



Visibility Over Rankings

■ Your Strategic Guide to LLM & AIO Optimization

Is AI disrupting your search visibility? Or is it opening new doors?

AI-driven search and generative results are still evolving, but populating these results aligns with the foundations of high-performing SEO strategies. Here's what we know, what we don't know (yet), and how OuterBox is responding to this rapidly changing environment.



It's Time for Answers

Search is no longer just about ranking—**it's about answers.**

Large Language Models (LLMs) like ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Perplexity, and Google's AI Mode are changing how people discover information online.

Digital marketing isn't what it used to be. It's now:

- **Visibility** over rankings
- **Context** over content
- **Conversations** over lists of blue links

Which begs the question: How do you optimize your online presence so users can still find you?

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There's no one-size-fits-all approach—that's never really been the case. Be skeptical of anyone claiming to have AI all figured out. SERPs, LLMs, and AI Overviews (AIO) are dynamic, changing daily, and yield varied results for users.

But there's good news: LLM Optimization (LLMO) and Generative Engine Optimization (GEO) share the same principles as traditional SEO.

However you feel about acronyms, your SEO team should already be adapting. Here's what we've learned so far, what remains uncertain, and how we're helping our clients get ahead.



"For over 20 years, we've maintained the edge we create for clients amid constant industry change. We're energized to tackle the challenges ahead and committed to being trusted advisors for our clients as we win together."

— **Jeff Allen, OuterBox CEO**



Defining the New Acronyms

LLMO? GEO? Yes, they're buzzy acronyms, but they aren't replacing traditional SEO. In fact, they're similar strategies, just for different technologies. They all share the same goal—**visibility**. We achieve visibility with content that offers **clarity, structure, and credibility**.

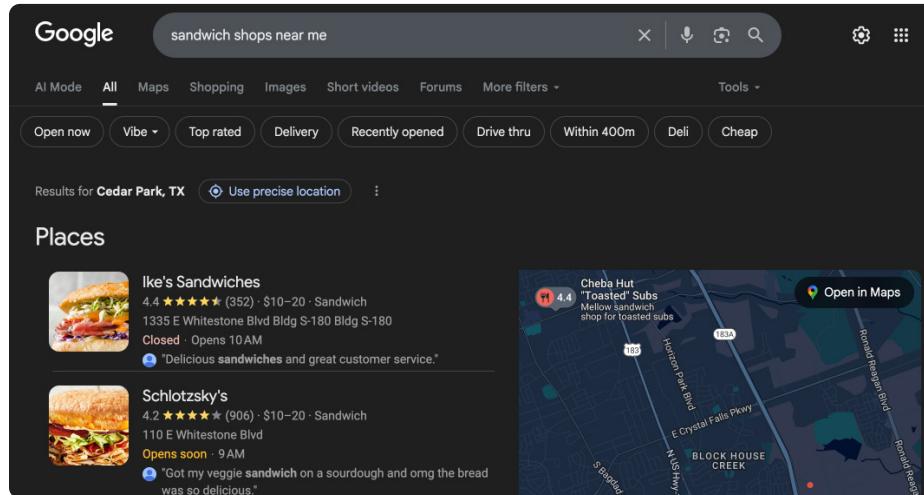
► *New acronyms, old acronyms, and how they share the same goals.*



So why is everyone talking about optimizing for AI in search?

Buyer behavior is increasingly turning to AI for conversational answers, allowing for follow-up questions and making decisions without ever visiting a website (zero-click). Optimizing for AI isn't optional. It's essential for your lead and revenue performance, as **your marketing should meet your audience where they're at.**

BEFORE



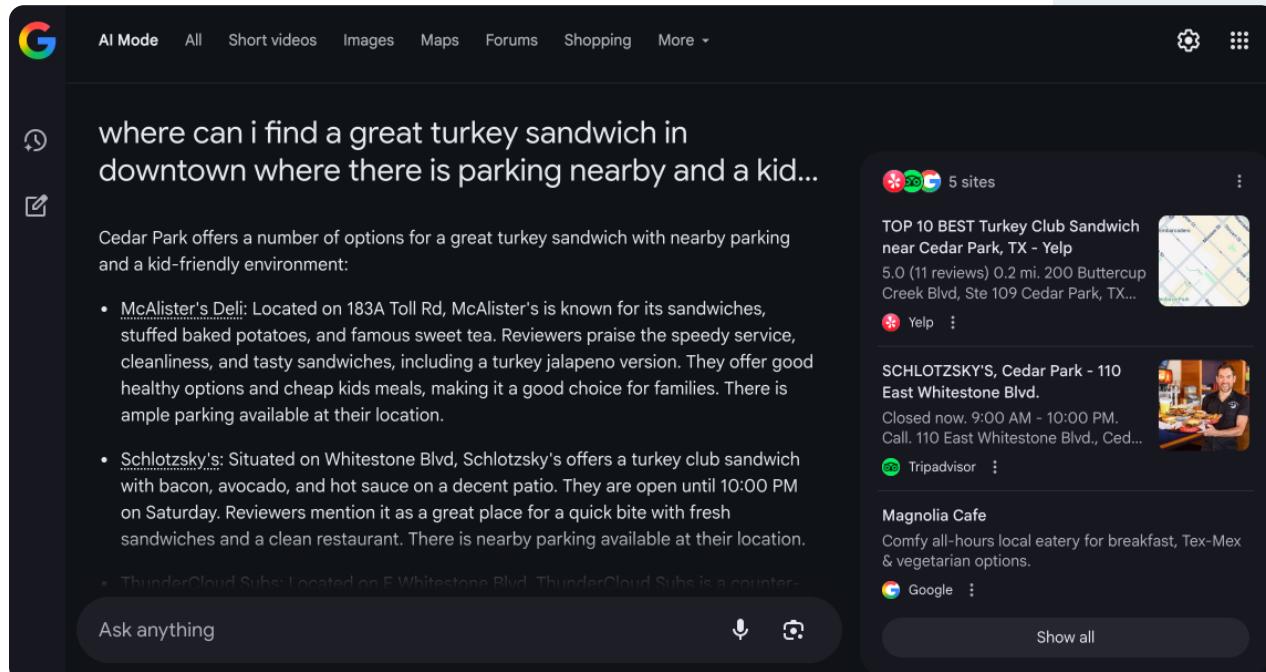
Google search results for "sandwich shops near me" in Cedar Park, TX. The results show two sandwich shops: Ike's Sandwiches and Schlotzsky's, with a map of the area.

Places

- Ike's Sandwiches**
4.4 ★★★★★ (352) · \$10–20 · Sandwich
1335 E Whitestone Blvd Bldg S-180 Bldg S-180
Closed · Opens 10 AM
"Delicious sandwiches and great customer service."
- Schlotzsky's**
4.2 ★★★★★ (906) · \$10–20 · Sandwich
110 E Whitestone Blvd
Opens soon · 9 AM
"Got my veggie sandwich on a sourdough and omg the bread was so delicious."

Map: A map of Cedar Park, TX, showing the locations of Ike's Sandwiches and Schlotzsky's relative to other landmarks like E Crystal Falls Pkwy and Block House Creek.

AFTER



Google search results for a conversational query: "where can i find a great turkey sandwich in downtown where there is parking nearby and a kid...". The results are more detailed and include a sidebar for top turkey sandwich spots.

Search Query: where can i find a great turkey sandwich in downtown where there is parking nearby and a kid...

Result Snippet: Cedar Park offers a number of options for a great turkey sandwich with nearby parking and a kid-friendly environment:

- McAlister's Deli**: Located on 183A Toll Rd, McAlister's is known for its sandwiches, stuffed baked potatoes, and famous sweet tea. Reviewers praise the speedy service, cleanliness, and tasty sandwiches, including a turkey jalapeno version. They offer good healthy options and cheap kids meals, making it a good choice for families. There is ample parking available at their location.
- Schlotzsky's**: Situated on Whitestone Blvd, Schlotzsky's offers a turkey club sandwich with bacon, avocado, and hot sauce on a decent patio. They are open until 10:00 PM on Saturday. Reviewers mention it as a great place for a quick bite with fresh sandwiches and a clean restaurant. There is nearby parking available at their location.
- ThunderCloud Subs**: Located on E Whitestone Blvd, ThunderCloud Subs is a counter-service sandwich shop that offers a variety of subs and salads. They have a kid-friendly menu and offer delivery options.

Sidebar: TOP 10 BEST Turkey Club Sandwich near Cedar Park, TX - Yelp

5 sites

- TOP 10 BEST Turkey Club Sandwich near Cedar Park, TX - Yelp**
5.0 (11 reviews) 0.2 mi. 200 Buttercup Creek Blvd, Ste 109 Cedar Park, TX...
- SCHLOTZSKY'S, Cedar Park** - 110 East Whitestone Blvd.
Closed now. 9:00 AM - 10:00 PM.
Call. 110 East Whitestone Blvd., Ced...
- Magnolia Cafe**
Comfy all-hours local eatery for breakfast, Tex-Mex & vegetarian options.

Users transitioned from simple to more detailed queries, seeking conversational answers with additional options.



"We analyze organic performance to identify opportunities for strategic growth. Our focus is to move beyond our existing SERP presence to intentionally target the search landscapes that will drive the most valuable opportunities for our clients, including LLMs and AIos. By performing a deep dive into the data at the query level, we can make informed decisions about our tactics to directly impact our bottom-line goals, including lead generation and transactions.."

- Jordan Sen
Group Director,
Integrated Strategy

The Impact of AI and LLMs

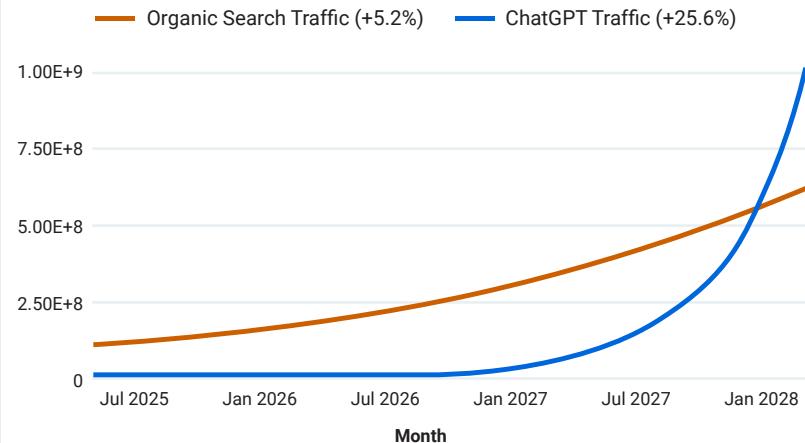
Traditional search remains dominant, but AI is quickly gaining ground. AI platforms (ChatGPT, Perplexity, Claude, etc.) accounted for just [5–6% of desktop search traffic in June 2025](#). However, this doubled from 2–3% last year.

As AI advances, click loss becomes a real concern:

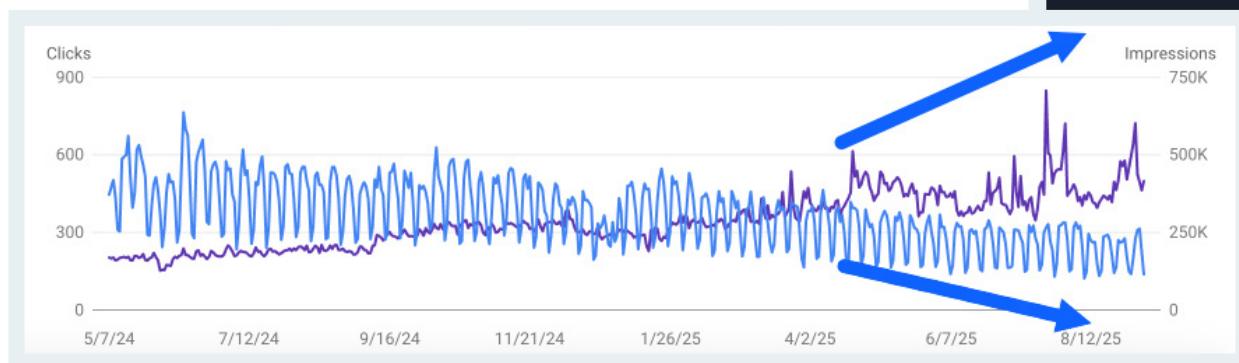
- 60% of searches end in zero clicks
- 80% of users rely on AI summaries for over 40% of their searches
- CTRs from top results have dropped from ~7.3% in March 2024 to ~2.6% in March 2025

It's important to consider Google's AI products. AI Mode (a new tab for AI searches in Google) and AI Overviews have lifted search impressions around 49% year-over-year and [advertising revenue to \\$54.2B in Q2 2025](#). Google is working hard to maintain its search dominance, but now there's a wrench in your data.

Organic Search & ChatGPT Traffic (Predictive)



▲ The predicted rise of ChatGPT traffic in the next few years via [Siege Media](#).



We're in the midst of what many industry analysts call "The Great Decoupling" or "The Crocodile Effect"—a shift where AI-influenced behaviors override traditional SEO signals. What we're decoupling here is impressions from traffic. A duplication occurs when AIO is involved, resulting in two impressions—one for the overview and another for the blue link version of the same result. You get increased impressions, but user engagement declines because users rarely click on both. In fact, thanks to the zero-click effect, many users aren't clicking at all as the AIO provides their answer. This context significantly alters your metrics, and your performance reporting must reflect this.

▲ Example of "The Great Decoupling" or "The Crocodile Effect" in Google Search Console.

AI Overview Trends

AI Overviews are triggered primarily by informational queries, meaning Google uses them when it interprets the user's intent as seeking knowledge rather than making a purchase. For marketers, this shifts opportunities for visibility toward top-funnel content. Content meant to explain versus sell, like guides, explainer videos, glossaries, infographics, industry research, and "what is..." articles. While query volume may remain consistent, the format and behavior of results continue to shift.

Recent data highlights this shift.

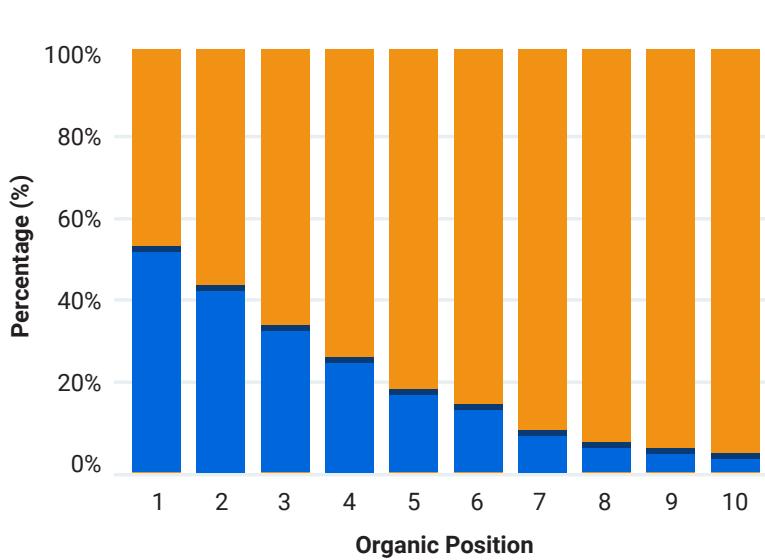
- When an AIO is present, position one CTRs drop by ~34.5%
- Overall, search clicks have fallen 30% year-over-year
- However, impressions rose 49% (The Great Decoupling)



Even if clicks are down, showing up in an AIO ensures your brand remains visible and top-of-mind—because if you're not there, your competitors will be.

So, how do you appear in AIOs? A high ranking isn't a guarantee, but it helps. Data from [Grow & Convert](#) shows that when brands rank in Google's top 10 organic results, they get cited in AI tools about 72% of the time.

Percentage of Pages Cited in AI Overviews by Organic Ranking Position



[From Ahrefs](#), brands ranking high on Google show a ~0.65 correlation with mentions in LLMs.

Worried you can't push your way up to those top spots? There's a strategy for that.

Over the past 12 months, AIO appearances have surged—particularly for long-tail queries of eight words or more. In these cases, new data shows increases in citations from lower-ranking sources:

- Longer, complex queries have grown 49% in AI Overviews since May 2024
- 400% increase in citations from results ranked 21–30



Consider optimizing for long-tail queries in your content where it makes sense, especially technical queries. AIOs saw a 48% increase in technical terminology within search queries within that timeframe.

Example:

A user searching “best stainless steel fastener suppliers for marine construction” may now see an AI Overview citing a supplier’s resource page that originally ranked on page three of search results—well outside the traditional “page one” battleground.

AI Overview

Top stainless steel fastener suppliers for marine construction inc. [REDACTED], which offers a wide range of 316 stainless steel products [REDACTED] serves as a stocking distributor for [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], known for high-quality stainless fasteners and excellent service. [REDACTED] also provides a broad inventory of marine options, including other non-ferrous materials, and offers expert [REDACTED] to meet specific project needs. ☰

Key Suppliers for Marine Construction

Marine fasteners [REDACTED] Located in Florida, they have decades of experience with [REDACTED]

Show more ▾

Then there’s the effects on click-through rate. According to [Search Engine Journal](#), CTRs are dropping for top positions (1–5) but increasing for positions 6–10, suggesting that users are sometimes bypassing both AIO and top organic results. This is likely due to a lack of trust in AI, as users associate even top organic results with AI.

It seems contradictory, but as we continue to figure out AIOs, these three things remain essential:

- Visibility over rankings
- Context over content
- Conversations over lists of blue links

LLMs, Your Industry, and Your Users' Intent

Recent data reveals a surprising disparity in AI Overviews across different industries. [Four percent of core eCommerce commercial queries trigger AIOverviews. In comparison, B2B queries see significantly higher inclusion at 70%.](#) This gap underscores how AI search rewards depth and authority, which aligns more closely with the nature of B2B content.



"AI is reshaping search at a pace we haven't seen in decades. At OuterBox, we see this not as disruption, but as the next great frontier. GEO and LLMO aren't replacing SEO—they're evolving it. We're committed to guiding our clients through this transition with the same clarity and results we've delivered for more than 20 years."

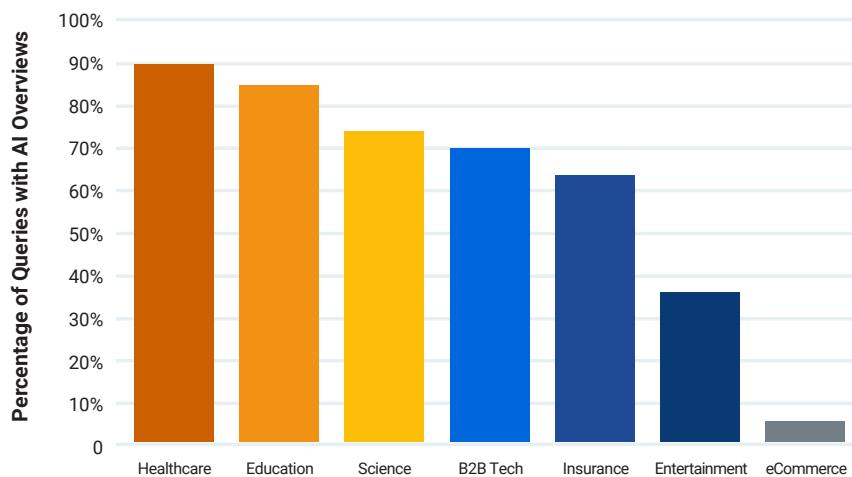
– Jeff Hirz
Exec. Vice President
Business Development

B2B

The reason lies in user intent. B2B inquiries are inherently more complex, involving longer buying cycles and multiple decision-makers. A prospect researching "best ERP systems for mid-sized manufacturers" isn't looking for a quick checkout button—they need context, comparisons, and trust signals before moving forward.

AI Overview Coverage by Industry (2025)

■ AI Overview Coverage %



AI Overview coverage by industry.

AI Overviews respond by pulling from authoritative, research-driven sources like white papers, technical blogs, trade publications, spec sheets, and solution guides. These sources provide the in-depth information buyers need to make informed decisions about specialized products and services.

For B2B marketers, this creates a clear mandate: **produce content aligned with complex buyer questions and invest in authority signals**, such as thought-leadership articles, case studies, research data, and other credible content.



eCommerce

However, eCommerce businesses shouldn't count AI out. In addition to high-quality, contextualized content, there's an additional tool to enhance eCommerce visibility – Merchant Feeds. These rely heavily on structured product data through Google Merchant Center and Microsoft Merchant Center, and LLMs tap them directly. If your feed lacks clarity or completeness, your products may not show up.

For these feeds, focus on key product attributes, such as...

- titles
- descriptions
- GTIN
- size
- color
- material
- ratings
- and even sustainability tags

All these details help LLMs interpret queries accurately and match them to your offering. This easy win for traditional SEO has a significant impact on eCommerce AI visibility.

A recent client win demonstrates this impact.

Between January and July 2025, a fitness retailer received 210 purchases from ChatGPT alone, generating \$75,000 in additional revenue.

Key events purchase	Average purchase revenue	Total revenue
210.00 0.12% of total	\$358.88 Avg -4.77%	\$75,365.65 0.11% of total

Client performance in GA4 showing success from ChatGPT.

What did we do differently? Nothing.

Their existing high-powered SEO strategy already focused on user intent by emphasizing clarity (easy to find and read), structure (including Merchant Feeds), and credibility (presented with authority and supported by reviews and other customer content).

How to Earn Visibility in AI and LLM Results

Building on our proven SEO strategies, OuterBox developed a three-part framework—grounded in ongoing AI research and testing—to drive success in LLM-powered search.

1. Help LLMs Understand Your Position & Expertise

- **Build Entity Authority:** Create thematic content hubs with interlinked categories and support pages, descriptive anchor text, schema markup, and frequent updates.
- **Write Authentic, Valuable Content:** Provide concise answers, add original insights, use clear headers, FAQs, tables, and infographics.



Help LLMs Understand Position & Expertise

Definition into problems you solve, value, history

2. Extend Answers to Your Core Audiences

- **Leverage User-Generated Content (UGC):** Build content around user questions using reviews, Q&A, and forum content from Reddit and Quora to improve freshness and trustworthiness.
- **Think of Structure:** Build Q&A blocks, FAQ schema, and clear linking to pillar/category content.
- **Cadence:** Maintain a consistent publishing schedule and refresh evergreen content every 3–6 months.



Extend Answers to Core Audiences

Reformulate content and participate in market conversations

3. Ensure a Technical Foundation for Max Visibility

- **Structured Data & Entity Linking:** Implement schemas, @id identifiers, and semantic relationships (connections between words and concepts that provide context) for AI comprehension.
- **Merchant Feeds:** Include complete, context-rich product feeds for AI shopping tools.
- **IndexNow:** Push website updates directly to search engines or “pings” them for faster AI and search engine indexing and crawling..
- **LLMs.txt:** Similar to a robots.txt file for search engines, add LLM-friendly resources for better AI parsing.
- **Limit JavaScript:** Use server-side rendering for essential content to ensure LLM crawlability.



Deploy a Technical Foundation for Max Visibility

Gain leverage by embracing all standard best practices

Bottom line: Strong SEO strategies remain critical and will generate results in AI. However, to stay ahead in the AI era requires content and technical strategy designed for how LLMs read, understand, and cite information—ensuring your brand maintains long-term visibility.

▲ Our 3-Part Optimization Framework for LLM Visibility

Why Content is Still King

Breaking down our optimization framework, we first focus on content. That's right. Content is still king, but here's what else you should consider in your content strategy beyond what your SEO strategy should already be covering.

1. Build Entity Authority with Content Hubs

- **Create a network** of interlinked pillars and supporting pages or "content clusters" that reinforce topical relevance for LLMs, helping them clearly understand your domain expertise.
- **Internal linking clarifies meaning.** Using clear anchor text and connecting related pages boosts how AI systems interpret entity relationships and topical context.
- **A structured hub**—combining blogs, FAQs, guides, tables, and tools—signals depth and breadth, making it more likely that your content will be surfaced in LLM-generated answers.
- **Content should mirror a Q&A pattern**, especially for long-tail queries. LLMs can more easily locate and quote your content. Building content frameworks rooted in real questions helps AI identify your pages as the answers.

2. Expand Your Reach with UGC

- Google and LLMs increasingly rely on authentic, user-generated insights, such as product questions, reviews, and forums, to surface current, intent-driven content. Of AI Overviews, the top two most cited domains are Quora and Reddit.

Now, let's examine our framework in relation to structure, an equally important consideration for both SEO and AI.

▲ Example of question architecture for "seo services" query.

Maximize Structured Data Opportunities

Google and Bing confirm that LLMs use structured data to interpret your content. That means technical SEO is critical to yielding results across all platforms.

Entity linking connects concepts like brands, people, or products, enabling LLMs to decipher meaning and relationships—improving retrieval precision and helping the technology connect the dots. To do this, we use the @id property, a piece of code that assigns a unique JSON-LD identifier to each entity—allowing you to tie items (like organization, person, or product) together in a site-wide semantic graph. Think of @id like a name tag for LLMs and search engines.

To ensure LLMs can see your content directly, avoid JavaScript. If your page relies on JavaScript for critical content, it may go completely unseen by these tools. AI agents read only the raw HTML—they won't wait for scripts to run.

An experienced SEO team comes in handy on the technical side of SEO and AI optimization. Having a team that can handle both front-end content and back-end site structure ensures the full stack works together, leading to better brand visibility.



"Structured data enables crawlers for both Search Engines and LLMs to understand information

about your site/brand as a whole, as well as the content on specific pages. When present, this additional context can increase eligibility for rich results on the search results page, as it provides crawlers with the information they need to better understand and display your content, which is beneficial to both the user and the website."

– Jordan Sen
Group Director,
Integrated Strategy

Organization		0 ERRORS	0 WARNINGS	▲
ID: https://www.schemaapp.com/#Organization				
@type	Organization			
@id	https://www.schemaapp.com/#Organization			
description		Schema App is an end-to-end Schema Markup solution that helps enterprise SEO teams develop a knowledge graph and drive search performance.		
knowsAbout	http://www.wikidata.org/entity/Q1891170			
knowsAbout	https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q6108942			
knowsAbout	https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q26813700			
knowsAbout	https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q180711			

The @id property at work. source: www.schemaapp.com



AI Optimization Checklist

To help you tackle optimization for AI Search and LLMs, we've taken our three-part framework and the tactics within each to create a checklist. This is a little peek under the hood of our AI Playbook - you'll notice a lot of similarities with SEO.

Content Clusters:

- Pillar or category pages include a wide-ranging, central topic overview.
- Add internal links from every asset to the pillar, using descriptive anchor text.
- Supporting assets should include how-to guides, FAQs, case studies, calculators, and other relevant resources.
- Schema markup to include FAQ Page, HowTo, and FAQ sections for structured data.
- Update cadence with frequent refreshes and timely content.

User-Generated Content:

- Add surface product Q&A, customer reviews, community forums, and comments on relevant pages.
- Encourage structured responses with schema, clear Q&A, and organization.
- Highlight real user scenarios on your site.
- Monitor relevant communities and contribute helpful answers.
- Reference brand insights subtly and avoid overt self-promotion.

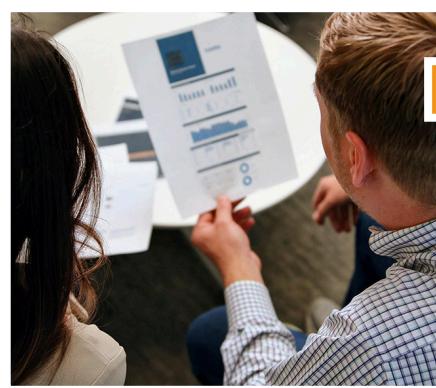
Content Architecture:

- Use headings phrased as questions (H2/H3) and include short Q&A blocks.
- Include dedicated FAQ sections with the FAQ schema.
- Format for readability—bullet lists, short paragraphs, and clear structures.

Technical Framework:

- Use core schema types like article, FAQ, Product, Review, Organization, and Author, wherever possible.
- Define an entity once (as an Organization or Person) with an @id property.
- Reference that @id wherever the entity appears—without redefining them every time.
- Limit JavaScript dependence for essential text and structured data. Use JavaScript only for optional enhancements like interactivity.
- Test without JavaScript with tools like [Toggle JavaScript](#) or turn it off in your browser—if you don't see a complete page, it's likely AI won't either.

Once this is in place, you'll need to track performance.



Tracking Success in the Age of AI Search

With AI Overviews and LLMs reshaping how users find information, the brands that win are those measuring impact beyond clicks—capturing presence, citations, and conversions inside AI ecosystems.

What to Track Today:

- **Referral Traffic:** Use UTMs and browser extensions to monitor traffic from Perplexity, Bing AI, and ChatGPT.
- **Lead Sources:** Using tools like [LOOP Analytics](#), track form-fills from AI sources.
- **AI Overviews in Google:** Track when AIOs appear and how often you get cited.
- **LLM Queries & Mentions:** Monitor prompts and brand mentions across AI tools.
- **Citation APIs & Knowledge Graphs:** Spot where your brand is cited and validate entity trust.
- **Long-Term KPI Shift:** From ranking to visibility, from clicks to answer presence.

Tip: No single tool tells the whole story. Use multiple platforms, track context (dates, campaigns, updates), and look for cross-platform trends.

Session source	+	Sessions	Engaged sessions	Engagement rate	Average engagement time per session	Events per session	Event count
3 chatgpt.com		266 (2.43%)	127 (2.39%)	47.74%	30s	4.55	1,210 (2.45%)

Here Are the “Go-to” Tools Our Team Has Been Leaning Into:

1. **Ahrefs:** Brand Radar for mentions, AIO citations, share of voice.
2. **AccuRanker:** Daily keyword updates with AIO visibility.
3. **Google Search Console:** Filter at page level; view query packages tied to AIO.
4. **Looker Studio Reports:** Custom-created for OuterBox clients, these include a dedicated AI tab to compare AI vs. organic traffic.
5. **LOOP Analytics + CallRail:** OuterBox’s proprietary form tracking tool, combined with CallRail, drives AI-driven leads to revenue.

By rethinking KPIs and tracking metrics for visibility, you can layer both widely available tools and our proprietary ones to see where your brand appears in AI answers, measure the traffic and leads, and tie it all back to revenue.

What's Next?

"Everything AI-related is evolving quickly. There's definitely no time to rest!"

We're experimenting with tactics, both traditional and emerging, every week. This is the only way to ensure we stay ahead of the curve for each new model and algorithm update."

– Jeff Allen,
OuterBox CEO



The future of AI search and LLMs is not entirely clear, but we know search volume will continue to grow in AI systems. More AI search engines are likely to enter the market, and search engines like Google and Bing will continue to incorporate AI into their results to stay competitive. We're keeping a pulse on search and user behavior—checking announcements, reviewing new tools, and monitoring performance.

The most important things we're doing to optimize for AIos and LLMs are:

- Build **authoritative, structured content** designed for conversational queries and long-tail intent.
- Shore up **technical foundations** to improve crawlability and indexability.
- Leverage **first-party data and chat insights** to identify SEO gaps, expand PPC keywords, and uncover UX opportunities.
- Track **visibility beyond clicks** by monitoring AIos, LLM citations, referral traffic, and brand mentions across platforms.
- Run **ongoing tests and refinements** to ensure strategies evolve alongside AI systems.

There's no better way to know how brands are performing than to manually run branded and category prompts across ChatGPT, Claude, Perplexity, or Google AI Mode, and log if your site is cited, linked, or described—giving you prompt-level visibility diagnostics today.

Testing has always been critical to digital marketing success, and AI is no different. When we see wins in content, technical updates, or channel strategies, we share them across teams—who then tailor what makes sense for each client.

SEO and AI optimization are not separate services. SEO teams should continue to focus on content quality and make the appropriate backend updates to ensure smooth crawling activity.

- **Clarity, structure, and credibility** will remain central to your brand's visibility.

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