What Businesses Should Know Before Hiring an AEO Agency

Buyers now ask ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity and Google's AI Overviews for answers. Those tools often reply with a short summary that names only a handful of suppliers. Answer engine optimization (AEO) is the work of making a brand one of those named, cited sources. Demand is rising fast, and more B2B companies now compare options before hiring an AEO agency.

People Also Ask

1. What does an AEO agency do?
An AEO agency structures a company's content, data and authority signals so AI answer engines can cite it.

2. Is AEO different from SEO?
AEO builds on SEO fundamentals but focuses on earning citations inside AI-generated answers.

For B2B and industrial companies, the wrong partner can mean months of spend with little to show. This guide covers what a sound engagement includes and what to ask before signing. It also covers the warning signs and why industry knowledge matters.

Rising Demand for AEO Services

A Pew Research Center analysis published in July 2025 tracked how Google users responded to AI summaries. Users clicked a traditional result link in 8% of visits when an AI summary appeared. Without a summary, that figure rose to 15%. The same analysis found that longer, more specific searches were more likely to trigger an AI summary.

That second finding matters for B2B. Industrial buyers ask detailed questions about tolerances, materials, lead times and compliance. Those are exactly the queries where AI summaries now sit above the links.

Companies that rank well in Google can still be missing from those answers. Answer engines weigh structure, entity clarity and third-party mentions differently. Certain signs reveal when a website isn't optimized for AI search answers. That gap is driving demand for AEO services in the USA. **Understanding how an AI SEO agency gets a business found in AI search clarifies AEO's role.**

Services That Should Be Included

A credible AEO engagement covers more than rewriting a few pages. Core components usually include:

- AI visibility audit: tests how answer engines currently describe the brand and which competitors they cite instead.
- Technical foundations: schema markup, crawl access for AfvI bots, clean site architecture and fast page loads.
- Answer-first content: pages and FAQs that give direct, quotable answers to the questions buyers actually ask.

- Entity and authority building: consistent business information, directory listings, reviews and mentions on trusted third-party sites.
- Monitoring and reporting: tracking citations, AI referral traffic and lead quality over time.

This is how we structure our answer engine optimization services. Our AI Visibility Engine™ moves through five stages. They are a visibility audit, competitor gap analysis, content and technical remediation, authority building and monitoring. Each recommendation ties back to a measured baseline. These services fit into a broader AI search strategy with AEO services.

Questions to Ask Before Signing

Clear answers to these questions separate a real AEO program from a rebranded SEO retainer:

- Which metrics and platforms define AI visibility in the reporting?
- What does the audit show about current presence in AI answers?
- Which deliverables land in the first 90 days?
- How does AEO connect with existing SEO, content and paid campaigns?
- Who owns the content, schema and data created during the engagement?
- Are there documented results from companies in the same industry?

A vague answer to the measurement question is a clear warning sign.

Red Flags to Watch For

Watch for these during the sales process:

- Guaranteed placement in ChatGPT or AI Overviews. No one controls what an AI model outputs, so a guarantee signals either misunderstanding or overselling.
- No baseline audit. Without a starting measurement, no one can prove progress.
- Content volume as the main deliverable. Dozens of thin, AI-written posts rarely earn citations; clear, accurate, well-structured pages do.
- Technical SEO left out. Answer engines still rely on crawlable, indexed, well-organized sites.
- Activity-only reporting. Monthly reports should connect AI visibility to traffic, leads or pipeline, not just list tasks completed.

Why Industry Experience Matters

Answer engines favor content that reflects real knowledge of a field. That means correct terminology, accurate specifications and direct answers to sector-specific buyer questions. A team that understands industrial procurement writes differently for a manufacturing engineer than for a consumer.

That is where our background shapes the work. MacRAE'S Blue Book has been the trusted source industrial buyers turn to for over a century. We've applied that insight to digital marketing and SEO for more than 25 years.

How to Choose the Right AEO Agency

The right AEO agency audits before it promises and covers technical, content and authority work. It also reports on business outcomes and understands the client's market. Use the questions above to screen

candidates, and treat guarantees as a warning rather than a selling point. Some companies also weigh an in-house marketing team against an AEO agency before deciding.

Book a free AI visibility audit with MacRAE'S to see how AI answer engines describe a company today. We identify where it is cited, where competitors appear instead, and what to fix first.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How long does AEO take to show results?

Structural fixes and early citations can appear within a few months. Consistent visibility takes longer, because authority building and monitoring are ongoing.

2. Can my current SEO agency handle AEO?

It can if it audits AI visibility, tracks citations across answer engines and adapts content structure, not just rankings. Ask for specific AEO deliverables.

3. Which AI platforms should an AEO agency track?

At minimum ChatGPT, Google AI Overviews, Gemini, Perplexity and Microsoft Copilot, since B2B buyers often use more than one.

4. Does AEO replace SEO?

No. AEO depends on SEO foundations such as crawlable pages, clear site structure and authority. The two work best as one program.

5. How does MacRAE'S approach AEO for B2B companies?

We start with a free AI visibility audit. Our AI Visibility Engine™ then closes content, technical and authority gaps, with regular reporting on citations and leads.

Meta Description:

Planning to hire an AEO agency? Learn which services to expect, questions to ask before signing, red flags to avoid and why industry experience matters.

snippet:

AI answer engines now shape B2B shortlists, and AEO agencies are multiplying fast. Before signing, check the services, ask the right questions and watch for red flags that signal overselling.

#AEO #AnswerEngineOptimization #AISearch #B2BMarketing #DigitalMarketing