

THE PRACTICAL GUIDE / WHITE PAPER 01

Generative Engine Optimization.

A practical GEO guide to improving your visibility in AI answers.

Generative engine optimization (GEO) is the practice of improving how a business and its information are discovered, represented, and cited in AI-generated answers. Start with useful, accurate content; make it accessible; then measure what actually changes.

01 **Measure**

02 **Improve**

03 **Publish**

04 **Verify**

05 **Prove**

For business owners, marketing teams, and agencies. Includes a practical workflow, a worked content example, and a reusable GEO checklist.

CHAPTER 01

What is generative engine optimization?

Make your business easier to find, understand, and choose.

Generative engine optimization, usually shortened to GEO, focuses on how your business is represented in AI-generated answers, including experiences such as ChatGPT, Perplexity, and Google's AI search features. A useful goal is to be mentioned for a relevant need, described accurately, cited as a source, or included in a customer's shortlist.

Consider a buyer asking which air-conditioning service can repair their system in their area. An answer needs more than a business name: it needs the service, location, eligibility, and reasons to trust the provider. A practical GEO strategy makes those details easy to find and substantiate, then checks how the business appears in actual answers.

Aggarwal and colleagues tested methods including Cite Sources, Quotation Addition, and Statistics Addition. In Table 1 of GEO: Generative Engine Optimization (arXiv version 3, June 28, 2024), these methods outperformed the unmodified-source baseline on both reported overall visibility measures: Position-Adjusted Word Count and Subjective Impression. The experiments used the GEO-bench test split and a research generative engine described in Section 3.1. These findings concern source visibility under those experimental conditions; they do not establish a guaranteed improvement for a business in today's consumer AI applications. [1]

This guide turns the objective into a practical workflow: measure the starting point, improve useful evidence, publish accurate information, verify the change, and observe the result. It is educational guidance, not a new research study. Examples are hypothetical unless explicitly attributed to the published BoostGeo study.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Use this guide to record a baseline, choose a page improvement, and plan a recheck.

CHAPTER 02

GEO vs. SEO: what changes, and what carries over?

Keep the foundations. Expand the questions you measure.

Search engine optimization helps people discover useful pages through search. GEO focuses on how information is selected and represented inside generated answers. These practices overlap: accessible pages, clear writing, trustworthy evidence, and useful information matter to both. The difference is the result you inspect.

Question	SEO	GEO
Where you look	Search results and the pages people visit.	Generated answers, their sources, and follow-up conversations.
What you inspect	Indexing, query impressions, positions, clicks, and conversions.	Mentions, citations, factual accuracy, recommendations, and resulting visits.
What you improve	Accessible, useful pages that meet a searcher’s intent.	Accessible, useful pages with clear, verifiable answers to buyer questions.

AEO, or answer engine optimization, is another overlapping label used for work on direct answers. AI SEO is a broader marketing term. Usage varies, so avoid building a strategy around a rigid acronym hierarchy. Ask which customer experience you are improving and what evidence will demonstrate progress.

Google states that its existing SEO fundamentals remain relevant to AI Overviews and AI Mode. Its guidance says there are no additional technical requirements or special schema needed for those features, and eligibility does not guarantee inclusion. Treat that as Google Search guidance, not a specification for every AI platform. [2] Google’s newer AI optimization guide provides further guidance specific to its generative AI search features. [5]

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Use GEO to extend your measurement and content work, rather than treating it as a reason to abandon SEO.

CHAPTER 03

Start your GEO strategy with real buyer questions.

A useful baseline reflects the decisions your customers actually face.

Collect questions from sales calls, support conversations, site search, and recurring customer objections. Remove personal details before testing. Start with an important offer and the decisions that lead someone to choose it. The examples below show how discovery and branded accuracy need different questions.

Record the exact question, date, language, relevant location settings, and the AI experience used. “Surface” means the specific application or API you tested. “Grounding” means the answer draws on retrieved sources. Save the answer and citations when available.

Record the search or browsing setting separately from whether search actually ran. Use an observable indicator, such as the application’s search activity display or an API tool-call record. If the setting or activity is not exposed, record unknown. Do not infer that search occurred solely because an answer contains plausible facts or links.

Repeat the same questions on a planned schedule. Keep unsuccessful or unavailable attempts in the record. Your first sample is a working baseline for these questions, not an estimate of what every buyer sees.

Check the relevant website page separately. Can it be retrieved, and does it clearly answer the question? Website Readiness measures page evidence; a model-comprehension test supplies that evidence to a model. [\[4\]](#)

To test independent discovery, start a fresh conversation with an unbranded buyer question. Do not supply the target business’s name, domain, website content, or identifying hints in the prompt, instructions, attachments, or prior conversation. Include only genuine buyer requirements, such as service type and location, chosen before inspecting the results. Record whether web search was used; an unprompted mention alone does not prove that the system retrieved the business from the public web.

Three questions to adapt

Discovery: Which companies repair central air-conditioning systems in Northport, Alabama?

Does the business appear without being named in the question?

Ask this in the same conversation, immediately after “Which companies repair central air-conditioning systems in Northport, Alabama?” Retain the complete preceding answer.

Comparison — follow-up to the discovery question: Among the companies you just listed, which explicitly state that they repair residential central AC systems in Northport, Alabama? Cite the source supporting each company’s service coverage.

Check whether the business remains in consideration and whether the cited evidence supports the stated service and location.

Branded accuracy: Does [business name] repair portable air conditioners?

Does the answer correctly reflect the stated exclusion? This does not test discovery.

Hypothetical home-services example. Adapt the offer and location; preserve follow-up context for comparison.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Save the starting evidence before editing. You need a comparable baseline to learn from the change.

Your AI visibility baseline

Use one worksheet for one question in one AI application. Repeat the exact question in a fresh conversation each time.

Exact question asked

Date(s)

Application used (e.g., ChatGPT, Perplexity, Google AI Overview)

Search or browsing setting: On / Off / Automatic / Unknown

If visible, did search actually run? Otherwise record unknown.

Total attempts / Completed answers / Unavailable or failed attempts

What prevented an answer, if anything?

Keep unsuccessful attempts in the record. An unavailable answer is not evidence of absence.

Mention: ____ The business was named.

Citation: ____ The business's website was linked as a supporting source.

Recommendation: ____ The answer explicitly suggested the business for the stated need.

Not observed: ____ None of the three appeared in a completed answer.

Counts can overlap. Optional note / saved-answer reference: _____

In ____ completed answers to this question on ____, we observed _____. This shows ____ under these test conditions; it does not prove _____.

These observations describe the question, application, and dates tested-not what every customer will see.

[Download the Full GEO Baseline Recording Template](#)

CHAPTER 04

How to optimize content for generative AI answers.

Answer the next useful question with information you can substantiate.

Answer the buyer's question

Start with the page that should answer the buyer's question. Explain who the offer is for, what it includes, relevant limitations, service areas or delivery conditions, and the next step. Put the essential answer where a reader can find it without interpreting slogans or opening several unrelated pages.

Use descriptive headings and direct explanations. Add a comparison table when people need to compare actual options; use a short list when they need steps. Keep context with the claim: a price needs its scope, a statistic needs its source and date, and a qualification needs a verifiable basis.

Support the answer with evidence

Add evidence your business can substantiate: documented methods, original research, product specifications, named expertise, examples, and customer-approved outcomes. Attribute borrowed findings accurately. Use only statistics, quotations, testimonials, and credentials that you can verify.

Create useful information about the questions your existing pages leave unanswered. Each new page should contribute a distinct answer or meaningful evidence. Avoid near-identical location pages and paraphrased articles created solely to cover keyword variations.

Keep information current

Assign an owner to review important service details, prices, locations, eligibility conditions, policies, and supporting sources. Update affected pages when those facts change, then check that visible content and structured data still agree. Show a meaningful updated date when the information has been substantively revised.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Improve the answer and its supporting evidence together. Clear wording cannot compensate for an unsupported claim.

ILLUSTRATION / HYPOTHETICAL BUSINESS

Give the reader something concrete.

Hypothetical example—not a real business or an observed visibility result:

BEFORE: A VAGUE PROMISE

Your trusted partner for all your home comfort needs. Quality service you can count on.

AFTER: SPECIFIC SERVICES AND LOCATIONS

We repair and maintain residential central air-conditioning systems in Northport, Alabama, and the nearby communities of Tuscaloosa and Coker. We do not repair portable or window air conditioners. Contact our team to confirm appointment availability at your address and request an estimate.

Adapt this example using only locations, services, exclusions, and promises your business can verify.

What changed?

The revised copy identifies the service, the customer, the service area, a material exclusion, and the next action. Those details help readers assess fit. They also create specific facts that a later comprehension check can test.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Write only what the business can verify. Then test whether the page is retrieved and interpreted accurately.

CHAPTER 05

Make accurate information accessible and consistent.

Check both the page people read and the signals machines receive.

Confirm that the intended public page can be retrieved and that important information is present in accessible text. Review accidental access restrictions, broken links, misleading canonical signals, and essential information that appears only after an interaction. Respect deliberate access policies; opening every crawler is not a universal business requirement.

Align the business name, offer, location, policies, and contact details across the relevant pages and profiles you control. Correct contradictions at their source. An accurate main page is less useful if the contact page or official listing still describes an old service area.

Use appropriate structured data to express facts that agree with visible content. Validate it and maintain it when the facts change. A machine-readable feed can support controlled publication, but it is not a promise that an external platform will index, cite, or recommend the business.

BoostGeo's published 2026 study submitted 1,000 local-business homepages and obtained assessable evidence for 897. Of those, 565 (63.0%) lacked the specific Organization schema signal checked. The quota-based homepage sample was collected August 27–28, 2026 with SIGIL/lambda-11; 103 unable outcomes remained separate. This identifies a captured-markup opportunity, not the percentage of businesses invisible to AI. [\[3\]](#)

Review accurate profiles and third-party references relevant to your business. Correct factual errors through the publisher's normal process. Earn attention through useful work and evidence; do not fabricate reviews, endorsements, or mentions. Treat any proposed citation tactic as a hypothesis to evaluate, not a guaranteed ranking factor.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Publish one consistent account of the business. Keep visible content, structured facts, and controlled profiles aligned.

CHAPTER 06

How to measure GEO performance.

Separate the website change from the external answer and the business outcome.

Define the acceptance condition before making a change. If the service area is missing, success first means that the approved service-area statement is accurately present on the live page and retrievable by the check. Closing a task does not establish that this condition passed.

Then rerun the relevant questions under comparable conditions. Keep the question sequence and settings, record new dates, and disclose provider or evaluator changes. A repeated prompt cannot freeze a changing model, search index, or public web.

Track mentions, citations, recommendations, and factual accuracy separately. For multi-turn journeys, inspect where the business enters or leaves consideration. If a browser agent tests a contact or purchase path, distinguish reaching a safe stopping point from actually submitting or buying. [4]

Keep counts and denominators beside percentages. Two mentions in three completed repetitions describe those observations; they do not establish that two-thirds of customers will see your business. Keep missing or failed observations visible. Choose a sample that fits the decision and report its limits.

Measure identifiable referrals, enquiries, and conversions separately over stated periods. Tracking may be incomplete, and changes can reflect other campaigns, seasonality, demand, or platform updates. A rise after a website fix is an observed association, not proof that the fix caused it.

Use the outcome to select the next piece of work. Preserve improvements, investigate regressions, and leave inconclusive tests labeled as inconclusive. This is how a GEO program learns instead of accumulating attractive screenshots.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

A better page, a changed AI answer, and more enquiries are three different results. Measure each on its own terms.

REFERENCE / MEASUREMENT BOUNDARIES

What each AI measurement can establish

Website Readiness · Is the page evidence clear?

Evidence: A retrieved page and a stated audit rubric.

Can show: The assessed page exposed particular information and signals.

Cannot establish: Independent discovery or recommendation in public AI answers.

Model comprehension · Can a model interpret supplied facts?

Evidence: Page information supplied to the selected model.

Can show: The model interpreted that supplied material under the test conditions.

Cannot establish: That the model found the business independently.

AI Visibility · Does the business appear in an answer?

Evidence: A recorded question on an identified answer surface, with grounding disclosed.

Can show: An observed mention, citation, or recommendation, distinguished explicitly.

Cannot establish: Universal rankings or what every customer will see.

AI Journeys · Does it stay in consideration?

Evidence: A preserved sequence of buyer questions and responses.

Can show: Where the business entered, remained in, or left the tested conversation.

Cannot establish: A prediction of every buyer's conversation or final purchase.

Agent actionability · Can an agent reach the intended step?

Evidence: A bounded browser task with a defined safe stopping point.

Can show: The path and terminal state observed in the recorded attempt.

Cannot establish: A completed transaction when the agent stopped before submitting.

Business outcomes · What changed in actual activity?

Evidence: Observed referral, enquiry, or conversion records over stated periods.

Can show: Measured changes in the available outcome data.

Cannot establish: That a specific website change caused the difference.

CHAPTER 07

A practical GEO checklist for your next improvement cycle.

Start small enough to finish, then repeat with better evidence.

Choose one important offer, the page that explains it, and a small set of buyer questions. Use the decision guide below to choose the first useful change. Aim to complete and verify that change before expanding the work.

Assign an owner and record what should be different on the live page. After publishing, check that condition and schedule a comparable observation of the original questions. Use the checklist to keep a work record; completion is not a visibility score.

BoostGeo connects this cycle through Website Readiness, Site Health, AI Visibility, AI Journeys, Fix Center, and Verified Facts. Start with the free Website Readiness check to inspect a page, then select the measurement that answers your next question. [4]

Prove: document verified changes and separately observed outcomes. A passed recheck establishes that the tested condition changed; a later increase in visits or enquiries does not, by itself, establish that the website change caused it.

The page could not be retrieved during this check. Record the test date, retrieval method, and observed error or response. Investigate the cause before treating the result as a website problem; one unsuccessful check does not establish that every visitor or AI system is blocked.

Check the result: The intended public page and key text can be retrieved.

The offer is misread or unclear. Clarify the service, location, eligibility, and supporting facts on the relevant page.

Check the result: The live page contains the approved details; repeat the interpretation check.

The page is clear, but the business is absent from answers. Inspect the sources cited for the same buyer questions. Identify a relevant information gap or factual inconsistency.

Check the result: Repeat the grounded questions and compare answers and sources. The result may remain unchanged.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Measure > Improve > Publish > Verify > Prove. Keep the evidence connected from one cycle to the next.

WORKSHEET / NEXT IMPROVEMENT CYCLE

Your GEO action checklist.

Page or offer: _____ Owner: _____

Review date: _____

- ☐ Choose an offer and a specific customer decision.
- ☐ Record real discovery, comparison, and trust questions.
- ☐ Save baseline answers with surface, date, settings, and sources.
- ☐ Check the relevant page's access and evidence quality.
- ☐ Replace vague content with accurate, useful decision details.
- ☐ Add verifiable evidence and attribute sources.
- ☐ Align visible facts, structured data, and controlled profiles.
- ☐ Define an owner and acceptance condition before publishing.
- ☐ Verify the live change and rerun comparable questions.
- ☐ Review mentions, citations, accuracy, and business outcomes separately.

Completion records your work, not a visibility score or predicted performance. Use the online checklist to save progress in your browser and export a text copy.

Generative engine optimization: common questions

Does GEO replace SEO?

No. GEO extends attention to how a business appears in generated answers. Accessible pages, useful content, accurate information, and search performance remain relevant. Track AI mentions, citations, and recommendations alongside search traffic and business outcomes.

Does a high Website Readiness score mean ChatGPT recommends my business?

No. Website Readiness evaluates the page evidence retrieved during an assessment. It does not establish that ChatGPT independently discovered or recommended the business. To investigate that question, run unbranded discovery tests and retain the application, dates, search state, answers, and sources.

Do I need special schema or an llms.txt file for GEO?

Requirements depend on the platform. Google does not require special schema or an llms.txt file for its AI search features. Use appropriate structured data that matches visible facts, and evaluate optional files against the requirements of the systems you intend to support. Neither guarantees a citation or recommendation.

What should I improve first?

Start with the page that should answer an important buyer question. If a check cannot retrieve it, investigate the failure. If the page is available but unclear, correct missing or inaccurate service, location, eligibility, or trust information. Choose a change you can verify before expanding the work.

How do I know whether GEO work helped?

First verify that the approved change reached the live page. Then repeat comparable AI questions and review mentions, citations, recommendations, and factual accuracy separately. Measure visits and enquiries over stated periods. A change after a website update is an observation; it does not by itself prove causation.

How long does GEO take to work?

There is no universal timeline. You can verify a live-page change before an external AI answer changes. Later observations may vary with retrieval, platform updates, the question, and other conditions. Set a review schedule, preserve the original questions, and report unchanged or inconclusive results.

SOURCES / EDITORIAL NOTES

Follow the evidence.

This guide presents BoostGeo's recommended workflow. It does not claim guaranteed increases in mentions, citations, rankings, or revenue. The published study and hypothetical example retain their own scope.

[1] Aggarwal et al.: GEO: Generative Engine Optimization

Version 3, June 28, 2024. Table 1 and Section 3.1: GEO-bench evaluation methods and results. Findings are specific to the tested methods and conditions.

<https://arxiv.org/abs/2311.09735v3>

[2] Google Search Central: AI features and your website

Google AI Overviews and AI Mode eligibility guidance. Accessed September 7, 2026.

<https://developers.google.com/search/docs/appearance/ai-features>

[3] BoostGeo 2026 AI Website Readiness Study

Collection: August 27-28, 2026. 1,000 submitted; 897 assessable; 103 unable. Quota-based homepage sample; SIGIL/lambda-11.

<https://www.boostgeo.com/research/ai-website-readiness-study-2026>

[4] BoostGeo measurement methodology

Product-specific measurement boundaries and limitations. Consult for current product details.

<https://www.boostgeo.com/methodology>

[5] Google Search Central: Google's guide to optimizing for generative AI features on Google Search

Last updated July 10, 2026. Accessed September 7, 2026. Guidance applies to Google Search and its generative AI features.

<https://developers.google.com/search/docs/fundamentals/ai-optimization-guide>

About this edition

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