

MAKE YOURSELF CITABLE

The Operator's Field Guide to **AEO**



ChatGPT



How to become the answer in AI search
without tricks, fluff, or "hijacking." ✨



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



AEO is not a trick. It is the discipline of making your brand easy to retrieve, safe to cite, and hard to misrepresent.

If traditional **SEO** optimized for rankings, **AEO** optimizes for answers. The win condition is not 'visibility'.

The win condition is becoming the default reference for specific questions that your best customers already ask.

HOW DO ANSWER ENGINES REALLY WORK?

Answers in LLM's come from **2 places**:

1. **Model Memory**: what the system learned during training
2. **Retrieval**: what it can fetch from the web or connected sources at answer time

If you want consistent, accurate mentions, you need both: a **canonical truth source** and **discoverable proof** that corroborates it.

WHY THIS EXISTS

Most AEO Advice is lying to you.

- You cannot “force” an LLM to recommend you
- Tricks don’t compound, trust does
- Real operators can smell manipulation instantly

Answer engines reward **clarity**, **evidence**, and **safety**, not **hacks**.



THE 3 LEVERS OF AEO

Everything that matters fits **here**:

LEGIBILITY

Can the system understand you clearly?

VERIFIABILITY

Can it justify citing you in a response?

CORROBORATION

Do any other sources back you up?

If you're missing one, and your content can't be quoted cleanly, **it won't be.**

LEGIBILITY

Make yourself hard to misunderstand.

- Clear definitions beat clever copy
- Constraints build trust
- “What we are not” reduces hallucinations



Vague positioning = vague AI mentions.

VERIFIABILITY

Be safe to cite.

- Direct answers
- Tables and comparisons
- Author + date



If a sentence can't stand alone, it won't get quoted.

CORROBORATION

Proof beats self-promotion.

- Reviews, not testimonials
- Partners, not puff pieces
- Communities, not astroturfing



If the only source is you, the claim is fragile.

THE ANSWER LIBRARY

You don't need **300** blog posts. You need **~30** answer assets.

- High-intent questions only
- Second-order questions matter more
- Optimize for "skeptical follow-ups"

Example: "How does X **work**?" → "When does X **fail**?"

THE CITABLE PAGE PATTERN

The site order structure that gets quoted:

- TL;DR
- Direct answer
- Steps or checklist
- Examples
- References

This is boring on purpose. **That's why it works.**

THE ENTITY CARD

This is the canonical truth about your company and product. Everything else should match it. If you only publish one new page this month, publish this.

The Entity Card must include:

- One-liner: what you are, for who, to do what, using what mechanism.
- What you do (3 bullets) and what you do not do (anti-hallucination).
- ICP, not-a-fit, category labels you accept, and alternatives people compare you to.
- Core outcomes with constraints: works when / fails when.
- Proof links: case studies, methodology, docs, reviews.
- Owner, last updated date, and update policy.

THE CONSISTENCY GRAPH

Map every place that describes you (site pages, docs, profiles, listings, review sites). Then remove contradictions. Every mismatch increases hallucination risk.

Think of it like data hygiene: if your objects are inconsistent, your reports are fiction. Same idea here.



THE EVIDENCE LADDER

Claims don't earn trust, **evidence does:**

1. Claim: the outcome you promise
2. Mechanism: the work you do, not benefits
3. Artifact: screenshots, examples, schema, logs
4. Corroboration: third-party references (reviews)
5. Repeatability: how someone can test the claim

Operators climb ladders, **marketers shout claims.**



THE 30-DAY AEO SPRINT

How to implement this without boiling the ocean:

- **Week 1:** Fix the truth (entity + consistency)
- **Week 2:** Publish 5 answer assets
- **Week 3:** Add proof and evidence
- **Week 4:** Corroborate and measure

Speed comes from subtraction, **not volume.**

AEO AUDIT SCORECARD

Score each item **0-2** (0 = missing, 1 = partial, 2 = strong). Re-audit monthly.

Area	Check	Score (0-2)
Legibility	One-liner includes who, outcome, and mechanism	
Legibility	What we are / what we are not is explicit	
Legibility	Category labels consistent across pages and profiles	
Verifiability	Top pages include definitions, steps, and constraints	
Verifiability	Outcomes include measurement method and timeframe	
Verifiability	Pages have author + last updated date	
Corroboration	At least 5 credible third-party references exist	
Corroboration	Partner/integration pages describe specific outcomes	
Proof	Claims are backed by artifacts (screenshots, examples, docs)	
Measurement	All referral traffic tracked + mention log maintained	

CLOSING

Stop trying to hack the system.

Build something worth citing instead.



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