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FOR IN-HOUSE MARKETERS

# SEO in the AI Era: GEO and AEO and Classic SEO, Oh My!

*How search is transforming and what your team needs to do about it.*

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## ABOUT ME

### 25+ Years

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Enterprise SEO, Paid Search & Analytics

### AI Forward

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Agentic AI, Custom GPTs & Workflow Automation

### In-house

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Cooking.com, Experian, Soccer Nation, Sold.com, Realtytrac, Dignity Health, Get My Auto and MeridianLink

### Top Clients

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Meineke Car care Center, Maaco, California Closets, Umami Burger, Pendleton, Wilco Farmstore, Public Storage, Google and Microsoft

THE RUMOR MILL SAYS...

"SEO IS DEAD"

***Wrong. SEO is transforming.***

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Classic SEO signals still matter:  
technical health, crawlability,  
links, and authority

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AI engines consume and cite  
content differently than  
traditional search crawlers

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Brands that master all three  
disciplines will dominate every  
search surface

THE BIG SHIFT

# FROM KEYWORDS TO CONVERSATIONS

## THEN —Keyword Search

*"wide feet running shoes men"*

- Fragmented keywords
- Match on exact terms
- 10 blue links to navigate
- User does the research work

## NOW— AI Conversation

*"I'm overweight, trying to lose weight. I have wide feet and need low-impact running shoes that work best for me. I'm a size 10, but sometimes wear 10.5. Help me find the right shoes."*

- Natural language intent
- Context and nuance understood
- AI summarizes one best answer
- Brand cited — or invisible

*The buyer has changed. Has your store?*

# HOW SEARCH BEHAVIOR HAS FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGED

*The query that used to take 4 words now takes 40. And that changes everything.*

## CLASSIC SEO

### Keyword-Based Search

- The user knows the product category.
- They fragment their need into a short keyword string.
- Google matches those words to pages.

#### YOU OPTIMIZED FOR:

- Exact-match keywords in titles and headers
- Keyword density and synonyms
- Meta descriptions with target phrases



## MODERN SEO + AEO + GEO

### Conversational Search

- The user describes their situation, pain point, and context.
- AI interprets intent, body type, fitness goal, and size.
- The answer engine recommends — and may cite your brand.

#### NOW

#### YOU OPTIMIZED FOR:

- Questions, pain points, and use-case scenarios
- Structured answers that AI engines can extract
- Brand authority so AI recommends you by name

# WHAT THIS SHIFT MEANS FOR YOUR CONTENT

*Modern search queries are sentences, not strings. Your content must answer them like a knowledgeable human would.*

**Classic**

**Write for keywords**



**Modern**

**Write for situations**

*Example: Instead of targeting 'running shoes wide feet,' create a guide: 'Best Running Shoes for Overweight Beginners With Wide Feet'*

**Classic**

**Optimize sales pages**



**Modern**

**Answer the questions buyers ask before buying**

*Example: 'Will these shoes reduce knee pain during jogging?' is a real question your content should answer directly.*

**Classic**

**Chase rankings**



**Modern**

**Earn citations and featured answers**

*Example: When ChatGPT answers 'best low-impact shoes for weight loss,' it cites sources. You need to be that source.*

# THE MODERN SEARCH TRIFECTA

*Three disciplines. One unified strategy. You need all three working together.*

## The Foundation

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### CLASSIC SEO

On-page optimization, technical health, authority building, and backlink acquisition. Still drives the majority of organic visibility. Non-negotiable.

## The Conversation Layer

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### AEO

Answer Engine Optimization. Structuring content so AI assistants, featured snippets, and voice search surfaces your exact answer to a direct question.

## The AI Citation Layer

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### GEO

Generative Engine Optimization. Building topical authority and entity trust so AI engines like ChatGPT, Gemini, and Perplexity cite and recommend your brand.

# CLASSIC SEO — THE FOUNDATION YOU CANNOT SKIP

*All engines crawl the web just like Google does. Without a solid technical foundation, none of the modern stuff works.*

## Technical SEO

Core Web Vitals, crawlability, indexation, mobile-first, structured data. LLMs crawl your site — if they can't read it, they won't cite it.

## Intent-Based Keywords

Shift from single keywords to intent clusters and topic groups. Cover the full decision journey: awareness, consideration, and decision queries.

## Authority & Backlinks

Links from trusted publications signal authority to both Google and AI training datasets. Digital PR earns both.

## On-Page Optimization

Clear H1s, semantic heading structure, descriptive image alt text, strong meta data. The basics are still the basics.

## E-E-A-T Content Signals

Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, Trust. Google and AI engines both reward demonstrable first-hand expertise over generic content.

## Entity & Local SEO

Establish your brand as a recognized entity: Google Business Profile, consistent NAP, and mentions that reinforce who you are and where you operate.

# AEO: ANSWER ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

*Get into the answer, not just the results page*

## What Is AEO?

**AEO** is the practice of structuring your content so that AI assistants, voice search tools (Siri, Alexa, Google Assistant), and featured snippet engines can surface your answer directly in response to a user's question — without requiring a click.

## The Real-World Example:

When someone asks Siri 'what are the best low-impact shoes for someone trying to lose weight?' — whose content does Siri read aloud? That's the AEO game.

## FAQ and Q&A Content Blocks

Format pages with direct question-answer pairs. Anticipate the full range of questions your audience asks — not just the ones about your product, but about their problem.

## Structured Schema Markup

Implement FAQPage, HowTo, Speakable, Product, and LocalBusiness schema. This tells AI engines what your content answers and how to extract it.

## People Also Ask Domination

Research PAA boxes in Google for your core topics. Build content that directly answers those questions. Owning PAA results trains AI answer patterns toward your content.

## Conversational Keyword Targeting

Target long-tail, natural-language queries: 'What is the best...' / 'How do I...' / 'Can I...' / 'What happens if...' Map these to real buyer pain points.

## The 40-60 Word Answer Rule

Lead every key page section with a concise, direct answer of 40-60 words. Then expand with depth. AI engines prefer to extract tight, quotable answers first.

## Pain-Point Content Mapping

Map every buyer pain point to a content asset. 'My feet hurt after running' leads to a shoe recommendation. That content journey is what AEO captures.

# GEO: GENERATIVE ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

*Become the source AI engines trust enough to cite by name.*

## What Is GEO?

GEO is the discipline of building your brand's digital presence so that large language models — ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, Claude, Copilot — recognize your brand as a credible, citable authority on relevant topics.

Unlike traditional SEO (ranking for clicks) or AEO (answering questions), GEO is about becoming the recommended brand inside an AI-generated answer.

## AI Engines That Cite Brands:

ChatGPT

Gemini

Perplexity

Claude

Copilot

## Entity SEO and Knowledge Graph

Build a recognized entity: Wikipedia page, Wikidata entry, Google Knowledge Panel, and consistent brand data across structured web sources. AI models are trained on these.

## Digital PR and Earned Media

Get your brand mentioned in publications that AI training datasets include: industry journals, major news outlets, authority blogs. Each mention reinforces your entity presence.

## Unlinked Brand Mentions

Even mentions without a hyperlink train AI models on your brand's association with topics. Monitor and cultivate brand mentions across podcasts, forums, and publications.

## Original Research and Data

Publish proprietary studies, surveys, and data reports. AI engines are trained to cite sources that produce original data others reference. A single compelling study earns citations for years.

## Topical Authority Building

Dominate a topic cluster with 15-20 interlinked, deeply informative pieces. AI engines assess breadth and depth of coverage when selecting which brands to cite.

## llms.txt Implementation

A new emerging standard: create an llms.txt file (similar to robots.txt) that guides AI crawlers on how to access and understand your content. Early movers gain a structural advantage.

# SEO IS NOT DEAD. IT EVOLVED.

*What changed. What stayed. What you need to add.*

## THEN (Classic SEO Only)

- Rank on Page 1 of Google
- Target keywords and keyphrases
- Build links for PageRank
- Optimize for search crawlers
- Content for human readers



## NOW (SEO + AEO + GEO)

- **Rank on Page 1 of Google**Target keywords and keyphrases
- **Target intents, pain points, scenarios, and questions**
- **Build authority for Google, AI trust signals, and citations**
- **Optimize for both crawlers and large language models**
- **Content that humans love and AI engines can extract and cite**

# YOUR UNIFIED ACTION PLAN

*Do not choose between SEO, AEO, and GEO. Build all three pillars in parallel.*

## 01

### Audit Your Technical Foundation

- Core Web Vitals and site speed
- Crawlability and XML sitemap health
- Fix 404s, redirect chains, and canonical issues
- Add llms.txt for AI crawler guidance

## 02

### Build AEO Content Layers

- Map all buyer pain points to content gaps
- Add FAQ sections and direct answer blocks
- Implement FAQPage and HowTo schema
- Target People Also Ask query clusters

## 03

### Launch GEO Authority Building

- Audit your entity presence (Knowledge Panel)
- Launch a digital PR and earned media program
- Produce one original data study this quarter
- Monitor AI engine brand mentions and citations

# THE FUTURE OF SEARCH BELONGS

## TO THOSE WHO DO ALL THREE.

Classic SEO keeps the lights on. AEO gets you into the conversation. GEO makes you the recommended brand. The marketer who runs all three wins every surface — Google, voice, and AI.

**Classic SEO**

**AEO**

**GEO**

Questions? Let's talk strategy.

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## THE TAKEAWAY

# "GOOGLE REWARDED THE BEST PAGE.

# AI REWARDS THE BEST ANSWER."



## 3 THINGS TO DO THIS WEEK

- 01** Ask ChatGPT & Perplexity to recommend a product in your category — see who shows up
- 02** Check your top product page — does it answer questions or just list specs?
- 03** Pull your last 30 days of reviews — are you actively generating and responding to them?