E-BOOK

Staying visible in an AI-first world.

The GEO revolution: from SEO
to Generative Engine Optimization

springbok

The customer search journey has changed

For decades, the customer search journey was predictable: it started on Google. That era is ending. We face new challenges. **Audiences are harder to reach as the customer journey fragments.** Users no longer start only with Google; they turn to TikTok for reviews, ask AI engines for comparisons, or watch YouTube for tutorials.

The search landscape has multiplied, now including traditional engines (Google), social engines (TikTok), and powerful new AI engines (LLMs). **While the channels have changed, the core human need remains the same: a fast, trustworthy answer.**

This e-book is a practical guide to this new landscape. We will focus on what works, introducing GEO (Generative Engine Optimization) - **a realistic strategy to ensure your brand provides those answers, no matter where the customer is asking.**

This is not the end of SEO. It is the beginning of what's next.

> **The search engines have multiplied and user behavior has changed, but the core expectation stays the same: a fast, trustworthy answer.**

Charlotte De Pauw
SEO & performance specialist

Content

01

The new search landscape

To build a strategy, we must first understand the new reality. AI-driven search is causing some fundamental shifts.

1. From links to summaries

Google is evolving beyond a list of links. With AI Overviews and AI Mode, it provides direct summaries. A customer journey that once took 2 days can now happen in a single 5-minute AI conversation.

The result: fewer clicks. The funnel has collapsed. The only clicks that remain are highly transactional.

> **We are getting fewer clicks, but those clicks are more valuable than ever.**

Jacco Hermus
SEO GEO Specialist

Two very different user journeys

Traditional SEO

Awareness (TOFU)
Search: “best CRM software”
Action: Visit 10+ websites
Result: Basic overview

Consideration (MOFU)
Search: “CRM features comparison”
Action: Research 5+ review sites
Result: Deeper understanding

Decision (BOFU)
Search: “Salesforce pricing”
Action: Check 3+ sources
Result: Ready to buy

15–30 days | 20+ touchpoints

AI Search

Single Conversation
TOFU → MOFU → BOFU in one chat

User: “What’s the best CRM for my 50-person SaaS startup?”

AI: “Here are the top 5 options with features...”

User: “Compare pricing?”

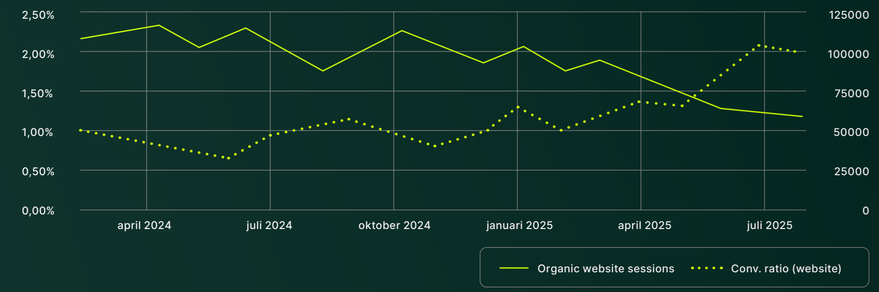
AI: “Here’s the breakdown...”

User: “Which do you recommend?”

AI: [Personalized recommendation]

5 minutes | 1 conversation

Evolution conversion rate



2. From keywords to conversations

We are witnessing the end of traditional keyword searching. Users are now asking complex, conversational questions. Instead of: “best running shoes” Users now ask: “I’m training for a half-marathon in a rainy city and have flat feet. What are the best, most durable running shoes for €150?”

3. From pre-click focus to post-click focus

Because the few remaining clicks are so high-intent, the **post-click experience is critical.** If a user clicks and finds your page slow or irrelevant, they will “bounce.” This means you haven’t lost a visitor, it also means you have taught search engines that your competitor’s page was the better answer. A powerful signal to the AI engine.

There are two types of these ‘user signals’:

- **The answer signal:** did the user stay on the page or bounce?
- **The experience signal:** was the page fast and easy to use?

Without a strong SEO foundation, you are invisible to AI. AI engines are fed with the best, most structured, and most trusted content. It’s about content and intent, brand and trust and experience and UX.

Good SEO is no longer just about getting the click; it’s about being mentioned in the AI’s answer. But what can we do next to SEO to increase our visibility within AI engines?

> **What’s good for the user (and traditional SEO) is exactly what AI engines are looking for as proof of a high-quality answer.**

Charlotte De Pauw
SEO & performance specialist

What can impact user signals?

Content & intent

1. Covering related content (with thebest content)
2. Perfectly matching intent + needs are met

Brand & trust

1. Being a recognizable brand
2. E-E-A-T (Experience, Expertise, Authority, Trust)

Experience & UX

1. Core web vitals
2. Engaging with the website

02

Defining GEO

If SEO is the foundation, GEO (Generative Engine Optimization) is the next layer. It is the practice of optimizing your brand and content to be found, understood, and used as a trusted source by AI engines.

1. Breaking down silos

First of all, it is important to note that search doesn't look the same on every channel. Beyond traditional engines, we must now also optimize for social, LLMs, app search and more, each requiring a specific approach.

This is where GEO changes the game by breaking down the old silos. Where traditional SEO often treated blogs, videos, and images as separate islands, GEO combines all these content types to generate a single, rich, and structured answer.

With the right channel-less strategy, you ensure you are visible everywhere.

Search doesn't look the same for every channel

Social Media	Marketplaces	Search engines	Video	LLMs	App search
Search Intent	Search Intent	UX optimisation	Search Intent	Search Intent	Search Intent
Content creation	Content creation	Search Intent	Content creation	Content creation	Content creation
Content optimisation	Content optimisation	Content creation	Content optimisation	Content optimisation	Content optimisation
Channel optimisation		Content optimisation	Channel optimisation	Structured data	Content optimisation
		Technical Support		Technical Support	Technical Support
		Building Authority			

2. Two data sources, two levels of influence

Before we optimize for AI, we first need to understand how LLM's find content and where we have an influence.

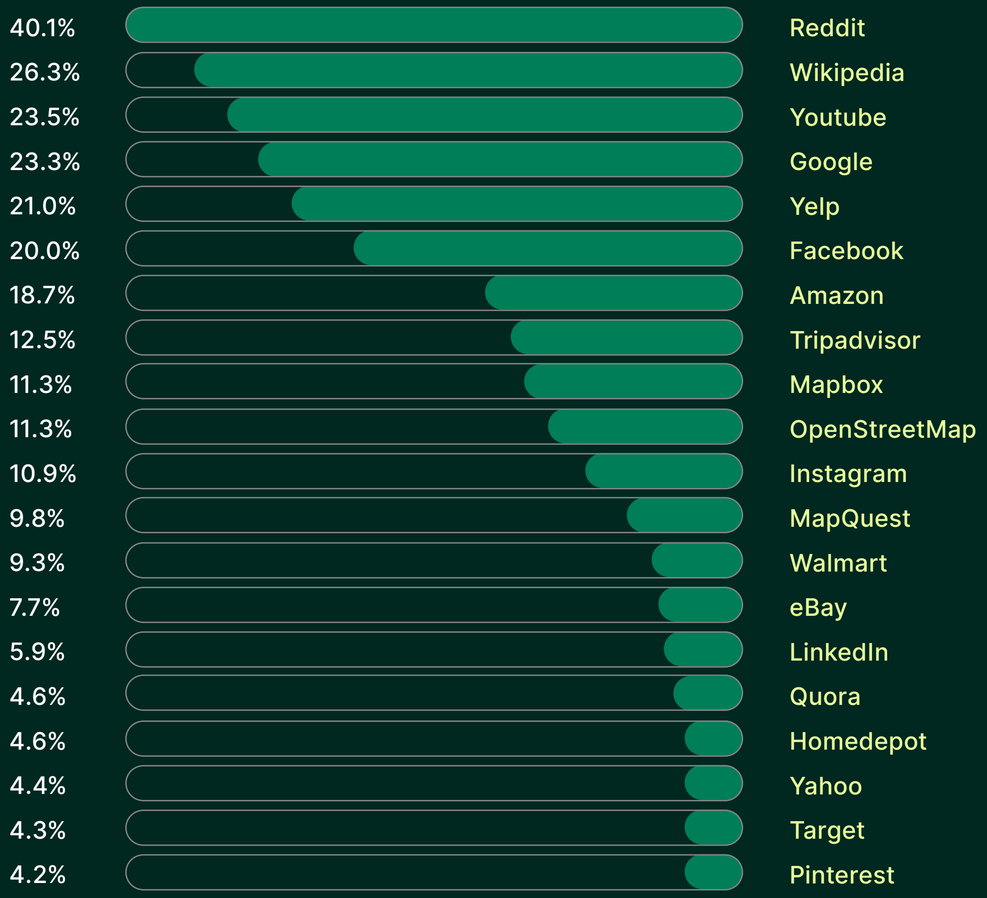
There are two types of AI engines:

- **Frozen Data Engines:** These rely solely on a static library of training data, which is often outdated and hard to influence.
- **RAG Engines (Real-Time):** These use Retrieval-Augmented Generation to search the live internet when their training data is insufficient. This is our massive opportunity, as visibility here can be directly influenced.

3. AI engines gather info differently

AI models gather information from a wide range of sources. They look for signals of authority, credibility, relevance, quality and structure on platforms like Reddit & Wikipedia, Social Media (LinkedIn, YouTube), news, business, and review sites.

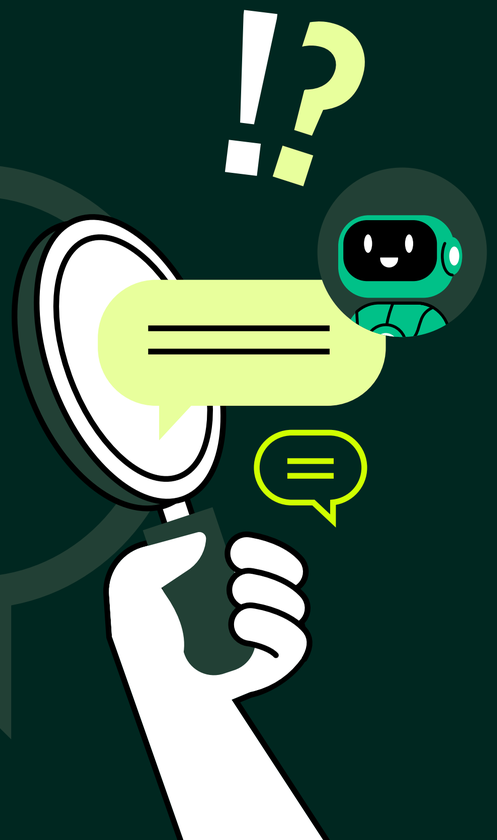
Where AI gets it's facts



4. AI engines think differently

AI does not perform a single search. It uses a ‘query fan-out’, breaking one complex question into multiple smaller queries. It then finds answers to all of them, combines the results, and writes a single, comprehensive answer. LLMs don’t just “match” keywords.

They understand the relation-ships between words to grasp the full meaning of a query.



Conclusion

Each LLM has preferred sources, but all value the same things: authority, relevance, quality, and structure. You do not need to be everywhere. You must investigate which sources the AI trusts for your specific topic and focus your efforts there.

How does AI think?

AI engine, acting like senior researcher

This user needs to:

- Define ‘best CRM’
- Find CRMs for ‘SaaS’
- Check pricing for ‘50 users’
- Compare features.

What is the best CRM for my 50 person SaaS startup?

Query Fan-out

- Top CRMs for SaaS?
- CRM pricing models?
- HubSpot vs. Salesforce for startups
- CRM user limits

Answer

03

A 4-Step GEO action plan

Increasing visibility for AI is not about “keyword stuffing.” It is about proving your authority and expertise across the entire web. This 4-step plan shows how.

01 Build authority through mentions

While traditional SEO values backlinks, AI engines value mentions. They look for evidence that your brand, products, and experts are being actively discussed on other trusted platforms.

→ **Action**

Connect your content to your in-house specialists. Then, work to get your brand mentioned on the key sources your audience trusts. Use Experience-Expertise-Authority-Trust as fundament

02 The conversational approach

You must move beyond single keywords and understand the full context of your user’s questions. Who are they, what’s their situation, their intentions and limitations.

→ **Action**

Map the entire conversation.

Answer the primary question and anticipate the follow-up questions in your content.

03 Your best-performing content must travel

Great content on your website is no longer enough. To build authority, you must own your topic across multiple channels, as LLMs pull all content types together to create an answer. Social strategy plays a prominent role here. If you have a strong blog post, you should consider also having:

- A YouTube video explaining the concept.
- A LinkedIn post from your expert.
- An FAQ page answering related questions.
- ...

→ **Action**

Repurpose your top-performing content into formats that work for other channels. Show both users and AI that you are the definitive authority.

04 Technical readiness

You must make it easy for AI bots to crawl, access, and understand your content.

→ **Action**

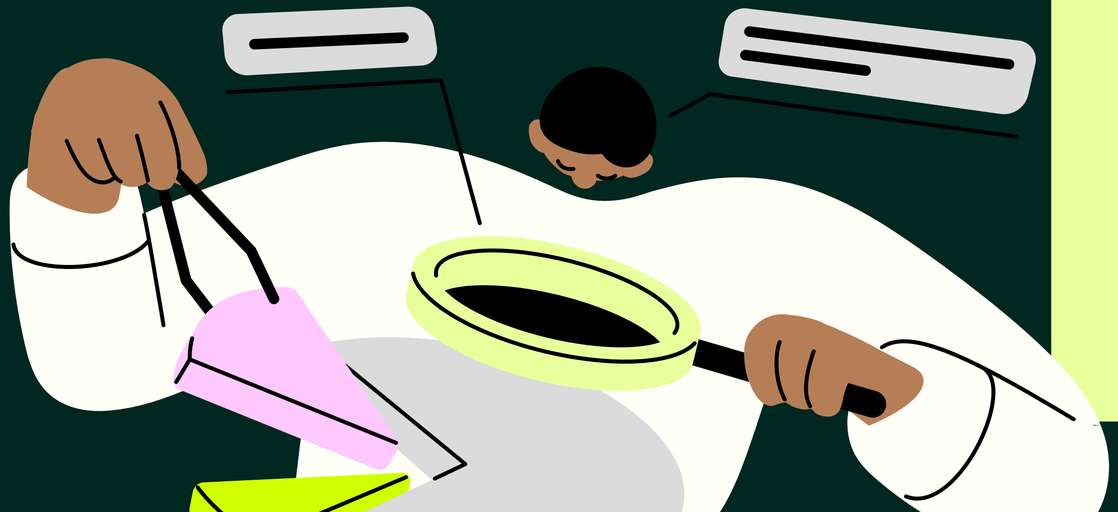
- Use structured data. Think of FAQ’s, HowTo pages, article markup...
- Build a strong technical foundation

04

A balanced strategy:

THE 70-20-10 RULE

This new landscape can feel overwhelming. It is tempting to chase every new trend, but a balanced strategy is more effective. We use the 70-20-10 rule to prioritize efforts. This framework allows you to build for the future without sacrificing today's performance.



70% The Foundation (Proven SEO)

This is the core of your effort. Focus on fundamentals that work for both traditional SEO and GEO.

- User-focused content
- Master user signals
- Solid technical SEO
- Great user experience
- ....

70%

20% Evolve (Content Distribution)

Use this portion to expand your reach. Take your proven 70% content and make it travel.

- Repurpose content for YouTube
- Build authority on social platforms
- Advanced structured data
- ....

20%

10% Experiment (New Frontiers)

This is your budget for testing. This is where you experiment with cutting-edge GEO tactics.

- Conversational research for new topics
- Zero-click optimizations
- New GEO tests

10%

05

Redefining success:

NEW KPIs

The most common question we hear is: “My traffic is decreasing, but my conversions are up. How do I measure success?”. The old metrics are no longer enough. We must now focus on two distinct areas.

1. Two focus points

→ Make every click count (post-click)

The clicks you do get are from high-intent users. Your goal is to convert them.

Your post-click KPIs are:

- **Engagement metrics:** Bounce rate, dwell time, and time on page. Are users staying?
- **Conversion rate:** Are these qualified visitors taking the desired action?
- **Unique visitors and next visitors**

→ Win before the click (pre-click)

This is the new challenge: measuring your visibility inside the AI’s answer, before a click ever happens.

Your pre-click KPIs are:

- **Brand Demand:** Branded search, direct traffic. Are more users searching directly for your brand name?
- **AI Visibility:** Organic impressions, share of visibility. How often is your brand mentioned in AI answers for your core topics?

2. How to track AI visibility today

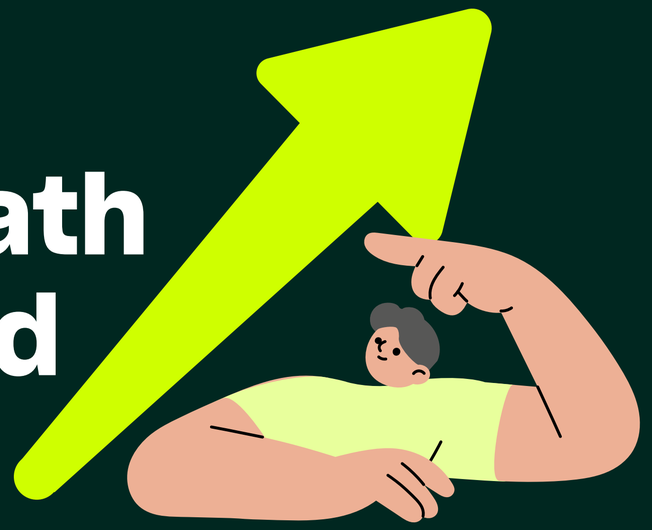
You can gain critical insights from the tools you already use.

1. **Your Web Analytics. Look for referral traffic from AI engines (e.g., chat.openai.com).**
   - Analyze traffic evolution: Is this segment growing?
   - Analyze landing pages: Which of your pages do AI engines already find valuable?
2. **Your Log Files. Your server's log files are a "guestbook" for all visitors, including bots. It tracks every visitor and bot on your website, wich provides valuable real data.**
   - Find AI bot visits: See which pages AI bots visit most. These are your top-performing topics for AI.
   - Find AI-invented 404s: This is the real insight. Look for 404 errors (Page Not Found) from AI bots. These are "invented pages" - URLs the AI believes should exist on your site. This is the best content-gap analysis you can get.
3. **Prompt analysis and GEO dashboards Specialized tools can also track your visibility for specific prompts and identify which competitors are being mentioned as sources.**

> **If an AI engine is looking for a page on your site that does not exist, you should probably create that page.**

06

Your path forward



Search has changed, but the goal remains: provide the best, most trustworthy answer. AI is not a threat; it is an opportunity for true marketeers to win.

GEO take aways

- Implement the **70-20-10 Strategy.**
- **Redefine your KPIs.** Stop focusing on traffic only. Start focusing on engagement metrics, brand demand, and reach/visibility within AI engines
- **Start measuring with the right tools.** Use GA4, GEO dashboard and log files
- **Map conversations, not keywords.** Stop hunting for keywords. Start with your persona's context and use community data like Reddit to find their real conversational questions
- **Your best content must travel.** Repurpose your top-performing content into multiple formats

What's your AI Visibility?

This new landscape is a significant opportunity for brands that can prove their authority. We can help you measure and improve your AI visibility.

Our AI Visibility Quick Scan is an interesting first step.
We will analyze your data to find:

How often AI bots are crawling your site.

Which topics AI engines already see you as an authority on.

New content opportunities hidden in your log files.

Let's get in touch!

Maureen Elbers
Client Service Director

maureen.elbers@springbokagency.com

Let's connect on LinkedIn

Jacco Hermus
SEO GEO Specialist

jacco.hermus@springbokagency.com

Let's connect on LinkedIn

Charlotte de Pauw
Performance & SEO Specialist

charlotte.depauw@springbokagency.com

Let's connect on LinkedIn