



FOR MARKETING AND EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES

Getting Found

Search & AI Search 2026 — US

How US businesses get found in 2026 — across Google, AI answer engines and AI Overviews. Practical SEO and GEO (generative engine optimization).

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01

Why Discovery Changed

How people find businesses has changed. Alongside traditional Google search, a growing share of US buyers now ask an AI assistant — ChatGPT, Gemini, Microsoft Copilot — or read Google’s AI Overviews without ever clicking through. Being the answer those systems give is becoming as important as ranking on page one.

This guide covers both at once: classic SEO (so you rank and get clicked) and GEO — generative engine optimisation — so AI systems understand, trust and cite you. The principles are global; the signals and examples are US.

02

SEO Fundamentals (still essential)

AI hasn’t replaced search — it sits on top of it, and it draws on the same authority signals. The fundamentals still decide whether you rank and whether an AI trusts you as a source.

Lever	What it means	Priority
Relevant content	Genuinely answers the query, well-structured	Core
Authority	Earned links & citations from trusted sites	Core
Technical health	Fast, crawlable, mobile, good Core Web Vitals	Core
Page experience	Clear layout, no intrusive interstitials	High

03

GEO: Optimising for AI Answers

Generative engine optimisation is about being the source an AI cites. The goal shifts from “rank #1” to “be the answer, and be named”. In practice that means writing clear, self-contained answers, stating facts unambiguously, and making your key information trivial for a machine to extract and quote.

Put the answer near the top. Use plain language. Avoid burying the point in a wall of text. Where a question has a definite answer, give it directly — then expand.

04 Structured Data & Machine-Readable Content

Schema.org structured data helps engines parse and quote you accurately. An /llms.txt file — a plain-English index of who you are and what you offer — is an emerging, low-cost signal that helps AI state your facts correctly.

Signal	Helps with	Effort
Organization schema	Entity recognition	Low
FAQPage schema	Direct-answer eligibility	Low
Article / Report schema	Content understanding & citation	Low
llms.txt	AI fact accuracy	Low

05 Authority, Local & Entity Signals

AI engines lean on sources they consider trustworthy, so citations from reputable US publications, directories and partners remain the strongest lever. Original, genuinely useful material earns those citations.

A consistent business identity across your site, Google Business Profile, state registration & EIN and local citations helps engines resolve you as a real, specific entity — which is exactly what they need to cite you confidently. For multi-location businesses, per-location pages and profiles matter.

06 Measuring AI Visibility & Next Steps

Beyond rankings and traffic, track how AI assistants describe your business and whether they name you for the queries that matter. If they get it wrong or omit you, that is the gap to close.

GEO is new and the signals are evolving; treat specific tactics as current best-guess, not guarantees. The fundamentals — clarity, structure, authority and a consistent entity — are durable. CMB Insight runs combined SEO + GEO audits and reports against agreed KPIs.

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