces the project team and sets out a programme of activities leading towards launch.

Everything looks sensible.

The client appoints the agency, the project begins and the team concentrates on delivering the agreed requirements.

There's nothing inherently wrong with this arrangement. Clear briefs, defined responsibilities and agreed deliverables are essential to successful projects.

But there is a limitation that can sometimes emerge.

The agency becomes so focused on delivering what the client has asked for that it doesn't spend enough time questioning whether the brief fully addresses what the organisation actually needs.

Perhaps the client wants a more engaging homepage, when its underlying problem is that potential candidates don't understand the breadth of careers available.

Perhaps it wants a better vacancy search, when the real challenge is that people from outside its sector don't recognise their transferable skills as relevant.

Or perhaps it wants to improve its Google rankings, without realising that a growing number of prospective candidates are using AI-assisted research to investigate employers before making their first website visit.

A good agency should certainly deliver an excellent website.

But a great recruitment communications agency should also be willing to challenge the assumptions behind the brief.

It should ask what the organisation is ultimately trying to achieve, investigate the barriers preventing it from achieving those ambitions and recommend solutions based on evidence rather than simply the services it happens to sell.

Sometimes that will mean building a new website.

At other times, the most valuable recommendation might involve candidate research, developing a clearer employer proposition, improving recruitment content or addressing gaps in the information available about particular career opportunities.

And increasingly, it may involve examining how the organisation is being represented within AI-powered search.

That's the difference between fulfilling a brief and working consultatively.

One delivers what has been requested. The other helps determine what will make the greatest difference.



The recruitment problem nobody thought to investigate

Let's imagine an organisation called Calder Engineering, a successful manufacturing business employing around 2,000 people across several sites in the North of England.

Calder has a strong reputation within its industry, produces high-quality engineering products and offers excellent opportunities for apprentices, graduates and experienced professionals.

Unfortunately, it has been struggling to recruit younger engineers.

The recruitment team believes that its careers website is part of the problem. It's several years old, doesn't work particularly well on mobile devices and lacks the engaging content needed to appeal to younger audiences.

So Calder commissions a new website.

The appointed agency develops an impressive creative concept. The design is modern, the photography is exceptional and a series of engaging videos introduces employees working across the business.

The website launches to considerable enthusiasm.

But twelve months later, recruitment remains difficult.

The website is attracting more visitors, and the candidate experience has improved, but applications from younger engineers haven't increased as much as everyone hoped.

What went wrong?

Perhaps nothing went wrong with the website itself.

Perhaps the organisation was addressing only part of the problem.

Imagine that a more comprehensive piece of candidate research had revealed that many young people simply didn't know Calder offered apprenticeships. Others assumed that engineering careers required a university degree, while some believed manufacturing offered limited opportunities for professional progression.

Perhaps school leavers were more familiar with larger consumer brands, and Calder rarely appeared in the places they researched possible careers.

And perhaps when someone asked an AI assistant to recommend engineering employers offering alternatives to university, Calder wasn't consistently included because its apprenticeship information was poorly represented across the wider digital environment.

If those findings had been available at the beginning of the project, the brief might have looked quite different.

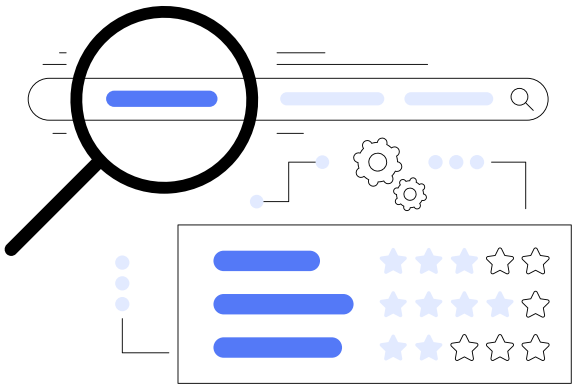
The new careers website would still have been important, but it might have formed part of a broader strategy involving educational partnerships, apprenticeship content, employee storytelling, technical search optimisation and ongoing visibility research.

Instead of concentrating primarily on persuading people once they arrived, the agency would also have helped Calder become more discoverable to audiences who weren't already looking for it.

The distinction is significant.

A website can improve the experience of an existing audience. A more comprehensive recruitment communications strategy can help an employer understand and reach audiences it hasn't yet engaged.

And in an age of conversational AI, that wider perspective becomes increasingly valuable.



The best starting point is often a question, not a design

The best starting point is often a question, not a design

One of the things I've learnt from working in recruitment communications is that the quality of the solution is often determined by the quality of the questions asked at the beginning.

An organisation might believe that its biggest challenge is attracting more applicants, when closer investigation reveals that it is attracting plenty of people but struggling to communicate the requirements of particular roles.

Another might assume that its employer brand lacks appeal, when the real issue is that potential candidates have an outdated understanding of what the organisation does.

And a third might concentrate heavily on improving its careers website, when its most significant opportunity lies in reaching people who have never considered working in its sector.

These problems can look remarkably similar when viewed through conventional recruitment performance reports.

But they require very different solutions.

That's why meaningful candidate research should be an essential part of the agency relationship.

Rather than immediately discussing colours, layouts and website features, we should be exploring how people think about the employer, what they understand about its opportunities and which factors influence their decisions.

We should be asking employees why they joined, investigating what candidates found confusing and understanding why suitable people sometimes decide not to apply.

And increasingly, we should be considering the conversations those individuals might have with AI-powered search services.

What would a graduate ask when trying to identify employers offering meaningful development? How might an experienced professional describe the kind of organisation they want to join? What concerns would a parent returning to employment raise when exploring potential opportunities?

These questions provide insight into candidate needs, but they also help establish the kinds of information an employer should make available.

And sometimes the findings may challenge the organisation's assumptions.

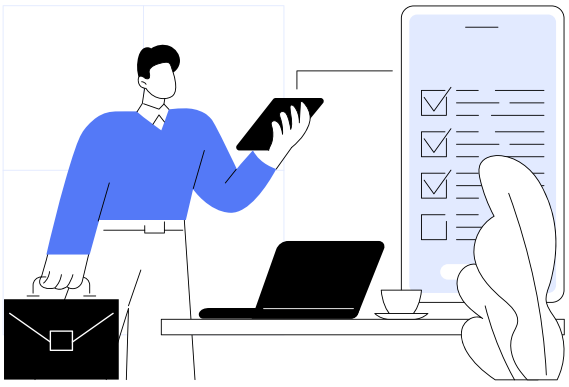
An employer might discover that the attributes it considers most attractive aren't necessarily those its target candidates value most highly.

Perhaps the organisation has invested heavily in communicating its innovative culture, while potential applicants are far more interested in the stability, training and progression opportunities it offers.

Or perhaps its recruitment advertising concentrates on salary and benefits, while the strongest attraction for a particular audience is the opportunity to undertake meaningful work.

A consultative agency should help uncover those distinctions.

Because effective recruitment communications begins with understanding people, not simply producing messages intended to appeal to them.



Recruitment marketing can no longer operate in isolation

There's another challenge that becomes apparent when we consider AI-powered discovery.

The information influencing an employer's visibility doesn't necessarily sit within the careers website, and it certainly doesn't always belong to the recruitment team.

Imagine a candidate asking which organisations offer excellent opportunities for developing digital skills within the public sector.

An AI-powered search service might retrieve information from careers websites, corporate publications, professional bodies, educational institutions and news coverage.

Some of the most useful evidence may have been produced by departments that have very little involvement in recruitment.

A digital transformation team might have published an article about a major technology project. Learning and development could hold information about professional qualifications, while corporate communications may have announced a partnership with a local university.

Elsewhere, individual employees might have shared accounts of their career development through professional networks.

All of this information could help explain what makes the organisation an attractive place to develop a career.

But within many employers, these activities are managed separately.

The recruitment team looks after the careers website and vacancies. Corporate communications manages the wider reputation, marketing is responsible for the main website, and individual departments publish their own information according to their immediate priorities.

From an internal perspective, the arrangements may be perfectly logical.

From the candidate's perspective, however, they're largely irrelevant.

Someone trying to understand whether an employer offers a rewarding career doesn't care which department was responsible for publishing a particular piece of information.

They simply want a clear, credible picture.

And an AI-powered search service retrieving relevant sources won't necessarily distinguish between the organisation's internal responsibilities either.

This creates an important opportunity for agencies that understand the wider recruitment communications landscape.

Rather than treating the careers website as an isolated project, they can help employers bring together the information that shapes their reputation.

They can identify valuable material already being produced elsewhere in the organisation, recognise opportunities for new content and establish a more coherent approach to communicating what the employer offers.

That might involve collaboration between recruitment, HR, marketing, internal communications, corporate affairs and operational teams.

It may not sound particularly glamorous, but the results could be considerable.

Sometimes the information required to strengthen an employer's AI visibility already exists.

It simply hasn't been connected, presented or communicated in a way that makes it easy to discover.



The creative agency and the technical specialist need to

For much of the history of digital marketing, creative development and technical search optimisation have been treated as relatively distinct disciplines.

The creative team concentrates on the ideas, messaging and experience. The developers translate those ideas into a functioning website, while SEO specialists work to ensure that search engines can discover and rank the resulting pages.

There is inevitably some collaboration, but the activities can still become disconnected.

An imaginative creative concept might rely heavily on animation, video or interactive content without sufficient consideration of how the underlying information will be accessed by search systems.

Equally, an SEO-led approach might produce technically well-optimised pages that satisfy particular search requirements but fail to communicate the employer's personality or engage potential candidates.

Neither extreme is particularly desirable.

And AI-powered discovery makes the relationship between these disciplines even more important.

Consider a careers website promoting a major apprenticeship programme.

The creative team may develop an engaging experience featuring employee films, interactive career pathways and beautifully designed explanations of the opportunities available.

The technical team needs to ensure that the essential information remains accessible, that related pages are connected logically and that appropriate structured data is used where relevant.

Meanwhile, the content team should be asking whether the information genuinely answers the questions prospective apprentices are likely to have.

And the search specialists should understand how those pages are being discovered across both conventional and AI-powered search environments.

All of these considerations need to influence one another.

It makes little sense for the creative team to develop an entire website before anyone considers search accessibility, just as it would be counterproductive for technical optimisation to dictate every aspect of the experience at the expense of creativity.

The strongest results come when the disciplines work together from the outset.

And this is where an agency with genuine recruitment communications experience has an advantage.

It understands that a careers website isn't simply an exercise in presenting information attractively.

It's an environment designed to influence one of the most significant decisions people make in their working lives.

That requires both emotional engagement and practical clarity.

It requires creative ideas that inspire, supported by accurate information that helps people make informed decisions.

And increasingly, it requires a technical architecture that allows that information to be discovered beyond the website itself.



The rise of the continuously improving careers website.

Let's return to the familiar website launch.

The new site looks exceptional, everyone is pleased with the result and the project team begins preparing its final report.

Under the traditional model, the agency might then provide hosting, technical maintenance and occasional support with content changes.

The website enters what is effectively a period of managed stability.

But what if we approached the relationship differently?

Imagine that the launch marked the beginning of an ongoing programme of recruitment communications improvement.

During the first few months, the agency monitors how candidates respond to the new experience, examining which content attracts interest and where visitors encounter difficulties.

It reviews conventional search performance, investigates the visibility of important career information and begins establishing a baseline for how the employer appears in relevant AI-generated responses.

As the organisation develops new recruitment priorities, the agency works with the client to understand which audiences need to be reached and what information those audiences are likely to seek.

Perhaps a new apprenticeship programme is being introduced. Rather than simply adding a vacancy when recruitment opens, the agency helps develop a permanent information resource explaining the programme, its qualifications and the opportunities it creates.

Perhaps the employer is expanding into a new region. The agency investigates how candidates in that area search for opportunities, which employers they're likely to consider and whether the organisation's reputation is sufficiently established.

Or perhaps the recruitment team notices that potential applicants are increasingly asking about flexible working. The agency reviews the available content, identifies gaps and helps communicate the organisation's arrangements more clearly.

Alongside these activities, it continues monitoring AI visibility, examining whether important content is being cited or referenced and identifying changes that might warrant further investigation.

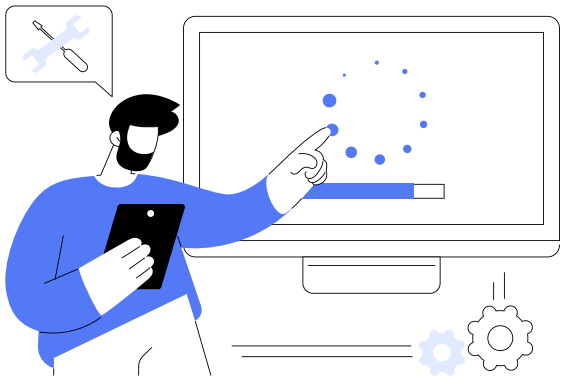
The website itself may require only modest adjustments.

But the recruitment communications strategy continues to evolve.

This is a very different relationship from one in which the agency delivers a product and waits for the client to request changes.

It is based on shared objectives, ongoing insight and a commitment to improving outcomes.

And importantly, it provides a more sustainable response to emerging technology than attempting to optimise a website once and assuming the job is complete.



The opportunity to create a new kind of partnership.

There is, of course, a commercial dimension to this change.

For agencies, an ongoing consultancy relationship offers the opportunity to develop deeper partnerships with clients and provide services that extend beyond initial website development.

But it would be a mistake to regard this simply as a convenient way of generating recurring revenue.

Clients are unlikely to see value in paying an agency indefinitely to produce reports that don't tell them anything useful.

Nor should they be expected to fund endless technical adjustments based on vague claims about improving their position within AI search.

The relationship needs to deliver something meaningful.

An employer should expect its agency to help it understand changes in candidate behaviour, identify genuine weaknesses in its digital communications and recommend practical improvements.

It should expect the agency to distinguish between established evidence and emerging assumptions, particularly in a field where the technology is changing rapidly.

And it should be able to see how the work contributes to clearer employer communications, stronger discoverability, better candidate experiences or more informed recruitment decisions.

That doesn't mean every recommendation will produce an immediate increase in applications.

Recruitment marketing has always involved activities whose influence is difficult to attribute precisely. Employer-brand development, reputation building and candidate research often deliver benefits over time rather than through a single measurable interaction.

But those benefits should still be approached with clear objectives and sensible methods of evaluation.

For example, an agency might identify that an employer's graduate development programmes are poorly represented in AI-assisted research.

It could work with the organisation to develop richer content, document employee experiences and improve the technical accessibility of the relevant pages.

It could then monitor whether the information becomes more discoverable and examine whether candidate awareness, website engagement or identifiable AI referrals change over time.

The findings wouldn't necessarily establish a direct causal relationship between every activity and every result.

But they would provide a more informed basis for future decisions.

That is what makes an ongoing consultancy valuable.

It helps an employer adapt intelligently rather than react impulsively to every new technological development.



When the agency needs to challenge the client.

A genuinely consultative relationship also requires something that isn't always comfortable.

The agency needs to be prepared to disagree.

Imagine a client asking its agency to make the organisation appear first whenever someone asks ChatGPT for the best employers in its sector.

It's an understandable ambition, particularly if competitors are beginning to appear in AI-generated recommendations.

But a responsible agency shouldn't promise something it cannot reliably deliver.

AI-generated responses vary according to the systems being used, the questions asked and the information available. There is no single, permanent ranking position that an agency can guarantee across every large language model.

Nor should the objective be to manipulate systems into recommending an employer regardless of whether it is relevant to the candidate's needs.

The more constructive response would be to explain what can realistically be achieved.

The agency can investigate how the organisation currently appears, identify weaknesses in its discoverability and improve the information supporting its employer proposition.

It can strengthen the technical foundations of the careers website, develop content that answers relevant candidate questions and help the employer communicate genuine achievements through appropriate channels.

It can establish repeatable measurements and monitor whether visibility changes over time.

But it cannot guarantee that a particular AI assistant will consistently place the organisation above its competitors.

And that honesty matters.

There will inevitably be providers promising dramatic improvements through supposed proprietary techniques or secret optimisation methods.

Some may deliver useful results, but employers should be wary of claims that can't be explained, measured or independently substantiated.

The role of a trusted agency isn't to tell clients what they want to hear.

It's to help them understand the opportunity, recognise the limitations and make sensible decisions about where to invest.

Sometimes that may even mean advising a client that its current careers website is perfectly capable of supporting the necessary improvements without requiring a complete redesign.

A consultancy that recommends unnecessary work simply because it can generate a larger project fee is unlikely to build the kind of trust that long-term partnerships require.



Why recruitment expertise matters more than ever.

One of the more interesting consequences of AI-powered search is that it may encourage employers to reconsider what expertise they need from the agencies supporting their careers websites.

A technically accomplished web development company can build an excellent website. A specialist SEO agency can improve search visibility, while a creative agency can produce compelling campaigns and engaging digital experiences.

Each discipline has genuine value.

But recruitment communications introduces considerations that extend beyond general digital marketing.

The audience isn't simply deciding whether to buy a product or subscribe to a service.

They're considering their future.

A prospective candidate may be thinking about financial security, family responsibilities, professional identity, personal fulfilment or whether they have the confidence to make a significant career change.

They may be anxious about their qualifications, uncertain about their transferable skills or unfamiliar with the industry they're considering.

And the employer is making its own judgement about whether that individual has the capabilities and potential to succeed.

Connecting those two perspectives requires an understanding of recruitment that goes beyond website development.

Consider the difference between someone searching for a particular vacancy and someone asking an AI assistant whether their experience in retail management could make them suitable for a career in housing.

A general SEO specialist might identify useful search terms and suggest content around career transitions.

A recruitment communications specialist should also understand why the candidate might be uncertain, what assumptions they may hold about the sector and how an employer could demonstrate that transferable skills are genuinely valued.

That insight could influence the entire approach.

Rather than simply producing an article about moving from retail into housing, the agency might recommend employee stories featuring people who've made similar transitions, clearer explanations of the capabilities required for particular roles and content demonstrating how the employer supports new recruits from different backgrounds.

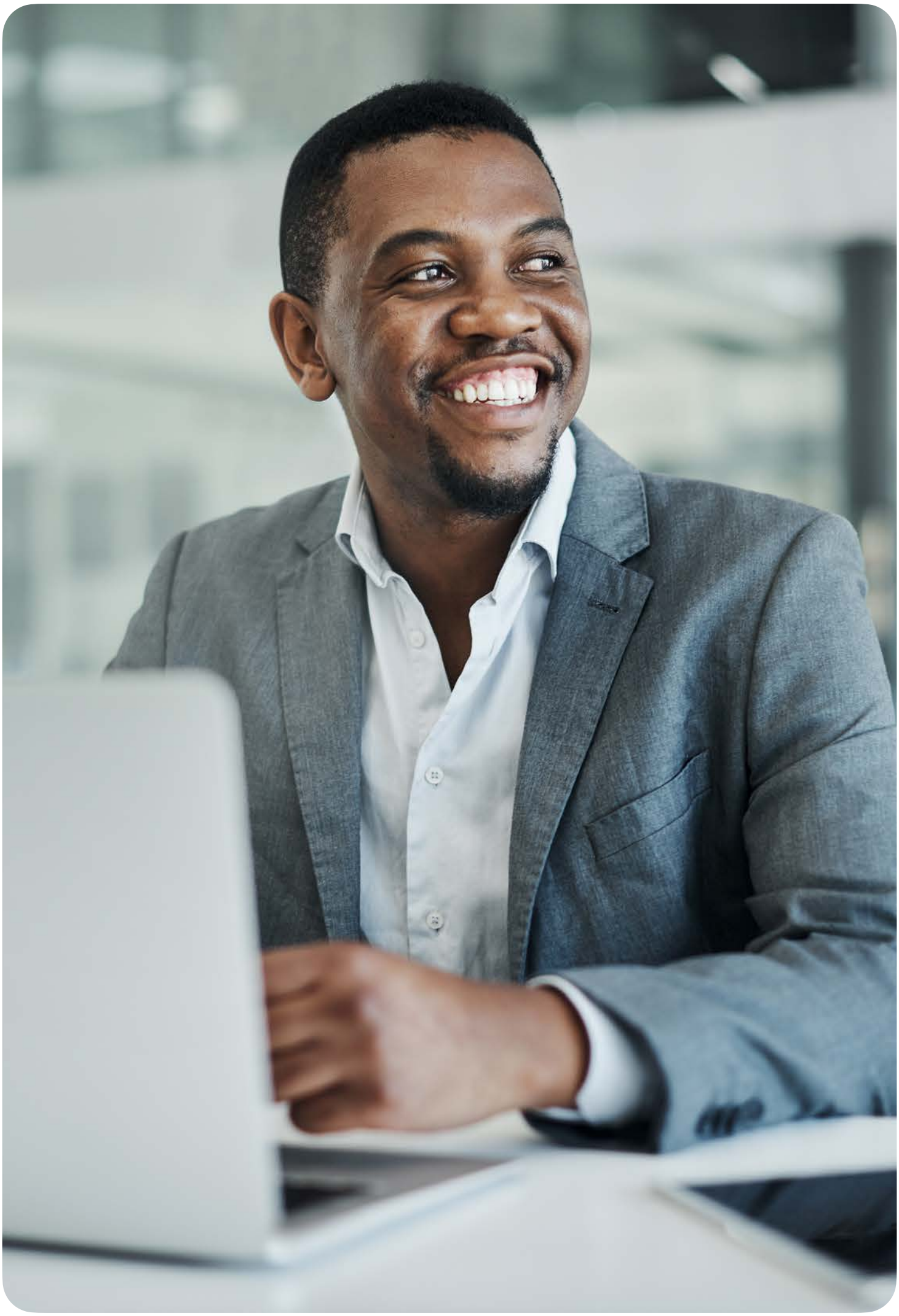
It might also advise the organisation to review whether its job descriptions unintentionally discourage candidates without conventional experience.

Suddenly, the work is about much more than search optimisation.

It's about improving the way an employer attracts and recognises potential.

And that is precisely where recruitment expertise becomes valuable.





AI should make us more curious about people, not less.

There's a certain irony in the emergence of AI optimisation as a discipline within recruitment marketing.

We're discussing how to make information more accessible to machines, yet the most effective approach may depend on developing a deeper understanding of human behaviour.

What do people worry about when considering a new job? What makes them confident enough to apply? Which experiences influence their perceptions of an employer? And what information helps them recognise an opportunity that might otherwise have passed them by?

These are fundamentally human questions.

And they're not always answered through analytics alone.

Sometimes the most useful insight comes from a conversation with someone who recently joined an organisation.

Perhaps they explain that they almost didn't apply because the job title sounded too senior. Perhaps they assumed the employer wouldn't consider someone from another industry, or believed that a particular profession required qualifications they didn't possess.

Maybe they only discovered the opportunity because a friend encouraged them to look beyond their previous experience.

Those stories can reveal weaknesses in recruitment communications that might never appear in a performance dashboard.

And they can help us understand how AI-powered discovery could be used positively.

If people are increasingly comfortable asking technology for advice about unfamiliar careers, employers have an opportunity to provide clearer information about who might be suitable for their roles.

They can explain the skills and capabilities they value, demonstrate how people from different backgrounds have succeeded and help candidates recognise possibilities they might otherwise overlook.

But to do that effectively, agencies need to understand the recruitment process and the people moving through it.

They need to recognise that the objective isn't simply attracting more applicants.

It's attracting people with the potential to succeed, while helping them make informed decisions about whether the opportunity is right for them.

Technology can support that ambition, but it shouldn't determine it.



An agency should be helping clients see around corners.

Perhaps the most valuable quality an employer should look for in a recruitment communications partner is the ability to anticipate change.

Not to predict the future with absolute certainty, because nobody can do that, particularly in a field as rapidly developing as artificial intelligence.

But to recognise emerging behaviours, investigate their potential implications and help clients respond before those changes become urgent problems.

Think about how mobile technology transformed the way people access careers websites.

There was a period when mobile recruitment was treated almost as an additional feature. Employers had desktop websites and, if budgets allowed, might develop a simplified experience for people using phones.

Eventually, it became obvious that mobile couldn't be regarded as an afterthought. For many candidates, it was their primary means of accessing the internet.

The agencies that recognised that shift early were able to help clients develop better experiences before poor mobile performance became a significant barrier.

AI-powered search may represent a similarly important evolution, although its eventual influence on candidate behaviour remains uncertain.

The responsible response isn't to declare that traditional search is finished or that every employer must immediately invest in a completely new website.

It's to recognise that another way of discovering and evaluating employers is developing, and that the organisations paying attention now may be better placed to respond as the technology matures.

That means experimenting, researching and learning.

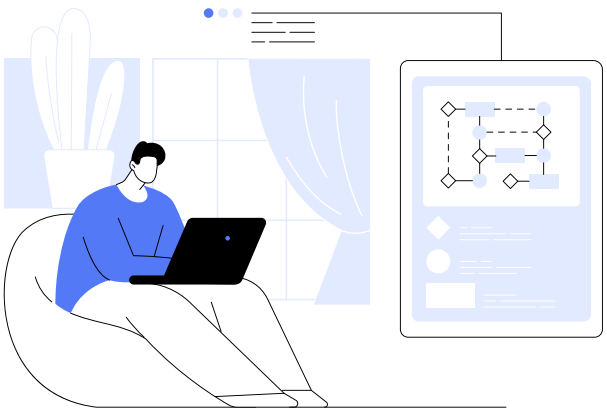
It means investigating how different audiences are using AI, examining how employers appear within relevant conversations and understanding which established SEO and content practices remain effective.

And it means helping clients distinguish between developments that genuinely matter and the considerable noise surrounding artificial intelligence.

A good agency shouldn't simply respond when a client asks what GEO means.

It should already be exploring what GEO might mean for recruitment, what can realistically be measured and how employers can improve their discoverability without compromising the authenticity of their communications.

That is the kind of proactive thinking that turns a supplier into a partner.



The value of bringing everything together.

Let's return to Calder Engineering, the manufacturing organisation that commissioned a beautiful new careers website but continued struggling to attract younger engineers.

Imagine that, rather than treating the website as a completed project, Calder's agency had continued working with the organisation to understand the wider recruitment challenge.

Its research team might have investigated how young people perceive engineering careers and which factors influence their decisions about apprenticeships and university.

The employer-brand specialists could have explored what makes Calder distinctive, speaking to apprentices, engineers and managers to uncover genuine stories about career development.

The creative team could then translate those insights into compelling content, helping people understand the opportunities available and imagine themselves pursuing a career with the organisation.

Meanwhile, the technical specialists could ensure that the careers website presented that information accessibly, connected relevant pages and published vacancy information in formats that search systems could interpret.

And the search team could investigate how Calder appeared in conventional results and AI-powered discovery, identifying opportunities for ongoing improvement.

None of these activities would exist in isolation.

The candidate insight would inform the content. The content would influence the website structure, while performance reporting would identify further questions for the research team to explore.

The organisation's recruitment priorities would guide the entire programme.

And as Calder developed new apprenticeship opportunities, expanded into different regions or introduced additional training pathways, the agency could help ensure that those developments were communicated effectively.

This is what a more integrated recruitment communications relationship could look like.

Not an endless series of unrelated projects, but a coordinated approach built around understanding candidates, communicating the employer's genuine strengths and improving the opportunities for the right people to discover them.

AI optimisation becomes one important part of that relationship, rather than a disconnected technical service.

And the careers website becomes the centre of an evolving ecosystem of recruitment information, not simply a finished design waiting for its next refresh.



The future belongs to agencies prepared to take greater responsibility.

There is a broader principle emerging from all this.

For years, agencies have quite understandably concentrated on the aspects of recruitment communications they could directly influence.

We could create advertising, develop employer propositions, build websites, manage recruitment media and improve candidate experiences.

But we couldn't always control what happened after those activities were delivered.

We couldn't guarantee that someone would apply, that the employer would make a good hiring decision or that every candidate would have an exceptional experience throughout the recruitment process.

Those limitations remain.

Yet being unable to control an outcome isn't the same as having no responsibility to understand it.

A recruitment communications agency should be interested in whether its work is genuinely helping the employer attract and engage suitable people.

It should be curious when an apparently successful campaign produces disappointing applications, or when a beautifully designed careers website struggles to reach particular audiences.

And it should be willing to investigate emerging influences on candidate behaviour, even when those influences sit outside the traditional boundaries of the services it provides.

AI-powered search is one such influence.

It introduces new questions about how employers are discovered, how information is interpreted and how prospective candidates form impressions before visiting a careers website.

We don't yet have all the answers, and it would be irresponsible to pretend otherwise.

But that shouldn't prevent agencies from helping clients explore the challenge intelligently.

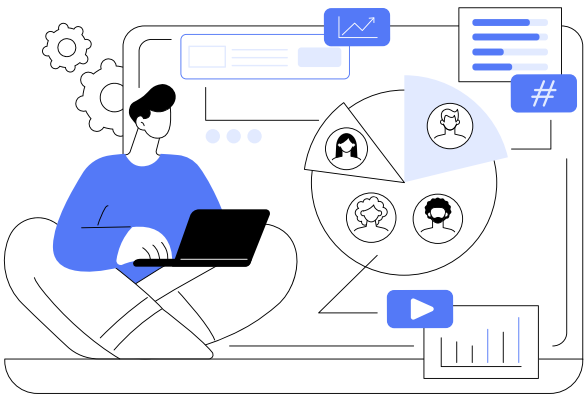
The most valuable agencies will be those that combine creativity with evidence, technical knowledge with recruitment understanding and strategic thinking with a willingness to keep learning.

They'll build excellent careers websites, certainly.

But they'll also investigate whether those websites are being discovered, whether the information they contain genuinely answers candidate questions and whether the employer's wider digital presence supports the reputation it wants to establish.

And they'll recognise that success isn't necessarily achieved by delivering more work.

Sometimes it's achieved by asking a better question.



Perhaps it's time to redefine what a careers website project actually is.

Imagine the next time an employer approaches an agency and asks for a new careers website.

Instead of beginning by discussing page templates, creative concepts and technical features, the agency begins with a different conversation.

It asks which audiences the organisation wants to attract, what those people currently believe about the employer and what prevents suitable candidates from considering its opportunities.

It investigates how people discover careers in the sector, including the role of conventional search, social media, professional networks, recruitment advertising and AI-assisted research.

It examines the information already available about the employer, both on the careers website and elsewhere, and considers whether that information adequately supports the claims being made about its culture and opportunities.

It reviews the existing website's technical foundations, candidate experience and performance.

And it begins identifying what the organisation might need not just today, but over the coming years.

The result may still be a new careers website.

In fact, it may be an exceptional one, combining imaginative creative ideas with accessible design, intuitive navigation and a seamless journey from discovering an opportunity through to applying.

But it will also be built on a more informed understanding of the challenges it needs to address.

Its content will be developed around genuine candidate questions. Its technical architecture will support discoverability, and its information will provide meaningful evidence about the employer's opportunities.

And when the website launches, the agency won't simply hand over the keys and disappear.

It will have established a foundation for ongoing research, measurement and improvement, helping the employer adapt as candidate behaviour and technology continue to evolve.

That's a considerably more valuable proposition than simply promising to build a beautiful website.

And it's one that employers should increasingly expect from the organisations they appoint to support their recruitment communications.



The agency of the future isn't selling websites. It's helping employers be chosen.

For all the technological developments we've explored throughout this white paper, I think it's worth returning to something surprisingly simple.

Recruitment is ultimately about people making decisions about other people.

An employer is looking for someone with the capabilities, potential and motivation to contribute to its organisation. A candidate is looking for somewhere they can use their abilities, develop their career and build a working life that meets their needs.

The purpose of recruitment communications is to help those two parties discover and understand one another.

For many years, careers websites have played a central role in making that connection possible.

They've allowed employers to tell their stories, present opportunities and create engaging experiences for prospective candidates.

That role isn't disappearing.

But the way people arrive at those websites is evolving, and the information influencing their decisions is increasingly being assembled through technologies that employers don't directly control.

This creates a new responsibility for those of us involved in recruitment communications.

We need to think beyond the website visit and understand what happens before it. We need to ensure that the information employers publish is accurate, meaningful and discoverable, while recognising that artificial intelligence is introducing new ways for people to research and compare career opportunities.

And we need to bring together the different disciplines required to make that possible, from candidate research and employer branding through to technical development, content strategy and AI visibility measurement.

Not because every employer needs another fashionable acronym added to its marketing strategy.

But because every employer has an interest in ensuring that suitable candidates can discover the opportunities it provides.

And every candidate deserves the chance to find an organisation where they could genuinely thrive.

The agencies that succeed in this changing environment will be those willing to look beyond the immediate brief, challenge familiar assumptions and take a more active role in helping clients understand how recruitment is evolving.

They won't simply ask whether the website looks impressive, whether its pages rank well or whether application conversion rates have improved.

They'll also want to understand whether the employer is visible to the people it hopes to attract, whether its reputation is supported by credible information and whether its communications are helping candidates make informed decisions.

Because, ultimately, creating a wonderful careers website is only one part of the challenge.

The real ambition is to ensure that when the right person starts thinking about their future, your organisation has the opportunity to become part of it.

And perhaps that is the most compelling reason of all for agencies to rethink the services they provide.

We shouldn't simply be helping employers build websites that people want to visit.

We should be helping them become employers that people want to discover, understand and, ultimately, choose.

The Genius AI Visibility Cycle

Discover

Research candidate questions and measure current visibility.

Structure

Make careers Information accessible, connected and technically sound.

Prove

Support the employer proposition with real evidence.

Amplify

Communicate genuine achievements through relevant trusted channels

Measure

Monitor citations, responses and candidate discovery, then Improve.

Genius
AI Visibility
Continuous improvement



Chapter 8: The Genius Approach — Built to Be Found. Designed to Be Chosen.

Why the future of recruitment communications is about much more than creating exceptional careers websites.



We've always believed there's more to a careers website than the website itself.

Over the years, I've been fortunate enough to work with organisations of almost every shape and size, from some of the UK's largest employers to smaller businesses trying to establish themselves in increasingly competitive recruitment markets.

The industries have varied enormously. Healthcare, education, housing, manufacturing, retail, public services and countless others, each with its own challenges, opportunities and particular ways of approaching recruitment.

But there's one thing that has remained remarkably consistent throughout those years.

Employers don't really want careers websites.

They want talented people to join their organisations.

Of course, they might commission a new website, develop an employer brand or invest in recruitment advertising. They might want a better applicant tracking system, an improved candidate experience or a more effective way of communicating their opportunities.

But those are simply different ways of addressing the same underlying ambition.

They want the right people to discover them, understand what makes their organisation attractive and feel sufficiently confident and enthusiastic to apply.

And when you think about it in those terms, the responsibility of a recruitment communications agency becomes considerably broader than designing and developing a website.

It's about understanding the people an organisation wants to attract, recognising what influences their decisions and creating the conditions that allow meaningful connections to happen.

That's the philosophy that has always informed our thinking at Genius.

We believe that excellent recruitment communications requires a combination of creativity, technology, insight and a genuine understanding of the candidate experience.

A beautifully designed careers website can be enormously powerful, but its value ultimately depends on whether it helps the employer achieve something meaningful.

Does it attract the right audience? Does it communicate the organisation's personality and opportunities effectively? Does it help people recognise whether the employer might be right for them? And does it provide a positive, accessible experience that encourages suitable candidates to take the next step?

Those questions have guided our approach for years.

But the emergence of AI-powered search introduces another question that deserves an equally prominent place in the conversation.

What happens if the right candidate never discovers the website in the first place?



The next generation of careers websites needs to think beyond the visitor.

Imagine two organisations commissioning new careers websites.

Both want to improve their employer brands, attract stronger candidates and create more engaging digital experiences.

The first takes a relatively conventional approach. It appoints an agency, develops an attractive creative concept, commissions some excellent photography and builds a website that works beautifully across desktop and mobile devices.

The new site is technically sound, accessible and supported by established SEO practices.

It's a very good piece of work.

The second organisation starts with a slightly different conversation.

Before discussing design, it wants to understand how its prospective candidates discover employers.

It investigates the questions people ask when considering careers in its sector, the assumptions they hold about different organisations and the factors influencing their decisions.

It looks at traditional search behaviour, but also considers how candidates might use AI assistants to explore unfamiliar opportunities, compare employers and investigate their reputations.

And it examines whether the information currently available about the organisation is sufficiently clear, credible and accessible to contribute to those conversations.

The findings begin to shape the project.

The employer discovers that many potential candidates are unfamiliar with the breadth of careers available. It also finds that several important development programmes are poorly explained online, despite being among the organisation's greatest strengths.

Its research reveals that people considering a career change are particularly interested in transferable skills, while graduates want more detailed information about structured development and progression.

These insights influence the structure of the new website, the content being developed and the way career opportunities are presented.

The resulting website may be just as visually impressive as the first.

But it has been conceived with a wider purpose.

It's designed not only to engage people who already know the employer, but also to make the organisation's opportunities easier to discover and understand through the various services candidates use to research their futures.

And when the website launches, the work doesn't simply stop.

The organisation continues monitoring how it appears across relevant discovery channels, identifying opportunities to improve its content and responding as candidate expectations evolve.

There's no guarantee that the second organisation will appear more frequently in every AI-generated recommendation, or that its investment will immediately produce more applications.

But it has approached the challenge more comprehensively.

And that difference is central to the way we believe careers websites should be developed.

Because a website shouldn't simply be somewhere people arrive.

It should be part of a wider strategy that helps them discover why the organisation might be worth considering in the first place.

The Genius approach begins with understanding people.

One of the risks associated with the growing enthusiasm for AI optimisation is that organisations begin with the technology rather than the audience.

They ask how to improve their visibility within ChatGPT, how to appear in Google's AI-generated answers or whether there's a particular technical technique that will persuade large language models to recommend them.

Those questions are understandable.

But I would argue that they're not the best place to start.

Before we can improve how an employer is represented within AI-assisted search, we need to understand what prospective candidates are actually trying to discover.

And that requires research.

Imagine a university seeking to attract talented academics and professional services staff. Its careers website may already perform well for people actively searching for jobs within higher education.

But what about professionals working in commercial organisations who might be interested in applying their expertise within a university environment?

They may never have considered higher education as a potential employer.

Someone working in digital marketing, finance, estates management or technology might assume that university careers are primarily concerned with teaching and academic research.

Yet those same individuals could find genuinely rewarding opportunities within the sector.

How might they discover them?

Perhaps by asking an AI assistant which organisations offer stable careers, interesting professional challenges and the opportunity to contribute to education and research.

That is a very different starting point from searching for "university jobs".

And if the university wants to be relevant to those conversations, it needs to understand the questions potential candidates are asking and the information they would find useful.

At Genius, this is where research and candidate insight become particularly valuable.

Through CXLabs, our research and insight capability, we can investigate the perceptions, motivations and behaviours that influence how people evaluate employers.

We can explore why particular audiences might consider an organisation, what prevents others from doing so and which information gaps could be affecting its attractiveness.

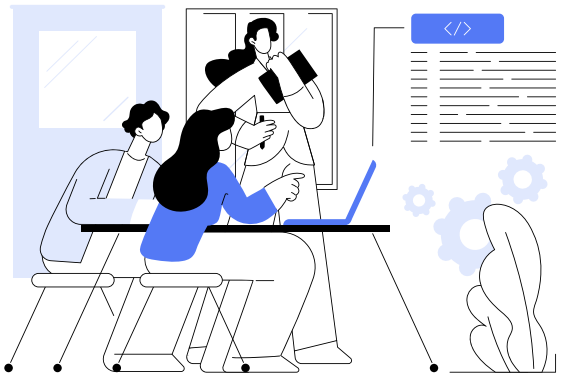
That insight can then inform the employer-brand strategy, careers website architecture and content development.

Rather than simply asking which keywords an organisation wants to rank for, we can ask what its prospective candidates genuinely want to know.

And the answers may be surprisingly revealing.

Sometimes the most important opportunity isn't to improve an existing webpage.

It's to create information that nobody previously thought to publish.



Building an employer brand that can be understood, not simply admired.

Building an employer brand that can be understood, not simply admired

For years, we've argued that employer branding is fundamentally about reputation.

It isn't simply a collection of attractive messages or a carefully designed visual identity. It's the understanding people develop of what an organisation is like to work for, informed by its culture, opportunities and the experiences of those who work there.

A strong employer value proposition should reflect something genuine.

And it should be communicated in a way that helps people recognise what makes the organisation distinctive.

The emergence of AI-assisted search makes that principle even more important.

Imagine an employer whose careers website proudly explains that it offers excellent development opportunities.

That's encouraging, but it tells a prospective candidate relatively little.

What kinds of development? For whom? Under what circumstances? And what evidence is there that employees genuinely benefit?

At Genius, we'd want to explore those questions rather than simply find a more imaginative way of expressing the original claim.

Perhaps the organisation has an exceptional leadership programme. Perhaps it supports professional qualifications, encourages internal mobility or offers apprenticeships that allow people to build careers without following a traditional academic route.

Perhaps its employees have remarkable stories about the opportunities they've been given.

Those are the things worth communicating.

We can develop engaging content that brings those experiences to life, using thoughtful storytelling, authentic employee voices and creative presentation.

But we can also make sure the underlying information is clearly explained and accessible, allowing both candidates and automated discovery systems to understand what the organisation actually offers.

That combination matters.

A technically perfect webpage containing generic employer-brand statements is unlikely to be particularly useful to someone seeking detailed career advice.

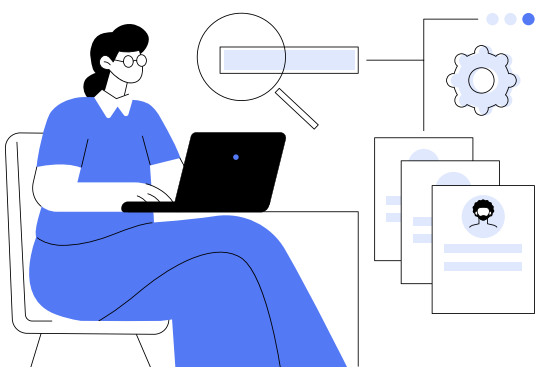
Equally, an extraordinary employee story presented entirely through an inaccessible format may be difficult for some visitors and search systems to interpret.

The opportunity lies in bringing creativity and substance together.

We want employers to tell stories that people remember, but we also want those stories to provide meaningful evidence about the experiences and opportunities available.

Because when someone asks an AI assistant to recommend employers offering particular qualities, there needs to be more than a collection of attractive promises for the system to discover.

There needs to be something worth talking about.



Designing for people, developing for discoverability.

One of the things I feel particularly strongly about is that AI optimisation must never come at the expense of the candidate experience.

We've spent years encouraging employers to move away from careers websites that are essentially administrative interfaces and towards experiences that engage, inform and inspire prospective applicants.

The last thing we should do is reverse that progress by creating websites designed primarily to satisfy search systems.

A careers website should still make someone feel something.

It should communicate the personality of the organisation, introduce the people who work there and help candidates imagine what becoming part of the employer might mean for their future.

It should be intuitive, inclusive and accessible, with an application experience that respects people's time and effort.

But behind that human experience, we can establish the technical foundations that make information easier to discover.

At Genius, this means considering search accessibility, information architecture and structured data as integral parts of website development rather than optional activities carried out after launch.

It means making sure important careers information is available in accessible text, that related content is connected logically and that vacancy data is accurate and consistently presented.

It also means recognising that the careers website and the technology managing vacancies need to work together.

An applicant tracking system shouldn't be treated simply as an administrative platform sitting somewhere behind the website.

It is often the original source of the vacancies, descriptions, locations and application information that candidates and search systems encounter.

The relationship between those systems therefore matters enormously.

Our iQ recruitment platform forms part of our wider understanding of the candidate journey, helping us connect the operational realities of recruitment with the digital experiences through which people discover and apply for opportunities.

That experience gives us a valuable perspective when designing careers websites and their integrations.

We understand the importance of clear vacancy information, accessible application journeys and reliable data flowing between systems.

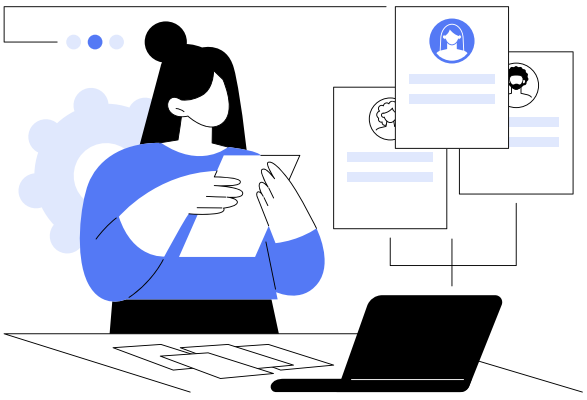
And we recognise that the decisions made about those processes can influence both the candidate experience and the discoverability of opportunities.

The ambition is straightforward.

To create careers websites that people love using, supported by information structures that make their content as accessible and understandable as possible to relevant search and AI systems.

Not because we want to build websites for machines.

But because we want the people using those machines to have a better chance of discovering the right employer.



Introducing Genius AI Visibility.

As we've explored throughout this white paper, preparing an employer for AI-assisted discovery isn't something that can be achieved through a single technical adjustment.

It requires an understanding of candidate behaviour, an assessment of the employer's current digital presence and a coordinated approach to improving the information available about its opportunities.

That's why we believe it makes sense to bring these activities together within a structured consultancy service.

We call the proposed approach **Genius AI Visibility.**

The principle is simple: help employers understand how they're represented within AI-powered discovery, identify where their information could be improved and develop an ongoing strategy for strengthening their visibility.

But the work begins with something more important than technology.

It begins with understanding what the employer wants to achieve.

Imagine a regional NHS Trust that is struggling to attract experienced nurses into specialist departments.

Its immediate recruitment objective might be to increase applications, but that doesn't necessarily tell us why suitable candidates aren't considering the opportunities.

Perhaps experienced nurses don't know about the specialist roles available. Perhaps the Trust's development programmes are poorly communicated, or candidates have misconceptions about the working environment.

And perhaps those same information gaps mean the Trust is rarely mentioned when people use AI to explore specialist nursing careers.

A meaningful AI visibility assessment should therefore begin by understanding the recruitment challenge and identifying the audiences whose decisions the organisation wants to influence.

From there, we can investigate the questions those audiences are likely to ask and establish how the employer currently appears across relevant AI-powered search services.

We can examine the information being referenced, compare the organisation's visibility with suitable competitors and identify where inaccurate, incomplete or inaccessible content may be contributing to the problem.

The findings then provide the foundation for improvement.

In some cases, the priority may be technical. Important information might be difficult for search systems to access, or vacancy pages may lack the structure needed to support reliable discovery.

In others, the greatest opportunity will lie in content.

The employer may need clearer explanations of its career pathways, richer information about professional development or more authentic employee stories demonstrating the experiences it offers.

There may also be opportunities to strengthen the organisation's wider digital presence through credible external communications, professional partnerships and relevant publications.

And once those improvements have been made, the process continues through monitoring and review.

Not because we can guarantee that an AI assistant will recommend the employer, but because we can establish a more informed understanding of how its visibility is developing and where further improvements might be worthwhile.

In effect, Genius AI Visibility brings together five connected activities: discovering how an employer is currently represented, structuring its information for accessibility, proving its claims through credible evidence, amplifying genuine achievements and measuring how its visibility develops.

Each activity supports the others.

And together they create a much more coherent approach than treating GEO or LLMO as isolated technical services.

The audit should be the beginning of the conversation, not the end.

Imagine that the NHS Trust commissions an initial AI visibility review.

The resulting assessment reveals that the organisation is frequently mentioned when people ask about nursing vacancies in its region, but rarely appears in discussions about specialist career development.

Several competing Trusts are referenced more prominently in those conversations, often through information about structured training programmes and employee experiences.

The analysis also identifies that the Trust's own development information is spread across several websites, with some material available only through downloadable documents.

Those findings are useful, but they aren't a solution in themselves.

A report that simply tells an employer it has poor AI visibility doesn't necessarily move it any closer to improving recruitment.

The real value comes from understanding what should happen next.

Perhaps the Trust needs to create a coherent specialist nursing careers section, bringing together information about opportunities, qualifications, training and progression.

Perhaps it could interview experienced nurses who've developed their careers within the organisation, helping prospective candidates understand what those opportunities look like in practice.

Perhaps existing material could be reorganised and made more accessible, allowing important information to be discovered without relying on lengthy documents.

And perhaps there are relevant professional bodies, universities or educational partnerships through which the Trust's genuine achievements could be communicated more effectively.

These are practical activities with value beyond AI optimisation.

They would improve the information available to candidates, strengthen the employer's communications and potentially help people make better-informed decisions about their careers.

That is the outcome we'd want an AI visibility assessment to produce.

Not simply a diagnosis, but a meaningful programme of improvement.

And importantly, that programme should remain proportionate to the employer's needs.

Some organisations may already have excellent technical foundations and require relatively modest content improvements.

Others may need more substantial work to address fragmented websites, outdated information or poor integration between their recruitment systems.

There shouldn't be a single prescribed solution for every employer.

The recommendations should emerge from the evidence.



Why we believe AI visibility needs to be monitored continuously.

One of the central arguments of this white paper has been that AI-powered discovery is not a static environment.

The technology is evolving, the information available to search systems changes and the questions people ask will continue to develop.

For employers, that means visibility cannot sensibly be treated as something that's optimised once and then forgotten.

Imagine our NHS Trust improves its specialist nursing content and begins seeing encouraging changes in how it appears within relevant AI-assisted searches.

The new material is clear, informative and supported by authentic employee experiences.

But six months later, the Trust introduces another development programme. A competitor launches an extensive recruitment campaign, while an external publication features several organisations recognised for clinical training.

The information environment has changed.

At the same time, the AI services themselves may have introduced new capabilities, altered their retrieval methods or changed the way they present sources.

The Trust's visibility could therefore develop in ways that aren't entirely explained by changes to its own website.

That's why repeatable monitoring matters.

By establishing a baseline and reviewing a consistent set of relevant candidate questions over time, we can begin to understand how the organisation's representation is changing.

We can examine citation activity and generative search performance where official reporting is available, investigate new opportunities and identify information that may need updating.

But we should also remain realistic about what the data can tell us.

There is no universal league table of employer rankings across large language models, and AI-generated recommendations can vary considerably according to the question, context and system involved.

We cannot promise that an organisation will always appear first, or that a particular improvement will automatically result in additional applications.

What we can do is provide a structured, transparent approach to investigating visibility and making informed decisions about how to strengthen it.

And as AI-assisted discovery becomes a more established part of candidate behaviour, that understanding may become increasingly valuable.



We're not simply interested in being mentioned. We're interested in being relevant.

There's an important distinction between visibility and relevance that sits at the heart of the Genius approach.

Imagine a large manufacturing organisation appearing frequently within AI-generated discussions about employment opportunities.

On the surface, that sounds encouraging.

But closer investigation reveals that many of those mentions relate to generic questions about the manufacturing industry, rather than the particular career opportunities the organisation wants to promote.

Meanwhile, the employer is struggling to attract engineering apprentices and experienced maintenance specialists.

If we concentrated solely on increasing the number of mentions, we might be celebrating a result that does relatively little to address the recruitment challenge.

That's why AI visibility needs to be connected to meaningful candidate audiences.

The objective isn't simply to make the employer appear more often.

It's to improve the likelihood that relevant information about the employer is discovered when people ask questions related to the opportunities it genuinely offers.

For the manufacturing organisation, that could mean focusing on how it appears in conversations about engineering apprenticeships, technical career progression or opportunities for experienced specialists.

For a university, it might involve academic careers, professional services opportunities and research environments.

For a housing association, the relevant questions could concern social purpose, customer services careers, community impact or opportunities to move into the sector from different professional backgrounds.

Every employer has its own priorities.

And those priorities should determine what we research, what we measure and where we recommend investment.

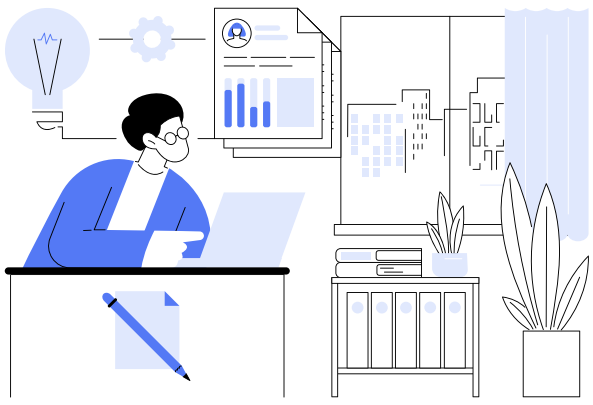
This is another reason why recruitment expertise matters.

An agency that understands the candidate journey can recognise the difference between generic brand exposure and visibility that might genuinely influence someone's decision to consider an opportunity.

And it can help employers concentrate their resources accordingly.

Because being recommended to the wrong audience isn't necessarily a success.

Being discovered by someone for whom the opportunity could be genuinely life-changing is much closer to what recruitment should be about.



The relationship shouldn't end when the website launches.

Let's return to where we began.

An employer commissions a careers website, the agency produces an exceptional design and the new experience launches to considerable enthusiasm.

Traditionally, that might have represented the successful completion of the project.

At Genius, we believe there's a compelling argument for viewing it differently.

The launch establishes the platform.

What happens afterwards determines how effectively that platform continues to support the employer's recruitment ambitions.

As the organisation grows, its opportunities change. New programmes are introduced, different audiences become important and the expectations of candidates evolve.

The careers website needs to respond.

But so does the wider communications strategy.

Perhaps an employer needs to develop a stronger reputation among graduates. Perhaps it's struggling to attract candidates from outside its traditional industry, or wants to communicate its commitment to supporting people returning to work.

These challenges require more than routine website maintenance.

They require insight, creative thinking and a willingness to examine how the organisation is perceived and discovered.

And increasingly, they require an understanding of how AI-powered search is influencing the information candidates encounter.

This is where an ongoing consultancy relationship becomes valuable.

Rather than simply responding to requests for website changes, we can help clients identify emerging opportunities, investigate new candidate behaviours and develop communications that remain relevant as the recruitment landscape changes.

We can review the effectiveness of existing content, recommend new employee stories, improve the accessibility of important information and monitor how the organisation appears within AI-powered discovery.

At the same time, we can continue developing the candidate experience, ensuring that people who reach the careers website find an engaging, inclusive and intuitive environment.

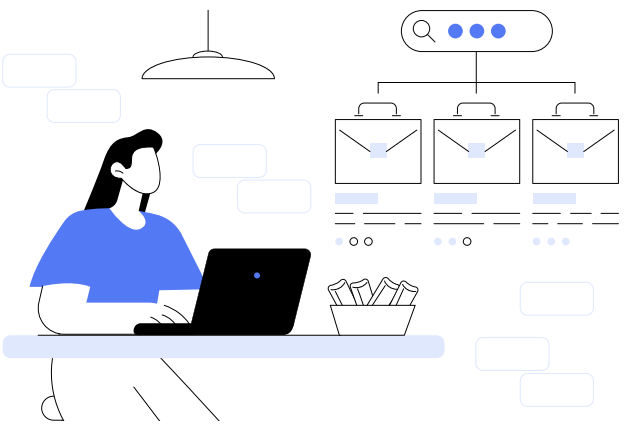
The technical and creative work should support one another.

And the relationship should remain focused on the employer's underlying recruitment objectives.

Because there's little point making an organisation more discoverable if the experience that follows fails to engage the people who arrive.

Equally, there's limited value in creating an extraordinary candidate experience if suitable people never have the opportunity to discover it.

The ambition is to address both.



The candidate journey doesn't begin and end with a website.

There's another reason why we believe this joined-up approach matters.

The careers website is an important part of recruitment, but it isn't the entire candidate journey.

Someone might discover an employer through AI-assisted research, explore its opportunities through the careers website and eventually decide to apply.

But their impression of the organisation will continue to develop as they move through the recruitment process.

The ease of applying, the quality of communication, the fairness of assessment and the experience of receiving feedback can all influence how candidates feel about the employer.

Those experiences contribute to reputation.

And that reputation may eventually influence what other people say about the organisation, which in turn can become part of the wider information environment through which future candidates investigate employers.

This is why recruitment communications, recruitment technology and candidate experience should work together.

At Genius, our approach to careers websites sits within a wider understanding of how candidates move from initial interest towards joining an organisation.

Our iQ recruitment platform supports the application and assessment stages, while AndMe extends the experience into onboarding, helping employers maintain meaningful engagement after an appointment has been made.

These technologies address different parts of the journey, but the underlying philosophy is consistent.

We want the experience to work for the candidate, not simply make recruitment administration easier for the employer.

And when we think about AI-assisted discovery, that philosophy becomes particularly relevant.

An employer's reputation isn't determined solely by what it publishes on its careers website.

It's also influenced by the experiences people have when interacting with the organisation.

An applicant who encounters a frustrating process, receives little communication or feels unfairly treated may develop a negative impression, regardless of how engaging the original website appeared.

Conversely, a candidate who receives clear information, feels respected and experiences a thoughtful recruitment process may leave with a positive impression, even if they aren't ultimately appointed.

Those experiences matter.

They influence whether people recommend an organisation to others, whether unsuccessful candidates consider applying again and how the employer's reputation develops over time.

AI visibility cannot compensate for a poor candidate experience.

But when an organisation communicates its opportunities effectively and delivers an experience consistent with its promises, it creates a stronger foundation for genuine employer reputation.

And that's why we see AI optimisation as part of a much broader approach to recruitment communications, rather than a standalone technical product.

The opportunity to get ahead, without pretending we can predict the future.

Whenever a new technology begins changing established behaviour, there's a period of uncertainty.

Some organisations move quickly, others adopt a more cautious approach, and many simply wait to see whether the developments will have a meaningful impact on their business.

There are sensible reasons for each response.

AI-powered search is evolving rapidly, and the relative importance of different services, technologies and optimisation practices will undoubtedly change.

Some techniques currently attracting attention may prove less useful than their advocates suggest. New reporting capabilities will emerge, and our understanding of candidate behaviour will become more sophisticated.

It would be irresponsible to suggest that we already know exactly how the recruitment landscape will look five years from now.

But uncertainty doesn't mean we should do nothing.

In fact, many of the improvements associated with preparing careers websites for AI-assisted discovery are valuable regardless of how the technology develops.

Clearer information about career opportunities helps candidates make better decisions.

Accessible content benefits people with different needs and abilities.

Well-structured vacancy data improves the reliability of recruitment information.

Authentic employee stories provide meaningful evidence about the organisation's culture and opportunities.

And a coherent digital presence makes it easier for people to understand what an employer offers, regardless of where they begin their research.

These aren't speculative investments in an uncertain future.

They're sensible improvements to recruitment communications that also provide a stronger foundation for emerging discovery technologies.

That's why we believe employers should begin considering AI visibility now, without becoming distracted by exaggerated claims or promises of guaranteed rankings.

The opportunity is to establish a more informed understanding of how the organisation appears across intelligent search services, identify genuine weaknesses and begin making improvements that deliver value across multiple channels.

And as the technology develops, that foundation can evolve with it.



A beautiful website is only the beginning.

Imagine, one final time, that you're responsible for attracting people to an organisation with genuinely exceptional career opportunities.

You've invested in developing your people, creating a supportive working environment and building a culture you're proud of.

You offer meaningful work, encourage professional development and recognise the importance of helping employees achieve their ambitions.

You have a great story to tell.

And you've commissioned an equally impressive careers website to tell it.

The design is engaging, the employee stories are authentic and the opportunities are presented clearly. The application journey is straightforward, accessible and respectful of the candidate's time.

Everything is in place.

Now imagine someone sitting at home, perhaps considering a career change, perhaps looking for their first job or perhaps wondering whether there's an employer somewhere that might offer the kind of working life they're searching for.

They open an AI assistant and begin describing what matters to them.

They don't necessarily know your organisation's name.

They may never have considered your industry.

And they certainly don't know how much time, energy and investment you've put into creating an exceptional place to work.

But what they're describing sounds remarkably like the opportunities you offer.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if the information available about your organisation helped that person discover you?

Not because a clever technical trick had persuaded an algorithm to promote your name.

Not because you'd somehow paid to appear ahead of more suitable employers.

But because the qualities that make your organisation genuinely attractive had been communicated clearly enough, supported by credible evidence and made sufficiently discoverable to be considered relevant to their needs.

That, for me, is the opportunity AI-powered search presents.

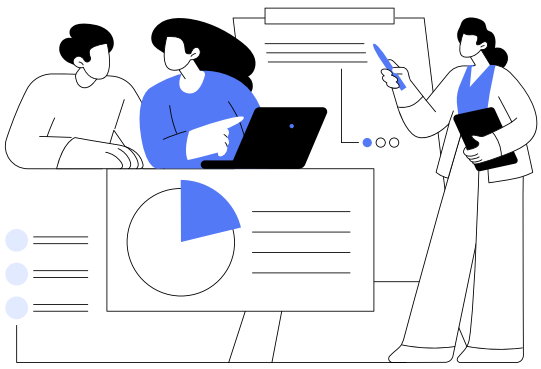
And it's the reason we believe the future of careers website development needs to extend beyond design, functionality and conventional search optimisation.

At Genius, our ambition is to help employers become more discoverable, more understandable and more compelling to the people they're trying to attract.

We want to create exceptional digital experiences, certainly, but we also want to understand what happens before people arrive and how the information available about an employer influences whether they decide to visit at all.

We want to combine candidate research with creative storytelling, employer-brand strategy with technical expertise and website development with ongoing visibility measurement.

And we want to help our clients adapt as the ways people discover career opportunities continue to evolve.



A beautiful website is only the beginning.

Because ultimately, a careers website should be much more than a beautiful destination.

It should be a living, evolving source of information that helps people recognise the opportunities an organisation can offer.

It should communicate an employer's reputation with authenticity, provide meaningful answers to the questions candidates ask and create a compelling experience when those candidates decide to investigate further.

And it should be supported by a partner who understands that recruitment success isn't simply about attracting visitors or generating applications.

It's about helping the right people find the right opportunities.

That is what we mean when we talk about Genius AI Visibility.

And it is the thinking behind a simple ambition that we believe will become increasingly important to employers in the years ahead.

Built to be found. Designed to be chosen.



A final thought: The candidate you haven't met yet.

We began this white paper with the story of a newly qualified nurse sitting at home in Yorkshire, asking an AI assistant to recommend an employer that could offer the right environment in which to begin their career.

Somewhere, there was an NHS Trust that might have been perfect for them.

An organisation with exceptional development opportunities, supportive colleagues and the kind of working environment in which that nurse could have built a rewarding career.

But the Trust wasn't mentioned.

Not because it was necessarily a poorer employer than those that appeared in the response, but perhaps because the information available about its opportunities wasn't sufficiently accessible, detailed or relevant to the question being asked.

Throughout this paper, we've explored how that situation could arise, why conventional SEO remains important and what employers can do to strengthen their visibility within AI-powered discovery.

We've considered how candidates increasingly use conversational technology to explore their futures, why employer-brand claims need credible evidence and how careers websites can be developed to make that information easier to discover.

We've also examined the limitations of AI search, the difficulties involved in measuring visibility and the importance of treating optimisation as an ongoing process rather than a one-off technical exercise.

And we've seen why recruitment communications agencies need to take a broader, more consultative approach to helping employers attract talent.

But I think there's one final point worth making.

For all the excitement surrounding artificial intelligence, large language models and the future of search, the fundamental purpose of recruitment hasn't changed.

People are still looking for opportunities that allow them to build worthwhile careers, develop their abilities and create better lives for themselves and their families.

Employers are still looking for people with the potential to contribute, grow and succeed within their organisations.

And recruitment communications still has the responsibility of helping those people find one another.

The technology connecting them may be changing, but the importance of making the right connection remains exactly the same.

Perhaps AI-powered discovery will eventually become the dominant way people research potential employers. Perhaps it will continue developing alongside conventional search, job boards, social media and professional networks.

The precise balance is impossible to predict.

But one thing seems increasingly clear.

Employers can no longer assume that the first meaningful interaction someone has with their organisation will take place on their careers website.

It may begin with a conversation in which the employer isn't even mentioned by name.

And if that conversation is helping someone decide where to build their future, surely we should be doing everything we reasonably can to ensure that relevant, accurate and credible information about our opportunities is available.

Because somewhere, right now, there's someone who could be an extraordinary addition to your organisation.

They have the skills, the potential and the ambition you're looking for.

They might thrive within your culture, benefit enormously from your development opportunities and make a meaningful contribution to your success.

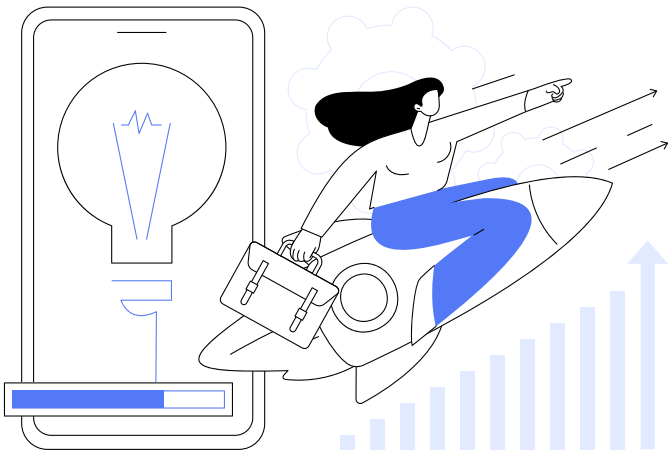
They simply haven't discovered you yet.

And perhaps the next question they ask an AI assistant could change that.

The future of recruitment isn't simply about being found when someone searches for your name. It's about being discovered when someone describes the kind of employer they're looking for.

That's the future we're preparing for.

And that's the future Genius wants to help its clients embrace.



How Genius can help

Genius is a creative communications, recruitment technology and insight partner specialising in the complete candidate and employee journey.

Through **Genius Intel,** we help organisations understand audiences, candidate behaviour, recruitment performance, employer reputation and journey friction.

Through our **employer-brand and creative work**, we discover and articulate credible employer stories that people can recognise and believe.

We create careers websites and recruitment experiences that combine concept, storytelling, accessibility, clear UX and measurable performance.

Through **iQ, our skills-first enterprise ATS**, we help organisations move beyond CV assumptions and towards evidence of capability, judgement and job readiness.

Through **AndMe**, we transform onboarding from administration into a personal experience that begins after the offer and builds confidence, connection and belonging before day one.

We do not believe Talent transformation starts with a product.

It starts with understanding where you are.

Then we help you get somewhere **better**.



Genius

Great communication connects people to purpose.

References & Further Reading

Beyond the Search draws on published research, industry studies and technical guidance from leading organisations examining the development of artificial intelligence, search behaviour and recruitment. The following sources provide further information and supporting evidence for the themes explored throughout this paper.

01. Ofcom — Online Nation 2025, December 2025

Research into UK internet behaviour, including Google's search usage, the growth of ChatGPT and the increasing presence of AI-generated answers in search results.

Ofcom — Online Nation 2025

02. Department for Science, Innovation and Technology — Public Engagement Survey 2025/26

UK Government research examining public adoption of generative AI, differences between age groups, attitudes towards the technology and concerns about the accuracy of AI-generated information.

DSIT — Public Engagement Survey

03. Pew Research Center — Do People Click on Links in Google AI Summaries?

An observational study examining the relationship between AI-generated search summaries, click-through behaviour and the characteristics of searches that trigger AI responses.

Pew Research Center — AI Search Study

04. Google — Alphabet Investor Presentation June 2026

Google's published figures on worldwide adoption of AI Overviews and AI Mode, illustrating the increasing scale of AI-assisted search.

Google — Alphabet Investor Presentation

05. LinkedIn — Global Talent Research 2026 January 2026

Research exploring jobseeker confidence, recruitment challenges and the growing use of artificial intelligence throughout the job search and hiring process.

LinkedIn — Talent Research 2026

06. iHire — The State of Online Recruiting 2025

Research examining recruitment technology and jobseeker behaviour, including the adoption of generative AI for job searching and application preparation.

iHire — State of Online Recruiting

07. Google Search Central — AI Features and Your Website

Official guidance explaining how websites can support visibility within Google AI Overviews and AI Mode, including established SEO principles, crawlability and content accessibility.

Google — AI Search Guidance

08. Google Search Central — Creating Helpful, Reliable, People-First Content

Guidance on producing original, credible and valuable website content, including Google's principles of experience, expertise, authoritativeness and trustworthiness.

Google — People-First Content

09. Google Search Central — JobPosting Structured Data

Technical guidance on making vacancy information understandable to search engines through structured data, including job descriptions, locations, employment details and application information.

Google — JobPosting Guidance

10. OpenAI — Publishers and Developers FAQ

Guidance on website discovery within ChatGPT search, including crawler accessibility and the role of OAI-SearchBot.

OpenAI — Publisher Guidance

11. Microsoft — Introducing AI Performance in Bing Webmaster Tools February 2026

An introduction to measuring how websites are cited within AI-generated answers, including citation activity, referenced pages and visibility trends.

Microsoft — AI Performance

12. Google Search Central — Generative AI Performance Reports
June 2026

Official guidance introducing dedicated reporting for website impressions within Google's generative AI search experiences.

Google — Generative AI Performance Reporting

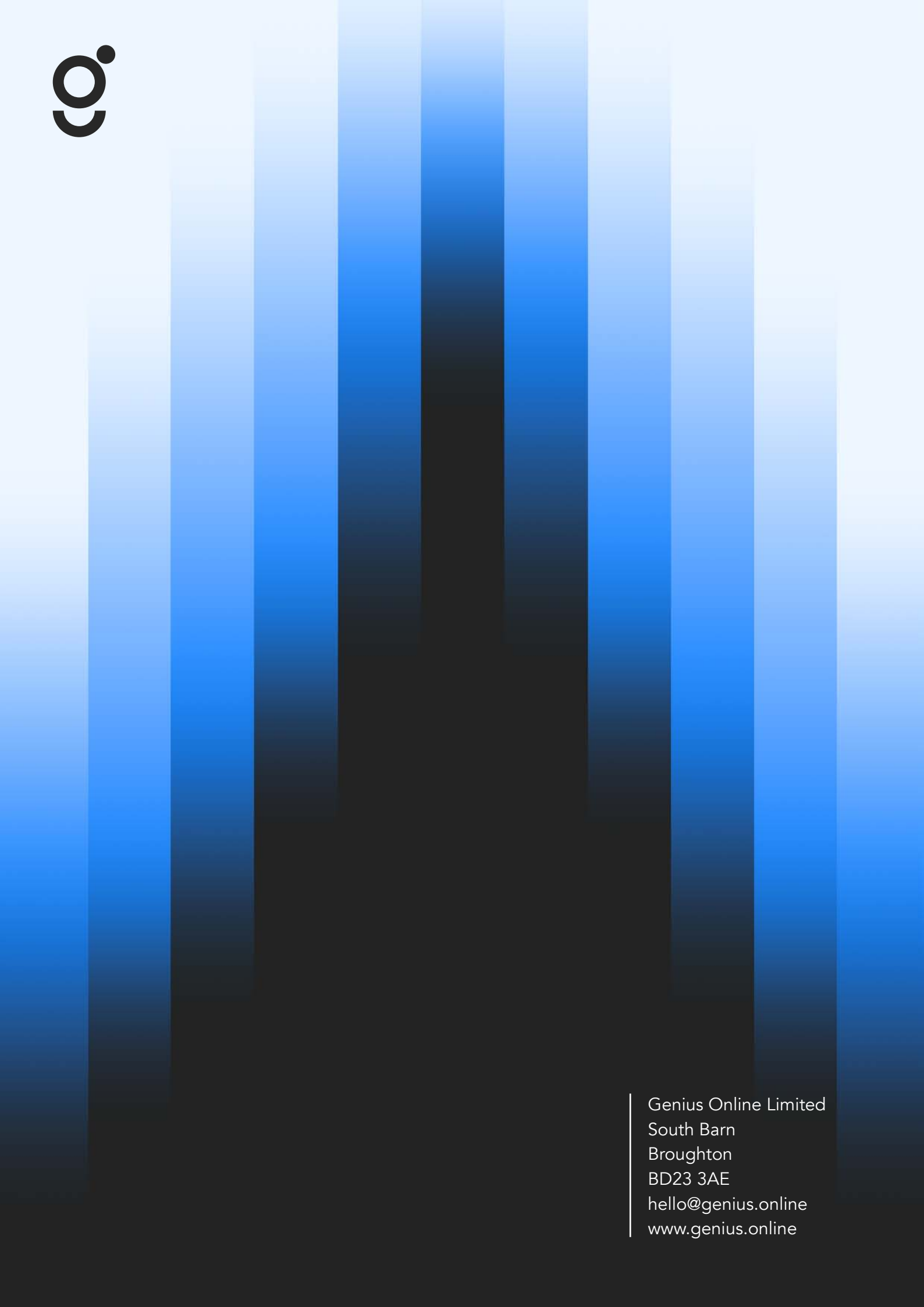
Research note

Statistics and findings are drawn from the publications identified above and reflect the methodologies, populations and reporting periods used by their respective authors. General AI adoption and search behaviour statistics should not be interpreted as direct measures of AI usage within recruitment.

The illustrative employer scenarios and the AI visibility frameworks presented throughout this paper are conceptual examples developed by Genius to explore the implications for recruitment communications. They do not represent measured employer rankings or guaranteed search outcomes.

Sources accessed November 2026.





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