CAMPAIGN CREATORS

The Modern Guide to AEO & AI Search Visibility

AI SEARCH & AEO GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

AI Search Is Changing Buyer Discovery

The way buyers discover, research, and evaluate solutions is changing.

Increasingly, buyers are turning to AI-powered experiences like ChatGPT, Google AI Overviews, Claude, Gemini, and Perplexity to get answers, compare vendors, and build shortlists before they ever visit a website.

For marketing, RevOps, content, and growth leaders, this creates a new challenge:

If buyers are asking AI for recommendations, is your brand being surfaced in the answer?

That question was the focus of our webinar, AI Search Is Here. Are You Being Found?, where Campaign Creators CEO Samantha Anderson and Director of Marketing Craig Reed explored how AI search is changing visibility, content strategy, and buyer discovery.

This guide expands on the key insights from that discussion and provides practical recommendations for organizations looking to understand and improve their AI visibility.

Key Takeaway

"The question is no longer where are we ranking. It's how visible are we to our customers when they ask AI about the products and services we provide?"
— Samantha Anderson

Prefer to Watch?

This guide is based on our webinar: AI Search Is Here. Are You Being Found?

Watch the full replay for additional examples, demonstrations, and audience Q&A.

STATS REPORT

The Visibility Gap

AI-powered search experiences are changing how information is discovered and consumed.

Instead of clicking through multiple websites, buyers can now receive summarized answers, recommendations, and comparisons directly within AI-generated experiences.

The result is a growing visibility gap between organizations that understand how they appear in AI search and those that don't.

What This Means

Traditional search metrics still matter. But rankings and traffic alone no longer tell the full story.

Organizations must now understand:

- Whether they are being cited by AI systems
- Which prompts trigger visibility
- Which competitors are being recommended instead
- How visibility changes over time

Because you cannot improve visibility if you do not know where you stand.

THE SHIFT

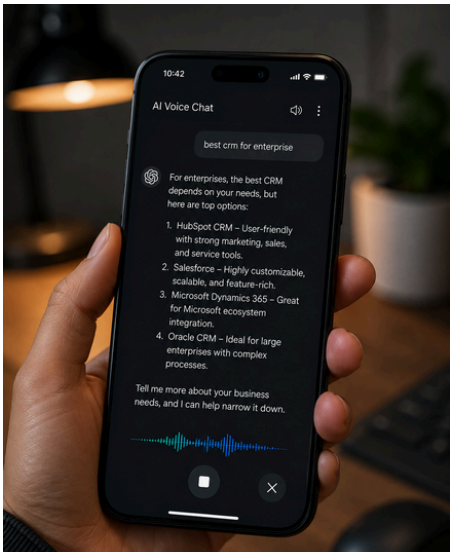
Buyer Discovery Has Changed

Before, buyer discovery followed a familiar path. A prospect would search Google, review multiple websites, compare vendors, and eventually narrow their options before engaging with a sales team.

Today, AI is increasingly becoming part of that process.

Buyers are using tools like ChatGPT, Google AI Overviews, Claude, Gemini, and Perplexity to research vendors, compare solutions, evaluate providers, and build shortlists before they ever visit a website.

This shift doesn't mean traditional search is disappearing. It means buyer discovery is evolving.



What This Means

When AI-powered experiences become part of the discovery process, visibility happens earlier in the buyer journey.

Brands that are consistently surfaced, cited, and recommended gain an advantage before traditional website engagement even begins.

Conversely, brands that are absent from AI-generated answers may never enter the buying discussion.

Key Takeaway

AI visibility is not replacing traditional search. It is becoming an increasingly important layer of buyer discovery that marketing teams must learn to measure and influence.

VISIBILITY ISN'T RANDOM

What AI Actually Rewards

Many marketers assume AI visibility is primarily driven by rankings. In reality, answer engines evaluate a much broader set of signals when determining which brands, content, and sources to include in their responses.

Throughout the webinar, three themes consistently emerged:

Authority

Can AI systems trust you?

Authority is built through expertise, brand reputation, third-party validation, reviews, backlinks, citations, and thought leadership. The more evidence AI systems find that supports your expertise, the more likely your content is to be surfaced.

Relevance

Do you directly answer the question being asked?

Answer engines prioritize content that clearly addresses user intent rather than simply matching keywords. The brands that earn visibility are often the brands that provide the clearest answers.

Consistency

Do AI systems see the same story everywhere?

Your website, LinkedIn presence, reviews, citations, content, and third-party mentions should reinforce one another. Conflicting signals create uncertainty. Consistent signals build trust.

Key Takeaway

Authority + Relevance + Consistency

These are the signals that help AI understand who you are, what you do, and whether you deserve to be part of the answer.

THE NEW BATTLEGROUND

AI Search Doesn't Start With Keywords

Traditional SEO has historically focused on ranking for specific keywords. AI search shifts the focus toward understanding and answering the questions buyers are actually asking.

Instead of searching for a short keyword like **“CRM software,”** a buyer may now ask, **“What’s the best CRM for a growing B2B company with a small sales team?”**

That difference may seem small, but it changes the strategy. AI search is more conversational, more contextual, and more intent-driven. To show up in those answers, organizations need to understand the questions buyers ask while they are researching problems, comparing solutions, evaluating vendors, and preparing to make a decision.

AEO Starts With Buyer Questions

As Craig Reed explained during the webinar:

> **"When we build an AEO strategy, we're not asking what keyword do you want to rank for. We're asking what questions our best-fit buyers ask before they ever talk to sales."**

This shift requires marketers to think differently. The goal is no longer owning a keyword. The goal is becoming part of the buying conversation.

Questions Worth Asking

What questions do buyers ask when they are:

- Exploring a problem?
- Comparing solutions?
- Evaluating vendors?
- Building a shortlist?
- Preparing to make a decision?

These are the moments AI increasingly influences.

Key Takeaway

Questions reveal intent.

Organizations that understand buyer questions are better positioned to create content AI can surface, cite, and recommend.

THE NEW CONTENT PLAYBOOK

Answer First. Explain Second. Prove Third.

One of the most practical frameworks shared during the webinar was Craig Reed's approach to AI-readable content. AI systems aren't reading content the way humans do. They're looking for clear, direct answers they can understand, extract, and reuse.

Answer First

Lead with the answer. Don't bury it halfway through the page.

- Answer the primary question in the first paragraph
- Use clear headings that mirror buyer questions
- Include concise definitions and direct responses
- Add FAQ sections that address common buyer concerns

Explain Second

Once you've answered the question, provide the context. Help readers and AI systems understand why the answer matters.

- Expand on the answer with examples
- Explain benefits, trade-offs, and considerations
- Address related questions buyers may ask next
- Use supporting visuals, examples, or comparisons

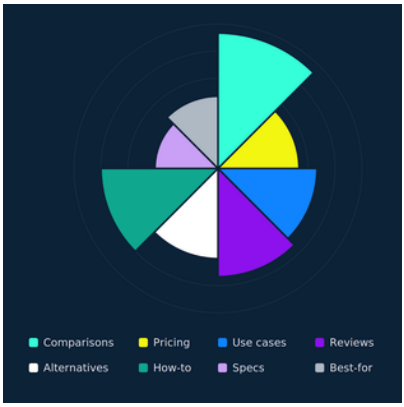
Explain Second

Support your claims with evidence. Authority is built when your content demonstrates expertise, not just opinions.

- Include original insights and expert perspectives
- Reference credible sources and industry data
- Add case studies, examples, or results
- Highlight customer outcomes and real-world experience

HOW AI ACTUALLY SEARCHES

One Question Becomes 30 Searches



One of the biggest differences between traditional search and AI search is what happens after a user submits a query. In traditional search, a keyword or phrase returns a list of results.

In AI search, a single prompt may be broken into dozens of related searches behind the scenes before a response is generated. This process is often referred to as query fan-out.

What This Means For Marketers

Winning AI visibility is not about owning a single keyword. mlt's about covering enough of the buyer's questions, concerns, and evaluation criteria that AI systems repeatedly encounter your expertise.

Actionable Tips

- Map the questions buyers ask before they talk to sales
- Identify the follow-up questions behind each prompt
- Create content that answers multiple stages of the buying journey
- Look for content gaps competitors may already be covering

Key Takeaway

The goal is not ranking for one search term. The goal is becoming part of the answer across the entire decision-making process.

HOW AI RECOMMENDS

Citations vs. Mentions

CITATION

You are the source

A citation occurs when an AI platform references your content as the source behind its answer. This is often accompanied by a link to your website or content.

- Reinforces expertise and authority
- Can drive high-intent website visits
- Connects your content directly to buyer research

MENTION

You are named

A mention occurs when your company, product, or brand is referenced without linking to your website.

- Increases awareness
- Influences consideration
- Builds recommendation frequency

Why Both Matter

Many buyer decisions are influenced before a website visit ever happens. As buyers increasingly use AI to research vendors, compare solutions, and build shortlists, visibility can occur long before traditional engagement metrics like clicks and sessions are recorded.

Citations and mentions both contribute to that visibility. Citations help connect buyers to your content, while mentions indicate that your brand is being included in AI-generated recommendations and conversations.

Organizations that consistently earn both are more likely to be surfaced when buyers ask AI for guidance, recommendations, or information about a category.

Key Takeaway

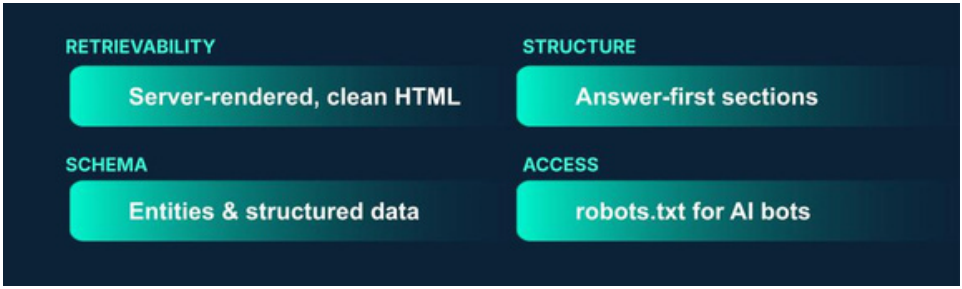
Citations help buyers discover your content. Mentions help buyers discover your brand. The strongest AI visibility strategies focus on earning both.

THE FOUNDATION

Think of Technical SEO as AI Plumbing

Technical SEO is the infrastructure behind visibility. If your content is difficult to crawl, hidden behind complex scripts, missing schema, poorly structured, or disconnected from the rest of your site, AI systems may struggle to use it—even if the page looks strong to a human visitor.

Before expanding your AEO strategy, make sure the foundation is sound.



Retrievability
Can AI systems access and surface your content?

Structure
Is your content organized in a way that makes the answer easy to find?

Schema
Are you giving machines enough context to understand the page?

Access
Can crawlers consume the content without unnecessary friction?

Key Takeaway

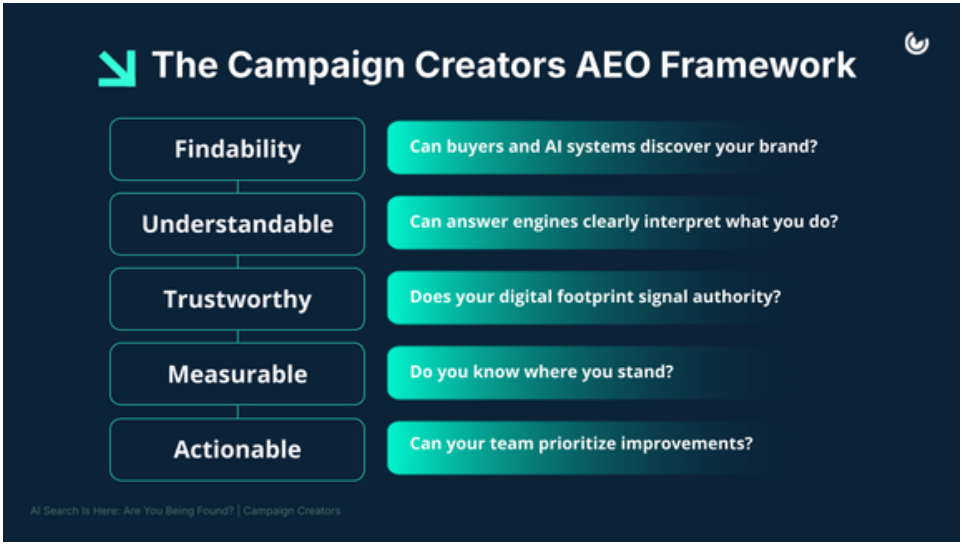
Strong AI visibility starts with a strong foundation. The easier it is for AI systems to find, access, and understand your content, the more likely your brand is to be surfaced, cited, and recommended in AI-generated answers.

THE FRAMEWORK

Our AEO Framework

Before deciding what content to create, what pages to optimize, or what tools to invest in, it helps to understand where your brand stands today.

That's why we developed a simple framework for evaluating AI readiness.



Key Takeaway

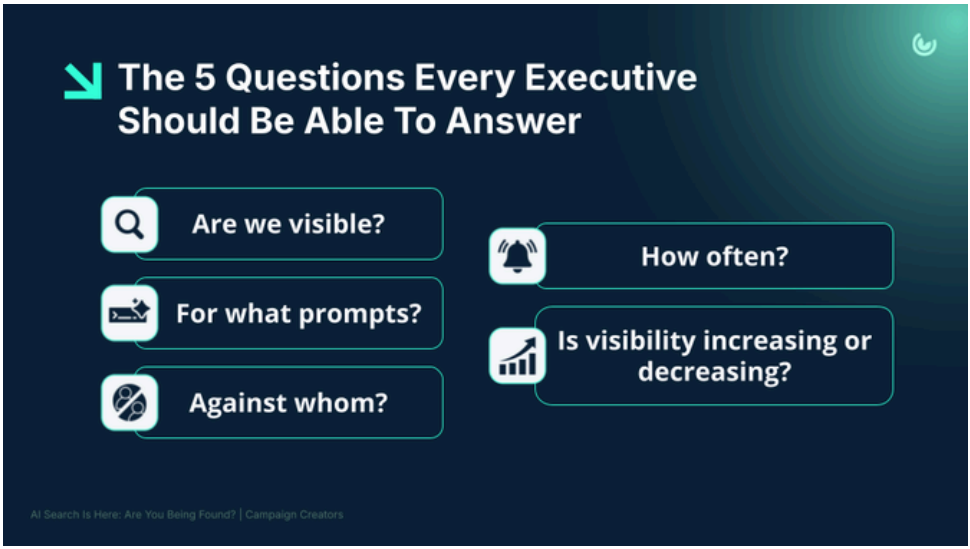
The most successful organizations aren't trying to optimize everything. They're systematically identifying visibility gaps and addressing them one step at a time.

ASK YOURSELF

The 5 Questions Every Executive Should Be Able to Answer

As AI search becomes a larger part of buyer discovery, leadership teams need a clear understanding of where their brand stands. The challenge is that many organizations are still operating without visibility into how AI systems are describing, recommending, or citing them.

If you can't answer the following questions, you likely have an AI visibility blind spot.



Key Takeaway

Before deciding what to create, optimize, or change, teams need a clear baseline for how their brand appears in AI search, which prompts they show up for, and where competitors may be gaining visibility instead.

QUESTIONS YOU ASKED

Frequently Asked Questions From The Webinar

Should we be following a good journalistic writing style and not bury the lead?

Yes. AI-friendly content should provide the answer upfront rather than making readers, or AI systems, search for it. Lead with the answer, then provide supporting context and proof.

What tools can be used to gain AEO visibility and run an audit?

The webinar highlighted HubSpot's AEO tool and Campaign Creators' AEO Visibility Audit as strong options. The most important thing is using a tool that helps you understand your visibility, citations, competitor presence, and share of voice across AI platforms.

What can we expect to find in our first AEO Visibility Audit?

The audit provides visibility into which prompts your brand appears for, your share of voice, competitor visibility, visibility scores, and recommendations for improving discoverability.

Can competitors have stronger AI visibility even if they don't rank well in traditional search?

Yes. AI search has created opportunities for organizations to gain visibility based on relevance, authority, and content quality—not just traditional search rankings.

What is meant by "schema"?

Schema is structured data that helps search engines and AI systems understand what a page contains. It provides additional context that makes content easier for machines to interpret.

If we only focus on one thing in AEO, what should it be?

Start with your technical foundation. Before investing in new content, ensure your pages are crawlable, indexed, accessible, and technically optimized for search and AI visibility.

Does it make sense to scrap old blogs, or should we optimize them?

In most cases, optimize them. Existing content often contains valuable expertise and authority that can be improved, updated, and restructured for AI visibility.

If a report shows we are "missing" or "not cited" for certain queries, what does that mean?

It means AI systems are not currently associating your brand with those prompts. These gaps often reveal opportunities to create or improve content around questions your buyers are actively asking.

How do we improve visibility for prompts where we're currently missing?

Create highly relevant, answer-first content that directly addresses the prompt, demonstrates expertise, and provides clear, structured information AI systems can understand and cite.

What's the biggest takeaway from the webinar?

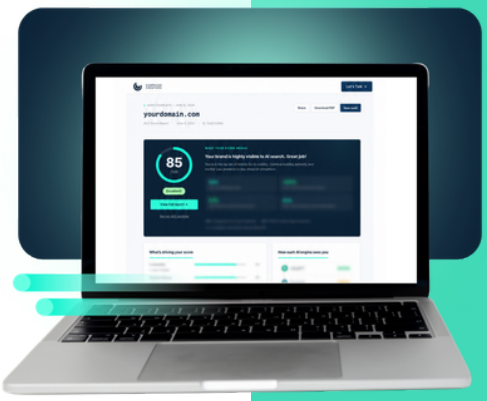
Before deciding what to create, optimize, or change, establish a baseline. Understanding how your brand is currently showing up in AI search is the first step toward improving visibility.

START HERE

Get Your AEO Audit Report

Throughout this guide, one message has remained consistent: Before deciding what to create, optimize, or change, it helps to understand how AI search is already describing your brand—and whether competitors are being surfaced instead.

The Campaign Creators AEO Visibility Audit helps establish that baseline.



- **Which prompts your brand appears for**
- **Which competitors are being recommended**
- **Where AI visibility gaps exist**
- **What sources influence visibility**
- **Where opportunities may exist to improve discoverability**

Get Your Free AEO Visibility Audit

www.aeo.campaigncreators.com

Scan the QR code or visit the URL to see how your brand is showing up across major AI search platforms.