GEO Best Practices Guide

Orange 142®

A Direct Digital Holdings Company

Forward

The New Search
The integration of generative AI into search was inevitable. As millions of users embrace AI tools to boost workplace productivity and streamline daily tasks, they're naturally extending these same technologies to transform how they research and make purchase decisions. This shift isn't just changing how people find information, it's upending the customer journey.

To help marketers navigate this transformation, the Orange 142 Emerging Channels Council has created this Best Practices Guide to Generative Engine Optimization (GEO). Our goal is to provide you with the strategic understanding and practical insights needed to maintain and enhance your brand's visibility in an AI-driven search landscape.

About the Orange 142 Emerging Channels Council
The Emerging Channels Council serves as a thought leadership body within Orange 142, focusing on educating, guiding, and encouraging independent brands and agencies to experiment and excel in underutilized and innovative channels. Through collaboration, data-driven insights, and practical resources, the council will help Orange 142 clients obtain strategic growth through sustainable practices in digital advertising.

To access all of the Emerging Channels Council resources, please visit:
https://orange142.com/emerging-channels-hub

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GEO Best Practices Guide

1. The AI Marketing Opportunity: Why GEO Matters Now

Generative AI is transforming marketing at breathtaking speed. McKinsey estimates it could boost marketing productivity by 5-15% of total spend -- a staggering $463 billion annual impact [source: McKinsey]. While AI touches every aspect of marketing, its impact on search represents perhaps the most fundamental shift in how brands connect with customers.

The Rise of Zero Clicks
Enter Generative Engine Optimization (GEO), a critical response to how AI is reshaping the customer journey. As AI-powered search engines evolve from simple link aggregators to sophisticated answer engines, they're creating a phenomenon known as "zero clicks" -- where users find complete answers within the search interface, eliminating the need to visit websites. [source]

By 2025, experts project 60% of all searches in the US and Europe will be zero-click experiences, fundamentally changing how brands must approach digital visibility. [source]

This shift carries profound implications for marketers, which we will discuss later on. For now, suffice it to say that the urgency to master GEO is becoming impossible to ignore. Organizations must now allocate resources to these new optimization strategies in order to maintain their digital presence. This goes beyond traditional SEO -- it requires understanding how AI systems interpret, synthesize, and present information.

The ripple effects are already visible across the marketing landscape. We're seeing growing demand for GEO expertise, spawning new job roles and specialized training. Marketing technology platforms such as HubSpot are integrating AI optimization features, while a new ecosystem of GEO-specific tools is emerging to help brands adapt

For forward-thinking marketers, this shift also presents a rare opportunity. Early adopters of GEO strategies stand to gain significant advantages in digital visibility. However, the stakes are equally high for those who delay: as AI tools increasingly

rewrite and reframe content, brands risk losing control over how their information reaches consumers.

In this new landscape, ensuring accurate citations and maintaining brand authority in AI-generated results isn't just important -- it's essential for survival.

2. The Generative AI Search Engines & The Impact on Consumer Behavior

The way people find information online is undergoing a fundamental transformation. Traditional search engines are evolving into AI-powered platforms that don't just point users to websites -- they understand questions, synthesize information, and engage in conversations.

These new search experiences are reshaping how users discover and consume information:

- Information synthesis replaces link lists. Rather than presenting users with multiple websites to explore, AI search engines analyze content across sources to deliver comprehensive, direct answers within the search interface. [source]

- Conversations replace queries. Users can refine their searches through natural dialogue, asking follow-up questions and drilling deeper into topics without starting new searches or clicking through multiple pages. [source]

- Direct answers replace website visits. By providing complete, contextual responses directly in the results, AI-powered search reduces the need for users to visit individual websites to find what they need. [source]

This shift represents more than a mere upgrade -- it's a fundamental change in how people access information online. For marketers and content creators, the implications are profound. Success now hinges on creating content that AI systems can confidently interpret, synthesize, and present to users.

Let's look at how today's leading AI search platforms are putting these capabilities into practice.

Types of Generative AI Search Engines
As people embrace generative AI tools to boost workplace productivity and streamline daily tasks, they're simultaneously discovering these same technologies can transform how they research and make purchase decisions.

This isn't a happy accident, it's a use case built into the tools by the developers. For instance, in its [YouTube video introducing Deep Research](), an OpenAI engine demonstrates how to use the tool to find the perfect skis for an upcoming trip to Japan.

Perplexity, meanwhile, boasts that its research results include the retailers offering the best price at the moment for the product in question.

Here are the key platforms shaping this new landscape of consumer research:

Category	Example Tool	Key Features	Best For
Generative AI-Enhanced Search	Google SGE [SearchGPT]()	AI snapshots with traditional links	Quick overviews and traditional search
Conversational Generative Search	[Perplexity]() (R1)	Direct answers with citations; real-time web integration	Conversational Q&A with reliable sources
Autonomous Research Agent	[OpenAI Deep Research]()	Multi-step research synthesis; detailed reports	In-depth analysis and information synthesis
Multi-Modal AI Search	[Claude 3]()	Processes text, images, and documents	Queries involving multiple types of media

Generative AI & Organic Search

The impact of AI-driven search on organic traffic is already substantial and projected to grow dramatically. [Gartner forecasts that brands]() could see their organic search traffic plummet by 50% or more by 2028, largely due to zero-click searches. This isn't a distant concern -- [early data from 23 websites]() following Google's AI Overviews launch revealed organic traffic drops ranging from 18% to 64%, highlighting the urgent need for brands to adapt their digital strategies.
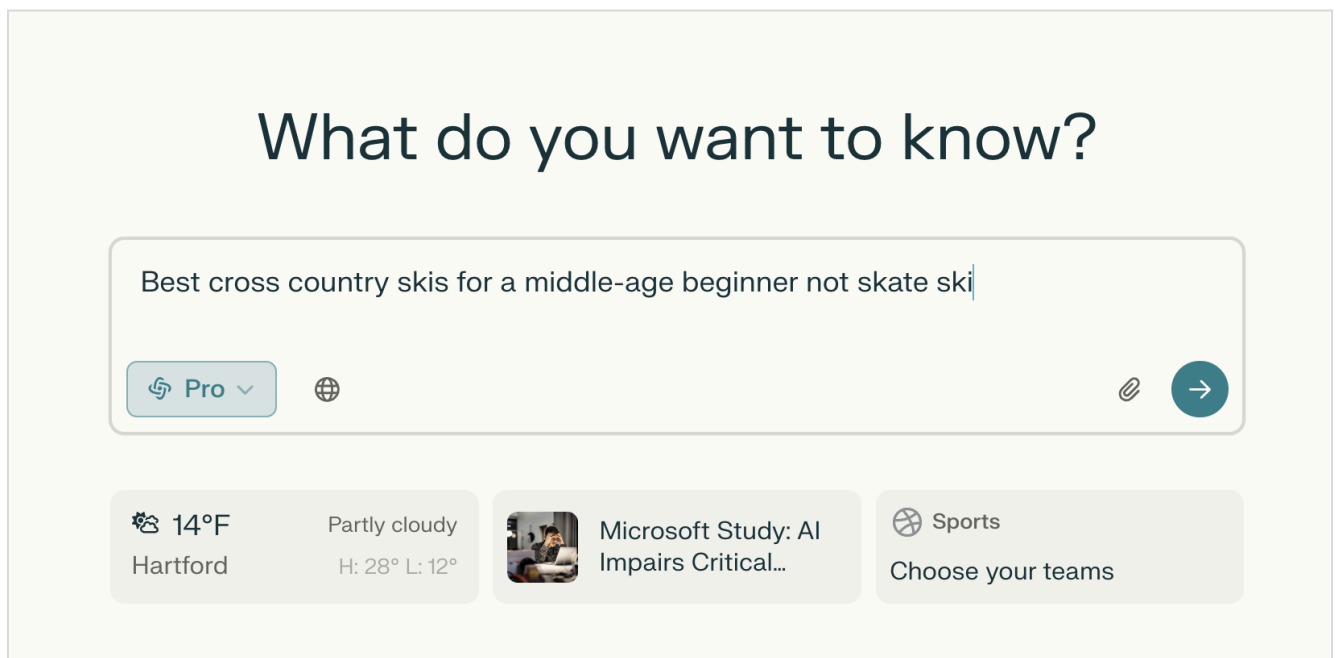
What Generative AI-Search Means for Marketers
We can't emphasize enough how the rise of generative AI-based search is -- and will continue to -- fundamentally change the way consumers discover and interact with content.

In the traditional search model, users receive a list of websites in response to queries, which they must assess and navigate to piece together the information they need to make a purchasing decision. That can entail reading multiple product descriptions, checking reviews across retailer websites, and depending on the price point, paying for specialized review sites (e.g. Consumer Reports) to make informed decisions.

Today's AI-powered search engines transform this fragmented journey into a seamless experience -- aka zero click. These tools synthesize information from across the web to deliver comprehensive answers that include product comparisons, aggregated reviews, pricing analysis, and purchase options -- all within a single interface.

Let's see this in action using Perplexity:

What do you want to know?

Best cross country skis for a middle-age beginner not skate ski

Pro ⌄

🌐 14°F
Hartford

Partly cloudy
H: 28° L: 12°

Microsoft Study: AI
Impairs Critical...

Sports
Choose your teams

✳ Perplexity

🛒 5 Products

For a middle-aged beginner looking for classic cross-country skis (not skate skis), here are some excellent options to consider:

Ski Model	Features	Best For
Rossignol Evo XT 55 Positrack	Waxless fishscale base, shorter length for stability, easy kick and glide, lightweight core	Groomed trails, beginner-friendly 5
Fischer Spider 62 Crown	Full metal edges, Nordic Rocker Camber, versatile for groomed and ungroomed trails	Touring on varied terrain, adventurous beginners 1 5
Atomic Pro C3 Skintec	Skin base for easy grip and glide, lightweight, adjustable bindings	Groomed tracks, beginners aiming to improve technique 5

The Rossignol Evo XT 55 is ideal for those sticking to groomed trails, while the Fischer Spider 62 Crown offers versatility for both on- and off-trail adventures. The Atomic Pro C3 Skintec is a great choice for beginners looking to grow into their skills.

🛒 **Related Products**
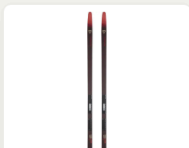
View All   ✕

🔴 REI ↗

Buy with pro

Fischer Spider 62 Crown Xtralite

$294.93 FREE Delivery

★★★★★ 4.8 (29)

✓ Versatility   ✓ Lightweight   ✓ Stability

✕ Limited Powder Performance   ✕ Control in Aggressive Terrain

🔴 REI ↗

Buy with pro

Rossignol Evo XT 55 Positrack Tour Si Skis

$249.95 FREE Delivery

⑤ Pro | Ask follow-up   📎   ↑

Generative AI Search is Inevitable

Generative AI search isn't just an optional feature -- it's becoming the new standard for how information is discovered and presented online. Users who rely on Google can't opt out of AI-generated overviews in their search results; that's a decision Google makes for them.

Even when users scroll past these summaries to traditional-looking results, they still see content that Google's AI search engine has deemed most relevant and authoritative based on GEO principles. This means in the very near future, every aspect of search will be influenced by how well content aligns with AI's understanding and evaluation criteria. The choice isn't between participating in GEO or sticking with traditional SEO, it's between adapting to this new paradigm or becoming increasingly invisible in search results.

[Call Out]
"[AI] does have the potential to be the final weapon that makes traditional search completely unusable." -- George Strakhov, EMEA chief strategy officer at DDB .

[end call out]

For marketers, GEO is becoming an imperative strategy for remaining relevant to the consumer.

3. What is Generative AI Engine Optimization (GEO)?

Traditional SEO has long been the foundation of digital visibility, helping brands rank in search engine results. But with the rise of AI-powered search, the rules have changed. Search engines are no longer just indexing and ranking web pages -- they are interpreting, synthesizing, and generating answers. A new discipline is required.

[Generative AI Engine Optimization (GEO)](#) is the process of optimizing digital content so that AI-driven search engines can accurately recognize, integrate, and cite it in their responses. Unlike traditional SEO, which prioritizes keywords and backlinks, GEO focuses on making content AI-readable, structured, and authoritative so it can be selected and surfaced within AI-generated answers.
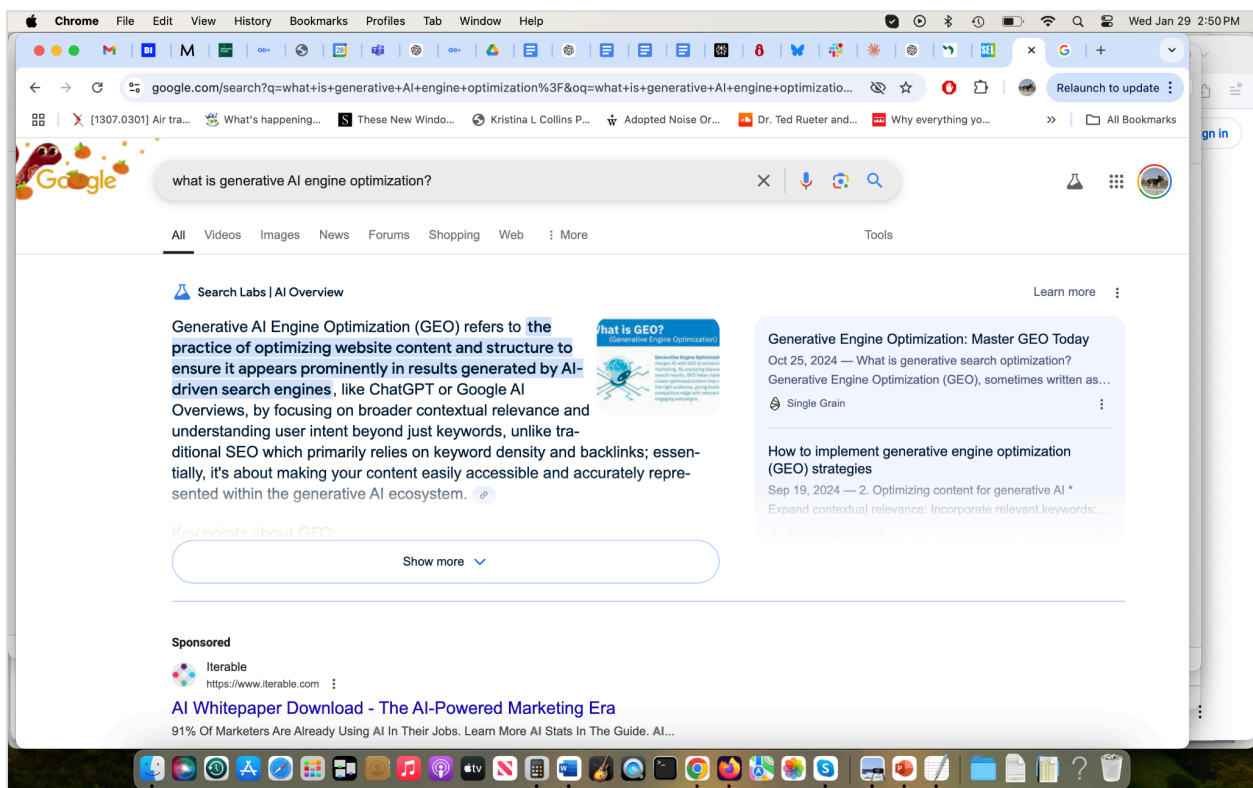
At its core, GEO ensures that brands remain visible in an era where search results are no longer just links, but AI-curated insights.

How GEO Works: Key Factors in AI Search Visibility

To appear in AI-generated results, content must be structured and formatted in ways that align with how AI models process information. This means focusing on:

- AI Comprehension. Structuring content so AI models can easily parse, validate, and synthesize it into relevant answers.

- AI Curation. Understanding how AI selects and prioritizes content when generating responses.

- AI-Driven Intent. Ensuring content aligns with how AI systems interpret user queries, rather than just focusing on keyword matching.

- AI Citation Value. Establishing authority so AI consistently references and attributes content in its generated answers.

Sources: [How to optimize your content for AI search and agents](#) by Search Engine Land (2025-01-29)

GEO isn't about replacing SEO, it's about expanding it to meet the demands of AI-powered search. Businesses that adapt to this new reality will maintain visibility and authority, while those that rely solely on traditional SEO may find themselves increasingly invisible in AI-generated search results.

How LLMs Select, Rank and Cite Content

Unlike traditional search engines, AI models don't just rank pages -- they synthesize and generate responses by analyzing massive amounts of data. While the exact ranking mechanisms are proprietary, the general process includes:

Data Processing & Training	AI models are trained on massive datasets, with preprocessing steps like cleaning, parsing, and normalization.
Content Analysis	Advanced techniques such entity-based optimization and semantic understanding help AI models interpret content contextually.
Ranking & Relevance	Modern LLMs use zero-shot ranking and sophisticated scoring systems such as Expected Relevance Value (ERV) to assess content quality

Response Generation	AI models predict and generate answers rather than retrieving direct quotes, though they can be fine-tuned to indicate knowledge limitations.
Evaluation & Fine-tuning	Continuous refinement, using methods like [LLM-as-a-judge](#), improves response quality and content selection

Why GEO Matters Now

The impact of AI-driven search is already evident. Studies show that organic website traffic is declining, and zero-click searches are rapidly rising. Brands that fail to optimize for AI search visibility risk losing control over how their information is presented -- or worse, being left out of AI-generated results entirely. When that happens, your brand is at risk of being omitted from the consumer's decision-making process.

Impact of GEO on Attribution

The rise of zero-click searches has made traditional attribution models less effective. Marketers have long relied on CTR, conversions, and referral traffic to measure SEO success, but AI-generated results disrupt this model in key ways:

- Declining clicks and traffic loss as users get their answers directly from AI-generated summaries, fewer are clicking through to websites, reducing measurable traffic.

- Conversion tracking gaps occur, especially in cases where consumers don't visit your site but still see and act on AI-generated content about your brand.

These developments are raising new challenges. Specifically, we need additional metrics that can measure events such as visibility in AI-generated results, how often AI systems cite a brand's content, and the influence on AI-driven decision-making on consumer behavior.

As AI search engines become more prevalent, success can't just be measured by website traffic anymore. What matters now is how accurately and favorably AI systems present your brand when answering user queries. GEO is about ensuring AI systems understand and represent your brand correctly when synthesizing information for users, not just about appearing high in search results.

4. How SEO and GEO Differ

SEO and GEO may share optimization principles, but they serve very different purposes. SEO is designed to improve rankings in traditional search engines, while GEO ensures that content is recognized, synthesized, and cited by AI systems. The table below outlines the key differences between these two approaches, highlighting how content strategies must evolve to remain effective in an AI-driven search landscape.

Action	SEO	GEO
Response Generation	SEO optimizes for traditional search engines that provide a list of links in response to user queries.	GEO optimizes content for AI systems to synthesize and prioritize information, generating quick and comprehensive responses.
Content Contextualization	SEO optimizes meta tags and content with keywords to improve search rankings.	GEO ensures that content is clear and contextually relevant, enabling AI algorithms to generate accurate and comprehensive responses.
Information Synthesis	SEO aims to improve the ranking of individual pages.	GEO focuses on how AI integrates and synthesizes content from multiple sources to provide comprehensive answers.
User Intent Understanding	SEO matches keywords to user queries to drive traffic.	GEO uses advanced AI to interpret and anticipate user intent more accurately, delivering more nuanced and precise responses.
Algorithm Adaption	SEO practitioners continuously adapt to [updates in search engine algorithms]().	GEO requires ongoing adaptation to the evolving capabilities, preferences and methodologies of AI technologies.

Content Formatting	SEO optimizes content for traditional search engine formats.	GEO crafts content that can be easily parsed and utilized by AI, including structured data and formats friendly to natural language processing.
Research-Driven Strategy	SEO relies on keyword research and technical analysis to inform optimization strategies.	GEO requires analyzing AI-generated content structures, topics and citation patterns and how they evolve over time to refine strategies, ensuring alignment with AI content processing and prioritization
Performance Tracking	SEO tracks keyword performance, rankings and other organic search metrics to apply to optimization strategies.	GEO tracks referral traffic from AI engines, cited sources and response structures to understand how AI-driven platforms prioritize and display your content, informing optimization tactics.

(Source: Search Engine Land)

As AI search continues to reshape how information is surfaced, GEO is no longer optional -- it's essential. Traditional SEO tactics alone won't ensure visibility in AI-generated responses. To stay competitive, businesses must optimize content for AI comprehension and synthesis, ensuring their information is not just available, but actively used by AI systems to answer user queries.

5. Best Practices for GEO

Tactics for optimizing content for AI visibility and comprehension
As AI-driven search becomes dominant, GEO specialists focus on making content readable, interpretable, and valuable for AI-generated responses. The following strategies ensure AI systems correctly process and surface content:

Content Structuring & Formatting	• Use clear headers, sections, and metadata for AI readability. • Implement schema markup and structured formatting (tables, lists, Q&A). • Ensure content is hierarchically organized and easy to parse.
Content Quality & Direct Answers	• Lead with concise, factual statements addressing common queries. • Structure information for AI-friendly comprehension rather than just keyword ranking. • Support claims with data, evidence, and authoritative sources.
Enhancing Credibility & Authority	• Cite credible, verifiable sources to improve AI trustworthiness. • Use consistent, factually accurate messaging across platforms. • Link to authoritative references that AI models prioritize.
Entity-Based Optimization	• Define clear relationships between concepts (e.g., "iPhone" & "iOS"). • Use consistent terminology and contextually relevant content. • Optimize for natural language processing (NLP) to align with AI query structures.
Technical Optimization for AI Comprehension	• Utilize structured data and knowledge graphs for AI visibility. • Implement named entity recognition to ensure AI understands key terms. • Optimize internal and external links for AI crawling and fact verification.
Optimizing for User Intent and Queries	• Answer natural language questions in a way AI can easily process. • Structure responses to align with conversational search behaviors.

	• Anticipate follow-up questions and related queries.
Brand Representation	• Maintain consistent brand messaging and clear attribution. • Strategically place brand mentions in AI-friendly formats. • Ensure AI-generated responses reflect accurate, authoritative brand information.
Use Emerging Measurement tools	HubSpot's [AI Search Grader](#) is a new tool that lets SEO teams understand content performance in AI search results: • Frequency of brand mentions in AI overviews • Contextual relevance in AI-generated responses • Dept of citations in generative search results

6. Final Thoughts

While no one can predict the future, the trajectory does seem clear: Generative AI search will become the dominant way consumers discover and evaluate products.

Google, with its massive global user base, will be a primary force in continued adoption. As a company whose success was built on search, it's unlikely they'll cede ground to newcomers such as Perplexity or OpenAI's Deep Research. Rather, it's easy to envision their rapidly growing AI Overviews to include end-to-end purchasing experiences that match their competitors.

AI search isn't just another search innovation, it's a radical shift in the way consumers make buying decisions. The traditional journey of visiting multiple websites, reading reviews, and comparing options is being replaced by AI-generated overviews that deliver everything from product comparisons to pricing in a single interface. Google's integration of this technology into their core search experience means this shift isn't optional, it's inevitable.

For brand managers, this creates new strategic imperatives. The window for brand discovery narrows as AI systems curate and synthesize options. Traditional product adjacency and cross-selling opportunities will diminish. Most critically, brand visibility becomes increasingly dependent on how well AI systems understand and represent your value proposition.

The brands that succeed in the new landscape will be those that master GEO early, especially as organic traffic continues to decline and zero-click searches become the norm. The ability to shape how AI systems interpret and present your brand isn't just a competitive advantage, it's essential for survival in the digital marketplace.

Want to learn how this can work for you? Orange 142 helps SMBs navigate and maximize GEO with strategic guidance and best practices. Let's connect to explore the right approach for your goals. Contact us today!