
SEO is now AEO

BUT DON'T PANIC!

You don't need to buy anything new

SEO for local businesses is:

- Search Engine Optimization (SEO) - content about your business that you post on your website, social profiles and Google Business Profile, or elsewhere, so that your business shows on a Search Engine Results Page (or SERP).

AEO for local businesses is:

- As above, but AEO stands for **Answer Engine Optimization**. It is the latest subset of SEO. AEO means making sure information from and about your business shows up in the AI Overview section of a SERP, or when someone asks a relevant question to a Large Language Model, like ChatGPT.

The situation in a nutshell:

Search engines are moving toward what some call “**answer-engines**,” which place an emphasis on directly answering user questions, rather than showing relevant results in the form of webpages.

Search engines have always aimed to provide the most relevant results with links to the best websites or business profiles. Now, they increasingly look to give **direct answers to queries**, often displayed at the very top of the search results page.

You might think that **this sounds like a major shift** that you need to take care of; you’re right about it being a major shift, but if you have the foundations of search engine optimization firmly in place, you are already on the path to success. By ensuring your

business name, address, and telephone number are consistent across the web, maintaining a robust Google Business Profile with plenty of positive customer feedback, and continuing to cultivate a high-quality online presence, you will find the switch to focusing on answer engines much less of a jump.

Answer engine optimization is simply a refinement of search engine optimization, not a wholesale replacement. It only requires a few tweaks, and then you'll be in the best position to reap the benefits of this new approach to search and discovery.

Why a Strong Online Foundation Matters

As I'm sure you already know, every day hundreds to thousands of prospective customers search online for products and services in their neighborhood and find information about businesses such as yours.

When your information is accurate and your reputation is solid, you appear more trustworthy and authoritative to people, search engines, and AI LLMs. That leads to higher **visibility**, and more recommendations, which in turn leads to more **website visitors** and more **walkins/inquiries/bookings etc.**

What to do to be on top:

1. Consistent Business Information

If your name, street address, and telephone number differ from site to site, search engines and LLMs become less confident to recommend you. You need consistency everywhere - on your own website, on directory listings and on your social media profiles, **as this all signals reliability**. It keeps potential customers from dialling the wrong number or showing up at the wrong location, and makes search engines and AIs confident that they're not feeding incorrect information to their users. The more confidence a search engine has in your business's online info, the better.

2. Robust Business Listing

Your profile on major map and search platforms is like a portal to your storefront. And the key to local SEO is your Google Business Profile, not your website. Keep it up to date with clear business categories, high-quality photos, and a succinct but informative description of what you do. Regularly check that your opening hours reflect holiday schedules or seasonal changes. Keep the info on your GBP consistent with your homepage. Post to it at least weekly. If you're struggling, use the prompt at the end of this document in Claude or Gemini. (Use the pro versions for this - take advantage of free trials if you don't have them!)

3. Positive Customer Feedback

Online reviews serve as social proof. Encouraging satisfied patrons to share their experiences not only raises your average rating across the platforms but also generates fresh, keyword-rich content. Responding courteously to all feedback - especially critical comments - shows you are engaged and customer-focused. And it shows this not just to prospective customers, but to the search and answer engines too. Reviews and their responses also give you a lot of organic SEO content. Learn more about reviews and how they actually help your business [here](#).

So what do I need to change? What are the 'tweaks'?

Once you've got all the essentials, there are only a few adaptations you need to make to the way you think about SEO content.

1. Frequently Asked Questions page

In the past, you optimized web pages so that your site would rank on the first page of search results. Now, you want to feed information to the algorithms ('the machine') This means that the content you craft and post must directly address common questions. For example, if people frequently ask "Where can I find the best independent café in town?" you might include a succinct answer in a frequently asked questions section on your site, explaining why you're the best and how people can find you. You can use the Google search function to see what people are searching for, and you probably know what the best FAQ's are, anyway!

The FAQ section should be on your homepage, and once so, update your [markup schema](#). It would also pay to have this on your GBP too - you used to be able to directly fill out an FAQ section on your GBP. This function is gone now, and AI overviews answer questions based on your other GBP, website, and social media content.

2. Wall of Love Page

A wall of love is a page of **just your reviews**. But there is a way to go about this to make it very well liked by the search engines, the answer engines, and by your visitors too.

Your wall of love should:

- Live-link to reviews from review sites, not have static text.
- Display reviews from many review sites, not just one (e.g. Trustpilot)
- Show scores, and the narratives explaining the scores (not just the stars)

Your wall of love should not just be a static testimonials page. Public reviews from third-party platforms, collated in this 'wall of love' style, really works best. Here's an example to illustrate: <https://www.plutio.com/customers> (I am not affiliated with this company or its wall of love in any way but it is a great example

3. Reviews [Why Google reviews will power up your local SEO in 2025](#)

It's already been mentioned, but it's worth mentioning again - have a good review score, with plenty of recent reviews. This is so that the answer engines will feel confident in promoting you to searchers. Reviews should be regular, recent, relevant and replied to. [You can learn more about the importance of reviews and answer engines here.](#)

4. GBP

Your Google Business Profile is now **essential**. Your business listings must all point to the GBP, and all info must be correct and congruent. Your GBP should link to your website, and vice versa. Articles, info, and photos should be posted to your GBP at least monthly, if not weekly, and you must post regular updates, as you would your Facebook page, for example.

Why isn't this a massive change?

Answer-engine optimization isn't a completely new discipline. It builds on the same fundamentals as SEO: clear site structure, authoritative content, and user-friendly design.

The new bit is simply that search engines via the AI overviews reward sites that offer direct, concise information that is not available elsewhere, such as info about your specific business, where you are and how you work, reviews and review responses, and answers to FAQ's.

If you have kept your **website organized**, your **business information consistent** across the web, and your **customer reviews** coming in, you're already practising the core principles. Remember, if you have that, which you should, the new adaptations are easy to make (more on that below).

Move now to have an advantage over your competition!

You can get your reviews popping by using my [Shine Online platform](#). Use that link to learn all about it! You can also use this platform to get yourself that Wall of Love - do that using the 'widgets' section. Design your Aall of Love widget easily from within the Shine Online platform, then create a new page in the backend of your website, paste the widget code in, and your wall of love will be live within minutes!

You should also be on top of all of the standard SEO for your site, and you can learn how I can help with that [here](#). It's another easy-to-read Google doc. In fact, I would say **it's better than this one**. If you choose to let me help you spruce your SEO up, I'll also create the FAQ content for you for free - just mention it to me at the time and say you read this article.

So that's how to win in the current age of AEO - Stay on top of your SEO best practices (of which AEO is a subset), get regular good reviews, have a Wall of Love, and a relevant FAQ section on your home page. Easy!

Here's to your success!

Paul.

GBP Prompt

PROMPT:

Create 52 engaging Google Business Profile posts outlines for me to create my own GBP post for [BUSINESS NAME], a [BUSINESS TYPE] located in [CITY/REGION]. Each post should be between 150-300 characters, include a clear call-to-action, and be designed to increase engagement, visibility, and conversions.

Do not include email address, phone number, or website url in the GBP posts.

Key Business Information:

Business name: [FILL IN]

Business type/industry: [FILL IN]

Location: [FILL IN]

Primary services: [LIST 3-5 MAIN OFFERINGS]

USPs: [LIST 2-3]

Website URL: [FILL IN]

Post Categories (Distribute 13 posts each):

1. Promotional (Offers, new services)
2. Educational (Industry tips, FAQs)
3. Engagement (Testimonials, team spotlights)
4. Seasonal/Event (Holidays, milestones)

Post Structure:

- Headline
- Body (150-300 chars)
- CTA (Vary: Call now, Book online, Learn more)
- Image recommendation
- Hashtags (2-3 max)

Seasonal Distribution Guidance:

Jan-Mar: New year goals, winter services

Apr-Jun: Spring offerings, summer prep

Jul-Sep: Summer services, back-to-school

Oct-Dec: Holiday prep, year-end promos

OUTPUT: give me 52 numbered post outlines that I can use to easily post once a week to my GBP. Do not give me full posts, but the outlines must be substantial.

END PROMPT

NOTE TO USER: Fill in any relevant information and make any necessary tweaks. Always check the work of AI - it's a useful assistant, but it's highly fallible. It will probably ask you if you want it to write the posts for you. You can let it do this, but again, check its work and make your tweaks. I highly recommend writing the posts yourself using the AI outline, or get in touch with me, and I can put you in touch with a professional writer for small businesses who can do this all for you.