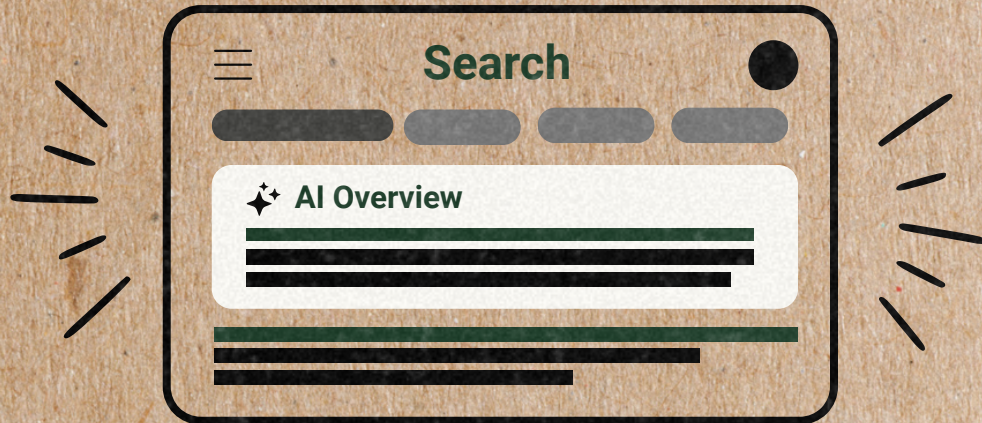
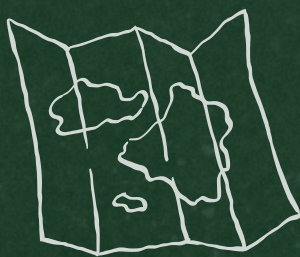


THE B2B MARKETER'S AEO FIELD GUIDE



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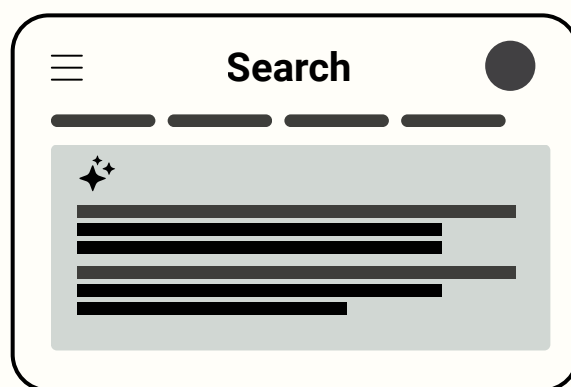
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STOP MEASURING THE WRONG THINGS

HOW TO IMPROVE AI VISIBILITY, BUYER CONFIDENCE, AND PIPELINE IMPACT

Your buyers are getting answers **before they ever reach your website.**



That means the old map is breaking.

For years, SEO was one of the primary paths to digital visibility. A buyer asked a question, reviewed a list of links, and chose where to go next. Your job was to earn the click and capture demand.

AI changes that sequence.

AI tools interpret the question, select credible inputs, summarize the market, compare options, and narrow the field before a buyer visits anything.

By the time a click happens, much of the evaluation is already done.

Visits from search engines will continue to decline. The latest research from SparkToro indicates that less than 30% of searches result in clicks to commercial websites. But fewer visits do not always mean weaker demand.

Done well, Answer Engine Optimization (AEO) can help the right people arrive with more context, stronger intent, and greater confidence.

WHAT IS AEO?

| AEO stands for **Answer Engine Optimization**.

It's the practice of **optimizing your content, structure, and digital presence so AI tools** like ChatGPT, Claude, Perplexity, Gemini, and Google AI Overviews **can accurately understand, retrieve, and reference your expertise** when answering buyer questions.

AI Drives Higher-Quality Traffic



4.4×

LLM visitors convert better than organic search visitors
(SEMRush, June 2025, across 500+ high-value topics).



11.4%

Conversion rate for AI-referred traffic vs. 5.3% for traditional organic (Similarweb).



23×

Better conversion
AI search visitors generated 12.1% of signups from just 0.5% of traffic (Ahrefs).

By the time someone clicks, **much of the evaluation is already done.**

THE AI DISCOVERY GAP

Your **website is no longer the only place buyers learn who you are, what you do, and whether they should trust you.** Like buyers, AI systems form answers using a much broader set of signals. Many of those are outside your website or things you can control.

The space between what your company knows, what your buyers need to know, and what AI systems can confidently surface is the AI Discovery Gap.

Closing that gap is becoming one of the most important challenges in modern B2B marketing.

THE AI DISCOVERY GAP

THE CHANNELS YOU CAN CONTROL

WHERE YOU'RE INVESTING

SEO & WEBSITE

PAID SOCIAL & ADS

EMAIL & NURTURE

EVENTS & WEBINARS

BEFORE THEY REACH YOUR SITE

WHERE BUYERS ARE DECIDING

CHATGPT

GEMINI

PERPLEXITY

AI-ASSISTED RESEARCH

THE GAP



AI DISCOVERY HAPPENS HERE

NO VISIBILITY. NO CONTROL.

WHAT DETERMINES IF YOU SHOW UP

OWNED CONTENT

- Blogs
- Service Pages
- FAQs

THIRD-PARTY COVERAGE

- Industry Roundups
- Analyst Reports
- Listicles

REVIEW PLATFORMS

- G2
- Capterra
- Google Reviews.

SOCIAL PRESENCE

- LinkedIn
- Reddit
- YouTube

EARNED MEDIA

- Press Coverage
- Partnerships
- Mentions

USER GENERATED CONTENT

- Forums
- Case Studies
- Community

Most B2B brands actively manage 1-2 of these signals.

AI-recommended brands manage all 6.

The AI Discovery Gap matters because trust is forming earlier than ever. Buyers are increasingly forming opinions before they ever engage directly with your company. If AI systems can't accurately understand and represent your expertise during that process, you may never become part of the buyer's consideration set.

That means AI visibility is not just a traffic issue. It's a buyer confidence issue.

This guide will show you how to improve both.

You will learn how to:

- **Understand the shift from SEO to AEO**
- **Evaluate your current AI visibility foundation**
- **Improve your chances of being cited in AI answers**
- **Create content that buyers and AI systems can understand**
- **Strengthen trust signals beyond your website**
- **Test and improve visibility over time**
- **Measure the signals that connect visibility to pipeline**

THE TERRAIN HAS CHANGED: FROM SEO TO AEO (ANSWER ENGINE OPTIMIZATION)

SEO still matters. Helpful content, crawlable pages, clear structure, technical health, and credible citations help buyers, search engines, and AI systems understand your company.

But SEO is no longer the whole map.

Traditional SEO focuses on earning visibility in search results. AEO expands that focus by helping your company show up accurately and credibly wherever AI systems gather information to answer buyer questions.



**AL DOESN'T RANK WEBSITES.
IT RECOMMENDS COMPANIES.**

SEO CREATES VISIBILITY.
AEO BUILDS TRUST AT THE MOMENT OF CHOICE.

HOW AEO DIFFERS FROM SEO

SEO		AEO
RANK FOR KEYWORDS	→	ANSWER BUYER INTENT
OPTIMIZE FOR LINKS	→	OPTIMIZE FOR RETRIEVAL
RELY ON METADATA	→	RELY ON STRUCTURE & CLARITY
DRIVE TRAFFIC	→	DELIVER ANSWERS
KEYWORDS	→	ENTITIES & CONTEXT
TECHNICAL SEO	→	ILMS.TXT, SCHEMA, AL-ACCESSIBLE CODE
FIRST PAGE = WIN	→	FIRST ANSWER = WIN



MORE THAN 60% OF GOOGLE SEARCHES NOW END WITHOUT A CLICK.

SOURCE: SPARKTORO + DATOS

That means buyers can learn, compare, and form opinions before they ever land on your site. That is why the foundation has to expand beyond rankings and traffic.

BUILD YOUR BASECAMP: FOUNDATIONS FOR AI VISIBILITY

Now that the terrain has changed, the next question is simple:

What foundation do you need to build?

Most conversations about AEO focus on visibility.

Visibility matters. But visibility alone does not create pipeline.

Visibility is only the first step.

Buyers must also understand your value, trust your expertise, and feel confident enough to choose you.

That's why AEO is bigger than search visibility; it's about buyer confidence.

Buyers still need to understand what you do.

They still need to find you when it matters.

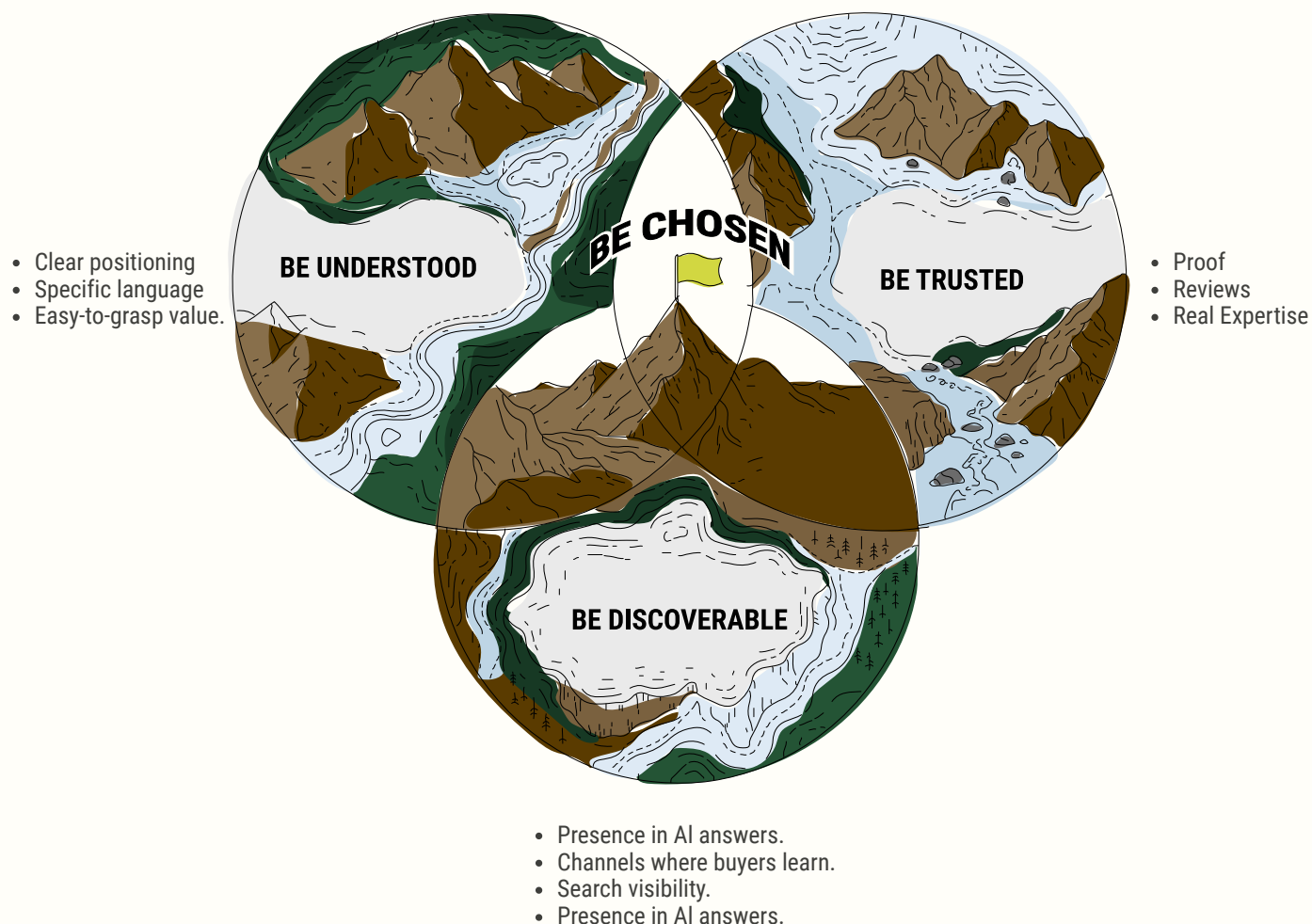
They still need to trust your expertise.

And ultimately, they need enough confidence to choose you.

That is why we use a four-part AEO framework:

- **Be Understood**
- **Be Discoverable**
- **Be Trusted**
- **Be Chosen**

When these four elements work together, visibility becomes buyer confidence, and buyer confidence becomes pipeline.



The goal is not simply to show up or get mentioned in AI answers. The goal is to make your company easier to understand, easier to trust, and easier to choose when buyers are already forming opinions.

The sections ahead will help you assess your current state, strengthen your foundation, and close the AI Discovery Gap.

Think of them as the trail markers that show whether buyers can understand, find, trust, and ultimately choose your company.

TRAIL MAP:

YOUR AEO READINESS SCORECARD

Before any journey, you need to know what you're carrying and what you're missing. Use this scorecard to identify where the AI Discovery Gap is creating friction between your expertise and your buyers' ability to find, trust, and choose your company.

Score each area from 1-5 using the scale below.

AEO Requirement	What It Means	What to Check	Score
Be Understood	Can buyers and AI tools quickly understand who we serve, what we do, what problems we solve, and why we are different?	Homepage, service pages, About page, company boilerplate, author bios, Review Listings, LinkedIn company page, partner profiles.	
Be Discoverable	Do we show up when buyers research, compare, and evaluate solutions?	AI answers, organic rankings, review sites, industry content, social media, podcasts, and third-party mentions.	
Be Trusted	Are our claims reinforced by credible proof across our website and external sources?	Case studies, testimonials, reviews, partner pages, certifications, awards, author credentials, podcasts, third-party articles, customer examples.	
Be Chosen	Do buyers find enough information to feel confident that we are a credible, relevant, and low-risk option? Is it clear how to take the next step with us?	Comparison pages, decision-stage content, implementation details, pricing context, proof points, objection-handling content, sales enablement assets.	

HOW TO READ THE TERRAIN

Score each area from 1 to 5.

Score	Meaning
1	Major gap. We have serious work to do.
2	Some foundation exists, but it is incomplete, inconsistent, or hard to find.
3	Adequate. We cover the basics, but there are clear opportunities to improve.
4	Strong. Buyers and AI tools can access what they need.
5	Excellent. We are clearly positioned, easy to find, well-supported by evidence, and differentiated at decision-making moments.

WHAT YOUR SCORE IS TELLING YOU

Total Score	What It Suggests
4–8	Your AEO foundation is weak. Start with clarity, service pages, proof, and core FAQs.
9–13	You have useful assets, but they are likely scattered or incomplete. Prioritize structure, consistency, and build content that answers buyers' questions.
14–17	You have a solid foundation. Focus on decision-stage content, third-party proof, testimonials, and measurement.
18–20	You are in a strong position. Focus on ongoing testing, distribution, and pipeline impact.

CHOOSE YOUR PATH

Before diving into the field guide, use this matrix to prioritize your efforts based on impact and difficulty:

If Your Lowest Score Is...	What It Usually Means	Quick Win	Strategic Move	Foundation Move
Be Understood	Buyers and AI tools may not clearly understand who you serve, what you do, or why you are different.	Standardize company descriptions across your website, LinkedIn, review sites, and partner profiles.	Tighten homepage and service page messaging around who you help, what problems you solve, and what outcomes you support.	Revisit positioning and define the 3–5 categories or content pillars you want your brand to be known for.
Be Discoverable	You may have valuable expertise, but buyers and AI tools aren't consistently finding it.	Create or update FAQ content around real buyer questions.	Build comparison pages, answer-first content, and internal links around priority topics.	Develop a hub-and-spoke content structure and add schema markup to key pages.
Be Trusted	Your claims may not be backed by enough visible proof across your website and external sources.	Add author credentials, testimonials, and proof points to high-value pages.	Strengthen review profiles, case studies, partner proof, and third-party mentions.	Build an ongoing proof system across reviews, customer stories, earned media, and expert-led content.
Be Chosen	Buyers may understand and find you, but still lack enough confidence to take the next step.	Add direct answers to common objections on key pages. Make sure your primary conversion pages include clear next steps and social proof.	Create implementation guides, pricing context, ROI content, and switching /comparison assets.	Build a decision-stage content system that helps buyers evaluate tradeoffs, reduce risk, and justify decisions internally.

LET'S KEEP MOVING

The next sections will show you how to improve each part of your AEO foundation. Along the way, you'll learn how to create more useful content, strengthen your digital footprint, improve AI visibility, and measure the signals that connect visibility to pipeline.

BE UNDERSTOOD: HELPING BUYERS AND AI UNDERSTAND YOUR EXPERTISE

Before buyers can follow the trail, the path has to be clearly marked. This section helps you turn your expertise into answers that buyers and AI systems can understand, retrieve, and trust.

Closing the AI Discovery Gap starts with clarity.

Before buyers can trust you, compare you, or choose you, they need to understand who you help, what problems you solve, and why your expertise matters.

AI systems don't browse websites the way humans do. They are more like detectives looking for clues in copy, markups, entities, and patterns.

That means useful content still wins, but only when it is clear enough to be found and used.

The best AI-friendly content does two things at once:

- 1. It helps buyers understand the topic.**
- 2. It helps AI systems understand why your company is a credible source.**

TURN BUYER CONVERSATIONS INTO PUBLIC ANSWERS

Many teams are overlooking one of the richest sources of expertise and AI insights they already have. Their own buyer conversations. Every week, valuable signals show up inside your business:

- **Sales calls**
- **Demo questions**
- **Lost deal notes**
- **Stalled opportunities**
- **Onboarding friction**
- **Support tickets**
- **Email replies**

AI-friendly content starts with authentic buyer language and questions, not generic keywords. Paying attention to customer interactions reveals:

- **Where trust breaks**
- **What content is missing**
- **What sales needs help answering**
- **What buyers need before they are ready to move**



YOUR NEXT CONTENT STRATEGY MAY ALREADY BE SITTING INSIDE YOUR CRM.

THE HIGHEST-VALUE BUYER QUESTIONS SURFACE DURING REAL CUSTOMER INTERACTIONS.

Turn these buyer interactions into market intelligence to build stronger messaging and smarter content. That is how stronger messaging gets built.



Field Tip: Upload three recent sales call transcripts into your favorite AI tool.

Ask it to show you:

- **Repeated objections**
- **Implementation fears**
- **Pricing concerns**
- **Comparison questions**
- **Phrases buyers repeat**

Those are future content topics.

TRAIL STORY: BUILD CONTENT FROM REAL BUYER CONVERSATIONS

At Vende, we built an AI tool trained on hundreds of hours of real prospect and customer conversations. Its job is simple: help us understand our customers' information requirements and push back the way a skeptical buyer would. Before a message, presentation, sales deck, or piece of content goes anywhere near a real prospect, we run it through that tool first.

This forces us to answer the same questions real buyers ask:

- **This sounds interesting, but what problem does it solve?**
- **Why should I care?**
- **How is this different?**
- **What would make me believe this?**
- **What risks am I missing?**

If the message cannot survive that pushback, it is not ready.

This is the same exercise that this section is asking you to do. We simply took it as far as we could.

This keeps us from creating content from assumptions and helps us create content using the language, objections, questions, and concerns your buyers actually have.

When your content reflects how buyers think and speak, it becomes easier for both people and AI systems to understand when your company is relevant.

MATCH CONTENT TO BUYER READINESS

Not every buyer needs the same answer. Some are still learning the category. Others are comparing options, validating risk, or looking for a clear next step. AI-friendly content works best when it matches the buyer's level of readiness.

A buyer asking "What is account-based marketing?" needs a different answer than a buyer asking "Which ABM partner is best for a mid-market company using HubSpot?"

Your content should help both buyers and AI systems understand where each answer fits in the journey.

Use this field map to organize content around buyer readiness:

Buyer Stage	Content Job	Example Formats
Learning	Teach the category	Pillar pages, POV posts, explainers
Evaluating	Answer specific questions	Blog posts, FAQs, comparison content
Validating	Reduce risk	Guides, checklists, case studies, reviews
Buying	Create a next step	Landing pages, assessments, consultations

This matters because buyers rarely move in a straight line. They may learn in one place, compare in another, validate through AI, and then visit your website when they are ready to act.

The more closely your content aligns with the buyer's stage, the easier it is for buyers and AI systems to understand how your expertise helps.



Field Tip:

Pick one priority topic.

Then map your existing content across the four buyer stages:

- **Do we help buyers understand the category?**
- **Do we answer their specific evaluation questions?**
- **Do we reduce risk with proof and practical guidance?**
- **Do we provide a clear next step when they are ready?**

If one stage is empty, that is where buyers may be losing the trail.

BUILD AN ANSWER WORTH CITING

AI systems are more likely to retrieve answers that are direct, specific, structured, and supported by evidence.

Your content should lead with the answer, support it with proof, and make the context easy to understand.

Strong AI-friendly content usually does 10 things well:

1. **Leads with the direct answer.**
2. **Defines key concepts clearly.**
3. **States the problem before offering solutions.**
4. **Uses buyer language instead of internal jargon.**
5. **Provides context for industry-specific terms.**
6. **Explains who the answer is for and when it applies.**
7. **Includes proof, examples, or data.**
8. **Explains tradeoffs, not just benefits.**
9. **Answers the next logical question.**
10. **Connects the answer to a clear business outcome.**



THE BEST AI-FRIENDLY CONTENT IS USUALLY THE CLEAREST CONTENT.

CLARITY HELPS BOTH HUMANS AND AI SYSTEMS UNDERSTAND, TRUST, AND RETRIEVE YOUR INFORMATION.



Field Tip:

Pull your top five service or solution pages.

If what you see above-the-fold doesn't clearly answer who the page is for, what problem it solves, and why your company is credible, fix that before adding more content.

HELP BUYERS MAKE DECISIONS

As AI tools become part of the buying process, decision-stage content becomes increasingly valuable. Buyers use AI to compare options, understand tradeoffs, evaluate risks, and validate potential solutions.

The more directly you answer those questions, the easier it becomes for both buyers and AI systems to understand when your company is relevant.

Useful content formats include:

- **glossaries and definition pages**
- **step-by-step explanations**
- **FAQs based on real buyer questions**
- **pricing and cost explanations**
- **implementation guides**
- **migration or switching guides**
- **comparison pages**
- **Risk and challenge discussions**
- **“What usually goes wrong” articles**
- **case studies with measurable outcomes**
- **feature, benefit, and tradeoff tables**

The goal is to help buyers make a more informed decision. Content that reduces uncertainty often creates more trust than content that simply promotes a solution.

TRAIL CHECK: DECISION CONTENT AUDIT

Buyers often have the same questions before they move forward. Use this audit to identify gaps in your decision-stage content.

Buyer Question	Page Exists?	Proof Included?	Needs Update?
What does it cost?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
How long does implementation take?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
What usually goes wrong?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
How are we different from competitors?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
What results have customers achieved?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Who is this a good fit for?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Who is this NOT a good fit for?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
What risks should buyers consider?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
What objections come up most often?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
What does the buying process look like?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No

Use your identified gaps from this audit to inform your content strategy. A gap often reveals a bigger opportunity than a missing blog post. The goal is to answer these questions in places that reduce uncertainty before a buyer speaks with Sales.

MARK THE TRAIL CLEARLY

AI tools need structure and context to understand what a page is about, who created it, what company it connects to, and why the information is credible.

That is why structure matters. Clear titles, headings, summaries, author information, readable text, and connected supporting pages help AI systems understand what you publish.

Think of this as the human-readable layer. If a buyer can scan the page and quickly understand the message, AI systems are usually more likely to understand it too.

But structure is only the trail marker. The answer still has to be useful. Here are a few ways to make content easier for both buyers and AI systems to navigate:

- **Use clear hierarchical headings, such as H1, H2, and H3.**
- **Break information into digestible sections with descriptive subheadings.**
- **Include a 1–2 sentence summary near the top.**
- **Balance paragraphs with bullets, tables, and visuals.**
- **Use tables when comparing options, features, risks, or tradeoffs.**
- **Ensure important video insights appear as text on the page as well.**
- **Convert image-based information into readable text.**
- **Use descriptive alt text for images.**
- **Make important educational content public instead of gated.**
- **Connect related pages with clear internal links.**

**Field Tip:**

Pick one important page or article on your website.

Then try reading only:

- **The headline**
- **Subheads**
- **Bullets**
- **Tables**
- **Image captions**

If the main message disappears when the paragraphs are removed, the structure needs work.

BUILD COMPLETE INFORMATION PATHS

AI systems work better when information is complete and connected. They won't draw conclusions for you. Just like humans, if you confuse them, you'll lose them.

Remember, these systems are like detectives looking for clues. Make it easy for them, and humans, to understand:

- **Your services and specialties**
- **The industries you serve**
- **Your ideal customer profile**
- **Your geographic reach**
- **Your certifications and credentials**
- **Your team's expertise**
- **Your methodology or process**

Some companies are also beginning to create "AI Disclosure" pages that centralize important company information in one place. Think of it as a knowledge source that AI systems can reference to better understand your company.

Add a link in the footer of your website that links to this page, similar to your footer page that links to all the critical information about your privacy policy page.



**CONTEXT HELPS AI CONNECT
YOUR COMPANY TO THE
PROBLEMS YOU SOLVE.**

POWER OF COMPARISON PAGES

Good comparison pages help buyers evaluate options while giving AI systems clearer relational context.

Strong comparison content should:

- **Explain differences clearly**
- **Include structured tables when helpful**
- **Support claims with proof**
- **Address tradeoffs honestly**
- **Focus on helping buyers make informed decisions**

POWER OF COMPARISON PAGES

Just as in traditional SEO, technical clarity still matters because it helps AI systems interpret what they see.

Think of this as the machine-readable layer. Technical clarity helps search engines and AI systems crawl, parse, and interpret useful content.

Some foundational technical elements include:

- **schema markup**
- **semantic HTML structure**
- **XML sitemaps**

- **descriptive page titles and meta descriptions**
- **crawlable site architecture**
- **accessible page design**
- **fast page load speeds**
- **clean internal linking**

These are amplifiers of useful information, not substitutes. A well-structured weak answer is still a weak answer. The best pages combine clarity, usefulness, structure, and proof.

**Field Tip:**

Run one important page through an accessibility checker.

Many accessibility improvements also improve AI readability because both systems rely on clear structure and context.

USE AI TO IMPROVE CONTENT

AI can also help improve the content creation process itself. Use tools like Claude, Gemini, and ChatGPT to:

- **Uncover topic gaps**
- **Repurpose existing expertise**
- **Improve readability**
- **Organize ideas**
- **Refresh outdated content**
- **Turn transcripts into usable assets**

For example:

- **Webinar transcripts can become blog articles**
- **Podcast discussions can become FAQs**
- **Customer interviews can become comparison content**
- **Sales call themes can become educational posts**



**USE AI TO SCALE EXPERTISE,
NOT MANUFACTURE IT.**

The goal is not to mass-produce generic content. The goal is to make your best expertise easier to scale, refine, and distribute.



Field Tip:

Your webinars, podcasts, sales calls, and customer interviews already contain hours of valuable expertise.

Start there before creating content from scratch.

TRAIL CHECK: WOULD AI UNDERSTAND THIS?

Before publishing an important page, pressure-test it.

Ask:

- **Is the answer direct and useful?**
- **Is the content easy to scan?**
- **Is proof attached?**
- **Is the information public?**
- **Would AI know who created this?**
- **Would a buyer trust this answer?**
- **Does the page clearly explain who it helps and why it matters?**

You will win the AEO game when your communication is clearer than your competition's.

BE DISCOVERABLE: HOW TO EARN A PLACE IN THE ANSWER

This is where you widen the trail beyond your website. The goal here is to make your expertise easier to find wherever buyers ask questions and AI systems look for trusted signals.

Remember, the AI Discovery Gap exists because buyers and AI systems are looking beyond your website. To close it, your company needs to show up across the questions, topics, and sources that shape discovery.

Being discoverable in AI isn't about tricking it to cite your company where it shouldn't. It's about making your expertise easy to find, understand, and trust.

And they are less likely to trust what they only see in one place. Yes, your website matters, but so do social media, review platforms, third-party articles, partner pages, communities, and the language customers use when they talk about you.

Search used to reward the page that ranked. Now AI answers reward the company that is clear, credible, and consistently reinforced across the places buyers already trust.

The goal is to make your best answers easier to discover, retrieve, cite, and trust than your competitors' answers.



**GETTING CITED IS NOT THE WIN.
GETTING CITED FOR THE RIGHT REASON IS.**

FOLLOW THE BUYER QUESTION

AI tools are more likely to use direct, specific, structured, and evidence-based answers.

Examples of early-stage buyer questions:

- **What is [your category]?**
- **How does [solution] work?**
- **What are common ways to solve [problem]?**

Some questions are closer to a decision:

- **Which [your category] vendors are best for companies like ours?**
- **What does this usually cost?**
- **What should we watch out for?**
- **How hard is this to implement?**
- **What alternatives should we compare?**

The closer the question gets to risk, cost, switching, implementation, or credibility, the more commercially valuable it becomes.



Field Tip:

Ask a high-value buyer a question related to your business in ChatGPT, Perplexity, Gemini, and Google AI Overviews.

Then document:

- **Who appears**
- **What sources are cited**
- **How the answer is framed**
- **What your company is missing**

That is your first citation map.

BUILD YOUR HUB AND SPOKE TRAIL SYSTEM

Unlike traditional SEO, which focuses on getting a single page ranked for a key phrase, AI tools do not evaluate a page in isolation; they look for patterns, depth of expertise, and connected answers across your site and anywhere your brand is mentioned.

That is why a Hub-and-Spoke content structure works best.

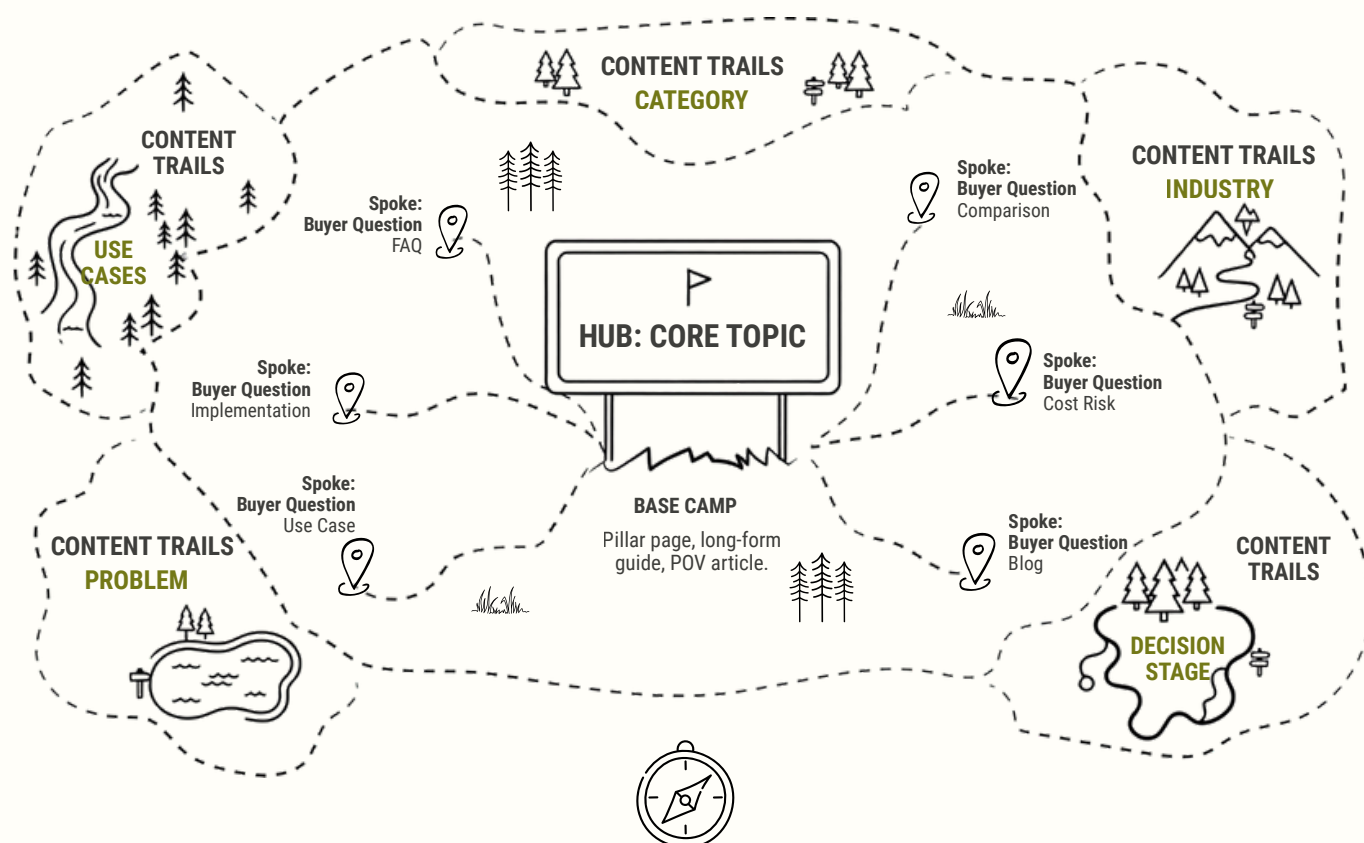
A hub is your comprehensive long-form narrative to a core topic your buyers care about. It gives the broad view, answers the main questions, and establishes your point of view.

A spoke is a more specific piece of content that goes deeper on one related question, use case, objection, or decision point.

The hub gives buyers the map.

The spokes help them explore the trail.

THE HUB-AND-SPOKE TRAIL SYSTEM



The hub anchors your authority.
The spokes answer related buyer questions.
The trails help buyers and AI systems follow your expertise.

For example, a hub on **B2B Go-To-Market Strategy** might connect to spokes on:

- **pipeline planning**
- **CRM lifecycle stages**
- **sales and marketing alignment**
- **buyer signals**
- **LinkedIn thought leadership**
- **paid media strategy**
- **decision-stage content**
- **campaign measurement**

The power is in the connection. Each spoke links back to the hub, and the hub links out to the spokes. Together, they create a clear path for buyers, search engines, and AI tools to understand your authority on the topic.

This matters because AEO is about demonstrating enough depth and consistency so AI tools can connect your company to the problem, category, and questions that buyers care about.

A strong Hub and Spoke system helps you:

- **Build topical authority**
- **Organize content around buyer questions**
- **Improve internal linking**
- **Create clearer paths for buyers**
- **Support SEO and AEO visibility**
- **Make your expertise easier to retrieve and trust**

It also makes your content easier to repurpose and distribute in important channels. Each piece of content can become:

- **Multiple LinkedIn, Reddit, or X posts**
- **Short videos**
- **Sales enablement assets**
- **Email nurture content**
- **Webinar topics**
- **Comparison pages content**
- **FAQ content**

That is why this model works so well in the clickless future. The hub anchors your authority while spokes distribute your perspective everywhere buyers learn.



Field Tip:

Pick one core topic you want your company to be known for. Then list the 10 questions buyers ask before they trust your answer.

That is your Hub-and-Spoke map.

BUILD A CONTENT TRAIL BUYERS AND AI SYSTEMS CAN FOLLOW

A Hub-and-Spoke system helps organize your expertise, but discoverability does not come from one content type alone.

Buyers and AI systems encounter your company through a mix of owned content, distributed content, proof points, and external signals.

The goal is to create a trail of useful content that makes your company easier to find in places that shape buying decisions.

Think about your content in five layers:

Content Layer	What It Does	Examples
Foundation Content	Anchors your authority and establishes the core topics you want to be known for.	Pillar pages, thought leadership, long-form guides
Question Content	Answers the specific questions buyers ask while learning, comparing, and evaluating.	Blog posts, FAQs, buyer-question articles
Proof Content	Builds buyer confidence and gives buyers and AI systems evidence that your claims are credible.	Case studies, reviews, customer stories, certifications, partnerships
Distributed Content	Extends your reach and carries your point of view into the channels where buyers already spend time.	LinkedIn posts, partner content, paid and organic distribution
External Signals	Reinforces your expertise outside the channels you control.	Employee content, customer content, communities, third-party mentions, partner pages

Each layer gives buyers and AI systems another way to encounter, understand, and connect your company to the problems you solve.

**Field Tip:**

Choose one topic you want your company to be known for.

Then map your content across the five layers:

- **Do we have foundation content?**
- **Do we answer the most common buyer questions?**
- **Do we have proof attached to the topic?**
- **Are we distributing the idea where buyers spend time?**
- **Are there external signals that reinforce our expertise?**

The gaps show where your discoverability trail is weakest.

TRAIL STORY: ONE IDEA, MANY TRAILS

At Vende, we don't create content one asset at a time. We build around a small set of content pillars that represent the topics we want to be known for.

Today, our B2B Growth Hub is organized around categories like:

- **Go-to-Market Strategy**
- **Pipeline Optimization**
- **Revenue Acceleration**
- **Modern Buyer Behavior**
- **Content Strategy**
- **Technology**

Each month, one of those pillars becomes the focus of our B2B Growth Show.

The show serves as the foundation for a much larger content ecosystem. One conversation becomes:

- **A long-form article**
- **Blog posts and FAQs**
- **LinkedIn posts and thought leadership**
- **Short videos and clips**
- **Sales enablement content**
- **Email nurture content**

- **Podcast and YouTube content**
- **Graphics and guides**
- **New resources in our B2B Growth Hub**

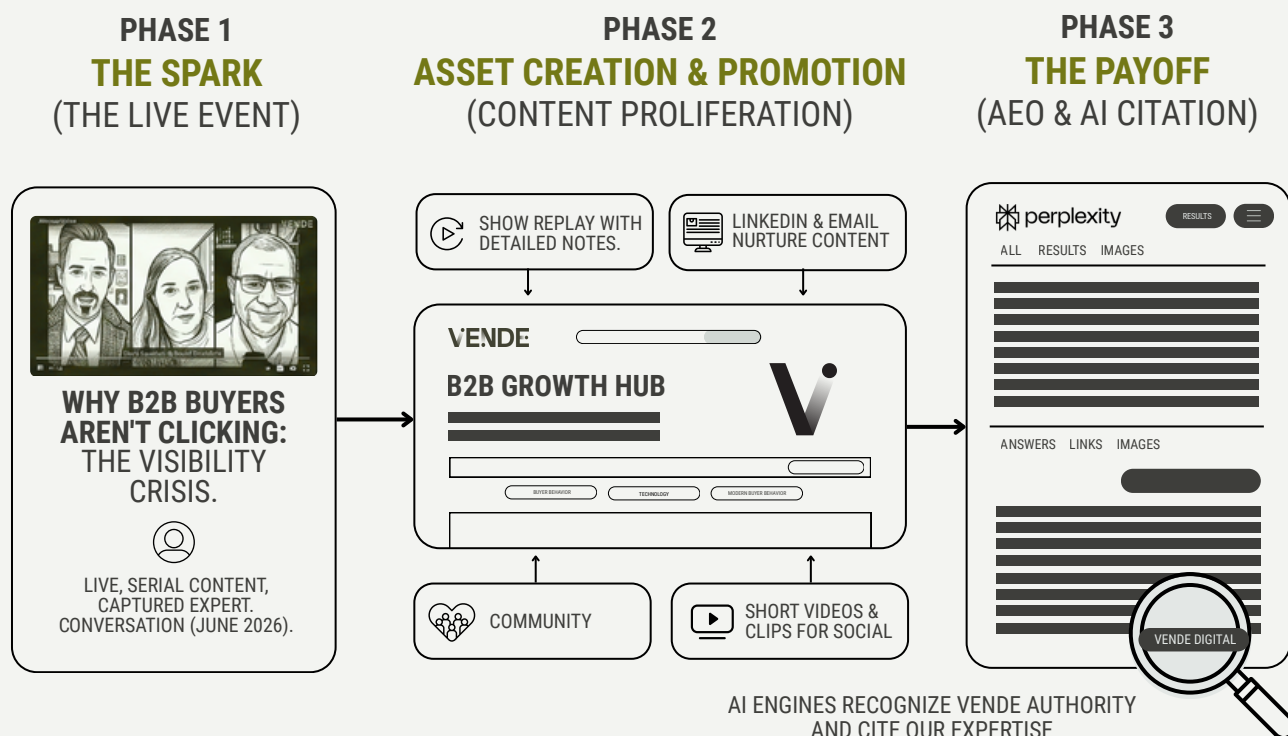
That content is then distributed across:

- **Our website**
- **YouTube**
- **LinkedIn**
- **Email**
- **Partner channels and communities**

Rather than creating isolated assets, we're building a growing library of expertise around the topics we want to own.

Every new asset reinforces the same ideas across multiple formats, platforms, and moments in the buyer journey. That consistency helps buyers discover our point of view and helps AI systems connect Vende to the categories and questions we want to be known for.

THE LIFECYCLE OF A SINGLE IDEA



Buyers and AI systems encounter the same expertise:

- | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|---------------------------|
| ✓ On our website | ✓ In videos | ✓ In email |
| ✓ In social posts | ✓ In communities | ✓ In third-party mentions |

TRAIL CHECK: ARE YOU CITE-WORTHY?

Before moving on, pressure-test one important buyer question.

Use this quick check:

Do we have a public page that clearly answers the question?	
Is the answer direct, specific, and useful?	
Is the content structured so AI can parse it?	
Is there proof attached?	
Do third-party sources reinforce the same claim?	
Are we using consistent language across platforms?	
Would this answer help a serious buyer move forward?	

If the answer is “no” to several of these, you have found your next improvement area.

Remember, getting cited ultimately means making your expertise easier to find, easier to trust, and easier to use when buyers are already forming opinions.

BE TRUSTED: MAKE YOUR CLAIMS EASIER TO BELIEVE

Trust is the footing beneath the trail. The AI Discovery Gap is not just about visibility. It's also about confidence. Trust becomes most important when buyers enter the validation stage of their decision process. If buyers and AI systems find your claims but cannot find proof, trust breaks before the conversation begins.

That's why AEO is about making your expertise easier to discover AND to believe.

Buyers want evidence that you can do what you say you can do. AI systems also look for patterns that reinforce whether your company is credible, relevant, and connected to the problems buyers are trying to solve.



**BUYERS AND AI SYSTEMS
TRUST EVIDENCE, NOT
EMPTY PROMISES.**

SHOW PROOF. SHARE RESULTS. MAKE IT EASY TO VERIFY.

That trust can come from many places:

- **Proof on owned pages**
- **Case studies**
- **Review sites**
- **Testimonials**
- **Customer-generated success stories**
- **Authorship credibility**
- **Third-party mentions**
- **Partner validation**

- **Analyst or association mentions**
- **Awards and certifications**
- **Consistency between claims and evidence**

The goal is simple: Make it easy for buyers and AI systems to connect your claims to credible proof.

Trust forms when claims and evidence appear together. The more easily buyers and AI systems can verify your expertise, the more confidence they have in recommending or choosing you.

FIELD MAP: SOURCES OF TRUST

Trust Signal	Buyer Question It Answers
Case Studies	Have you done this before?
Reviews	Did customers have a good experience?
Testimonials	What do customers say about you in their own words?
Author Pages	Why should I believe this expert?
Certifications	Are you qualified?
Analyst / Influencer Mentions	Do independent experts recognize you?
Partner Profiles	Are you credible in your ecosystem?
LinkedIn Content	What do you actually believe?

ATTACH PROOF TO THE CLAIMS BUYERS CARE ABOUT

Most companies make plenty of claims.

- **We’re experienced.**
- **We understand the market.**
- **We deliver results.**
- **We’re different from competitors.**

But what do these claims really mean? Buyers need evidence to back the claims. A strong trust signal connects what you say to something buyers can verify. The more important the claim, the stronger the proof-point should be.

Claim	Stronger Trust Signal
We understand your industry.	Industry-specific case studies, customer examples, and subject matter experts.
We deliver measurable results.	Metrics, before-and-after examples, and customer outcomes.
We have deep expertise.	Author bios, credentials, certifications, webinars, podcasts, appearances, and published thought leadership.
We are a safe choice.	Reviews, testimonials, implementation details, risk discussions, and customer references.
We are different.	Clear comparison content, tradeoff explanations, and proof tied to your point of view.
Claim	Stronger Trust Signal



Field Tip:

Pick one high-value solutions page. Highlight every major claim on the page.

Then ask:

- **Is there proof attached?**
- **Is the proof specific?**
- **Is the proof visible without digging?**
- **Would a skeptical buyer believe this?**
- **Would AI systems find other sources that support the same idea?**

If the answer is no, the page is asking for trust it has not earned yet.

BUILD TRUST BEYOND YOUR WEBSITE

Your website is only one signal. Buyers and AI systems validate expertise by comparing information across multiple trusted sources. If your site says one thing, review platforms say another, and partner profiles say something else, the signal gets weaker.

That is why off-site trust matters. Look at the places buyers and AI systems may use to understand your company:

- **LinkedIn posts**
- **YouTube content**
- **Review platforms**
- **Industry publications**
- **Partner directories**
- **Podcasts and webinars**
- **Analyst or association content**
- **Community discussions**

AI tools can better understand and recommend your company when credible sources consistently describe it.

This does not mean you need to be everywhere. It means the places that matter to your buyers should reinforce the same story.

CREATE A TRUST KIT FOR YOUR COMPANY

Consistency doesn't happen by accident. Most companies need a repeatable system for describing who they are and why they matter. One of the easiest ways to strengthen trust signals is to create a set of reusable descriptions that can be used anywhere your company appears. Most B2B companies lack intentionality here and describe themselves differently across the web.

- **The website says one thing.**
- **The LinkedIn page says another.**
- **A podcast host writes a different introduction.**
- **A partner directory uses outdated copy.**
- **A conference event page introduces your executive in a completely different way.**

For buyers and AI, inconsistency creates confusion and weakens confidence.

Create a simple trust kit that includes:

- **Company boilerplate description**
- **Service and solution descriptions**
- **Category definitions**
- **Executive and subject matter expert bios**
- **Speaker introductions**
- **Short and long company descriptions**
- **Key proof points and differentiators**
- **The 3–5 ideas you want to be known for**

These assets can be reused across:

- **Partner directories**
- **Podcast show notes**
- **Event pages**
- **Webinar registrations**
- **Guest articles**
- **Association listings**
- **Analyst profiles**
- **Speaker submissions**
- **Social profiles**

The more consistently your company is described across credible sources, the easier it becomes for buyers and AI systems to understand who you are, what you do, and why you are credible.

TEACH YOUR POINT OF VIEW IN PUBLIC

Expertise becomes more credible when it is visible. Teaching your point of view in public helps buyers and AI systems understand what you stand for, who you help, and how you think about the problems you solve.

The content you share beyond your website should not simply promote your company. It should demonstrate your expertise. Every post, article, webinar, podcast appearance, or presentation is an opportunity to reinforce what you know and why buyers should trust you.

One of the most effective ways to do this is through zero-click content.

WHAT IS ZERO-CLICK CONTENT?

Zero-click content is content that delivers a complete, useful idea without requiring a click.

Yet, being trusted with zero-click content is not simply about giving away information without requiring a click. It is about consistency. The companies that become trusted sources focus on 3-5 category pillars that reinforce what they want to be known for.

- **They have a clear point of view.**
- **They teach the same categories.**
- **They answer the same problems.**
- **They reinforce the same differentiators.**

Over time, buyers and AI systems begin to connect those companies to those topics and trust them as reliable resources.

Think about the three to five categories you want your company to be known for.

Those categories should show up consistently across your:

- **LinkedIn posts**
- **Articles and blogs**
- **Webinars and podcasts**
- **Event presentations**
- **Interviews and guest appearances**
- **Executive thought leadership**

Each post should focus on one category. Over time, your body of work should reinforce the same themes. Repetition creates recognition, and consistency builds trust.

**Field Tip:**

Look at your last 10 LinkedIn posts.

Would a buyer understand your point of view, what problem you solve, who you solve it for, and why you are credible without clicking?

If not, your social content is not doing enough work.

MAKE EXPERTISE VISIBLE WITH AUTHOR PAGES

AI systems and buyers both look for signals that the information they are reading comes from a credible source.

That is why author pages matter.

An author page gives context about the person behind the insight. It helps buyers and AI systems connect a real person to real expertise, published insights, and company knowledge. The easier those connections are to verify, the stronger the trust signal becomes.

This is especially important for B2B companies where expertise is often spread across founders, executives, subject matter experts, strategists, consultants, engineers, product leaders, and customer-facing teams.

A strong author page should include:

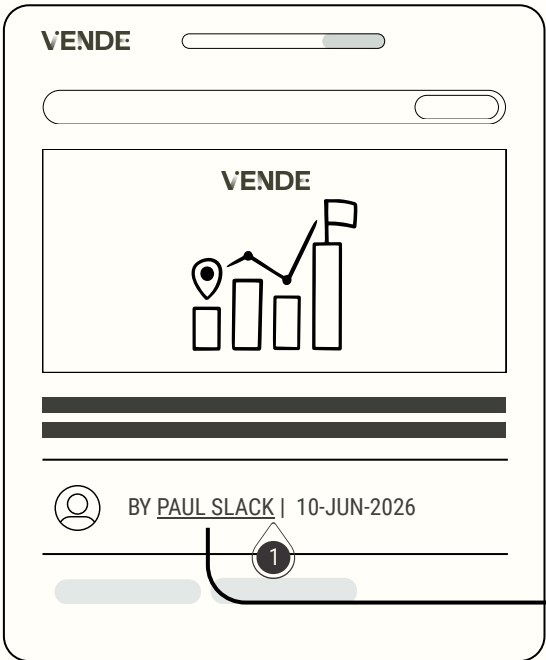
- **the author's role and area of expertise**
- **relevant industry experience**
- **credentials, certifications, or awards**
- **links to published articles, interviews, webinars, podcasts, or media mentions**
- **topics the author regularly covers**
- **company connection and bio**
- **links to LinkedIn or other professional profiles**
- **clear author bylines on related articles**

Do not treat author pages like an afterthought.

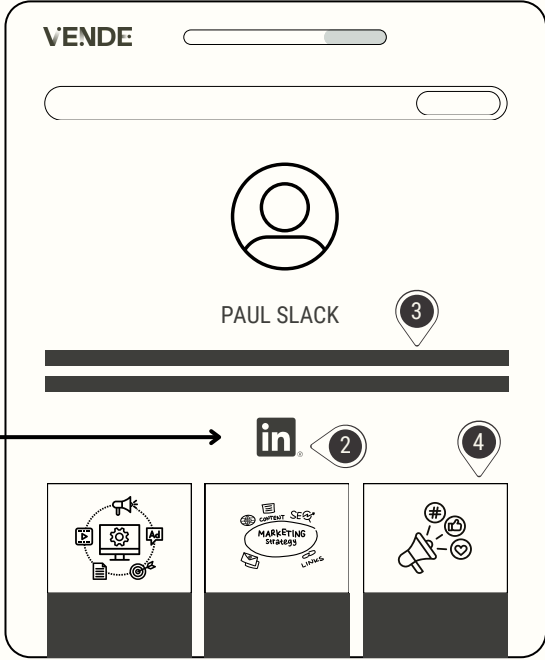
If your content makes an expert claim, buyers should be able to see who is behind it and why that person is credible. This also helps AI systems connect people, companies, topics, and expertise more clearly.

HOW TO AUTHOR PAGES BUILD TRUST

PUBLISHED ARTICLE



AUTHOR PAGE



Map Pins	Trail Marker	Why It Matters
1	Article Byline	Connects content to a real expert.
2	LinkedIn Profile	Verifiable professional identity.
3	Author Bio	Explains experience and authority.
4	Article Library	Demonstrates consistent expertise.

**Field Tip:**

Choose your top three subject matter experts.

For each one, create or update an author page that clearly explains:

- **what they know**
- **where their expertise comes from**
- **What topics do they speak or write about**
- **where their work has appeared**
- **how they connect to your company's point of view**

If a buyer would trust the article more after seeing the author page, you are on the right trail.

TRUST COMPOUNDS ACROSS SIGNALS

No single signal creates trust on its own. Confidence grows when multiple sources reinforce the same expertise, proof points, and positioning.

Confidence builds when buyers and AI systems see the same themes reinforced across multiple sources.

Your website says you specialize in healthcare.

Your case studies show healthcare outcomes.

Your executives write about healthcare trends.

Your partner profiles describe healthcare expertise.

Your customers mention healthcare transformation.

Each signal reinforces the next. Trust compounds through consistency.

The problem is that many companies weaken those signals without realizing it.

Their homepage says one thing. Their LinkedIn page says another. Review sites use an old category. Partner listings have outdated boilerplate. Sales decks introduce a different message.

That creates confusion. For buyers, confusion slows trust. For AI systems, confusion weakens retrieval.

Start with the basics:

- **Use the same company name and product names.**
- **Standardize your company description.**
- **Align your category language.**
- **Repeat the 3–5 ideas you want to be known for.**
- **Keep review site and directory profiles current.**
- **Make sure social profiles reinforce the same positioning.**
- **Connect claims to proof wherever possible.**

AEO rewards clarity that compounds.



**TRUST COMPOUNDS A WHEN THE
SAME STORY IS TOLD IN MULTIPLE
PLACES BY MANY VOICES.**

CONSISTENT SIGNALS ACROSS TRUSTED SOURCES BUILD
CREDIBILITY AND DRIVE CONFIDENCE.

TRAIL CHECK:

CAN BUYERS AND AI SYSTEMS TRUST THIS?

Before moving on, pressure-test one of the key claims your company makes.

Ask:

Is the claim specific?	
Is the proof visible near the claim?	
Do we have customer evidence that supports it?	
Do third-party sources reinforce it?	
Are reviews, testimonials, or partner pages up to date?	
Are author credentials visible where expertise matters?	
Does LinkedIn reinforce the same point of view?	
Would a skeptical buyer believe this without talking to Sales?	

BE CHOSEN: HELPING BUYERS MOVE FORWARD WITH CONFIDENCE

Your 90-Day Action Plan

Being discoverable, understood, and trusted are not separate activities. They work together. Buyers choose companies they can find, understand, and believe.

That's why the goal of AEO is not simply to generate visibility. The goal is to create enough understanding and confidence that buyers are more likely to choose you when they are ready to act.

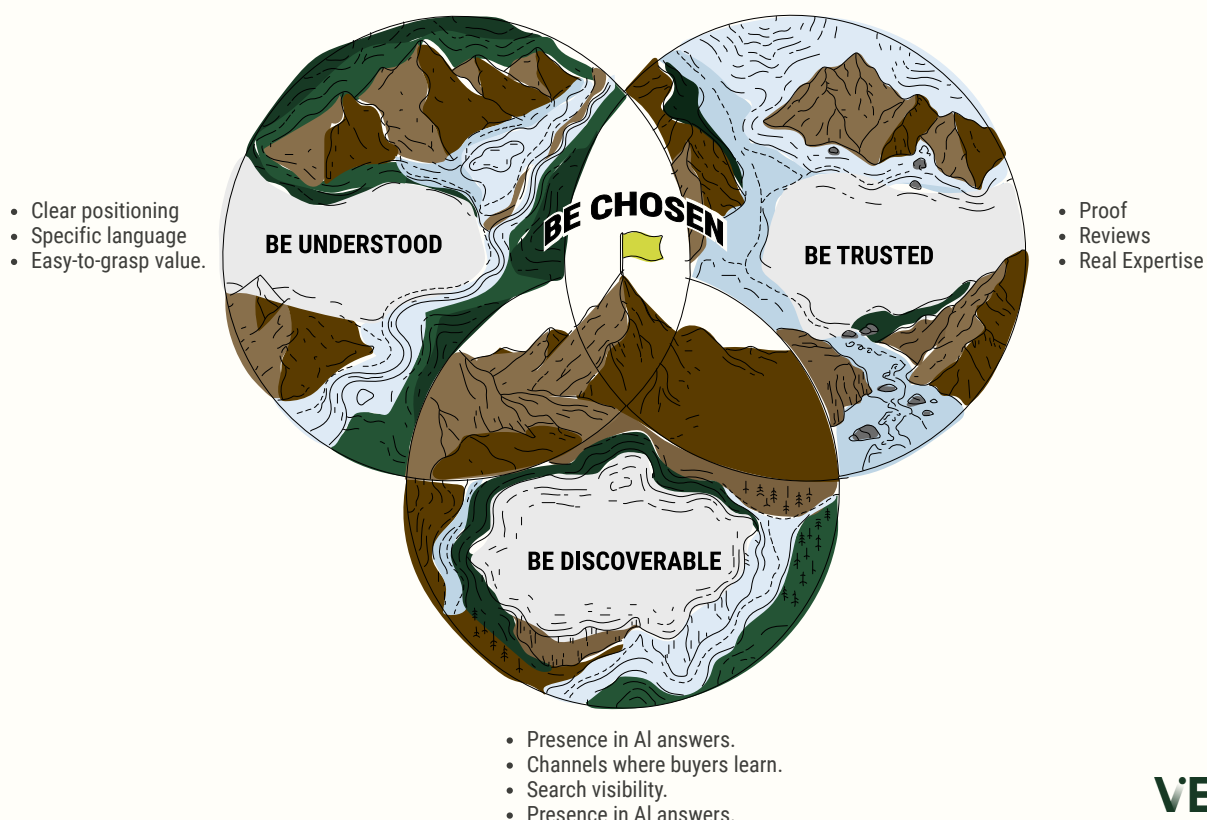
At this stage, buyers are no longer trying to understand the market. They are trying to make a decision.

Can this company solve our problem?

What risks should we expect?

How difficult will implementation be?

How do we build internal alignment?



In the Buyer Readiness Field Map, this is the buying stage. Buyers have already learned, evaluated, and validated their options. Now they need confidence to move forward.

The companies that get chosen make it easier to answer those questions. They reduce uncertainty, remove friction, and help buyers take the next step with confidence.

The next 90 days are about putting those pieces together in the right order. You don't need a complete rebuild, a new tech stack, or an army of AI specialists. Every trail starts with a first step.

TRAIL STOP 1: ESTABLISH YOUR BASELINE

Before you change anything, understand what buyers see today.

- **How visible are you?**
- **How well are you understood?**
- **How much trust do your digital signals create?**

The goal is to establish a starting point. Document what appears to be working, where gaps exist, and which improvements are likely to create the greatest impact. Think of this step as setting your compass before starting the hike.

Outcome: A clear picture of your current visibility, understanding, and trust signals.

TRAIL STOP 2: STRENGTHEN WHAT BUYERS ALREADY SEE

Your highest-traffic pages carry more influence than most companies realize.

Buyers often validate companies through a small set of high-impact pages:

- **Homepage**
- **Service pages**
- **Process and pricing pages**
- **Case studies**
- **Comparison pages**
- **Author pages**

If buyers arrive on these pages after researching elsewhere, they should immediately understand:

- **What you do**
- **Who you help**
- **Why you are credible**
- **Why is your approach different**
- **What is the next step to take**

Do not overlook your existing assets. Small improvements to high-traffic pages often create disproportionate gains in buyer confidence.

Outcome: Higher confidence when buyers validate your expertise.

TRAIL STOP 3: REDUCE DECISION FRICTION

Most companies publish awareness content. Far fewer publish content that helps buyers make decisions. Create assets that help serious buyers move forward:

- **ROI pages**
- **Implementation guides**
- **"What usually goes wrong" pages**
- **Stakeholder FAQs**
- **Migration and switching guides**
- **Proof stories with measurable outcomes**

The goal is not to persuade buyers, but to reduce uncertainty. Decision content often generates less traffic than awareness content, but it drives conversions and generates more pipeline.

Outcome: Less friction and greater confidence during evaluation.

TRAIL STOP 4: REINFORCE TRUST SIGNALS

You now understand that buyers validate information across multiple sources, and that AI systems do the same. Create a plan to increase and improve your:

- **Customer reviews**
- **LinkedIn thought leadership posts**
- **Podcast appearances**
- **Partner mentions**
- **Industry publication mentions**
- **Consistent company descriptions across platforms**

Visibility no longer comes from a single ranking. It comes from an ecosystem of reinforcing signals.

Outcome: Greater confidence that your company can deliver on its claims.

TRAIL STOP 5: BUILD YOUR OPERATING RHYTHM

AEO is not a one-time project. Continue tracking traffic, leads, pipeline, and revenue. Then add signals that reflect how modern buyers actually buy. Win by building repeatable processes for testing, learning, and improvement.

Establish a regular cadence to:

- **Review visibility**
- **Evaluate trust signals**
- **Identify content gaps**
- **Refine positioning**
- **Monitor buyer behavior**
- **Measure progress**

Progress compounds when learning becomes part of the process.

Outcome: A repeatable system for continuous improvement.

YOUR FIRST 90 DAYS ON THE TRAIL

DAYS 1-30

Understand the Terrain

- Establish your baseline
- Identify visibility, understanding, and trust gaps
- Prioritize high-impact opportunities
- Strengthen existing pages and signals

Goal: Know where you stand.

DAYS 31-60

Strengthen the Trail

- Reduce decision friction
- Publish or improve decision-stage content
- Reinforce trust signals across channels
- Align your story across people, platforms, and partners

Goal: Make it easier for buyers to understand and trust you.

DAYS 61-90

Create Your Operating Rhythm

- Establish review processes
- Create testing and learning routines
- Begin measuring progress
- Build a recurring improvement cadence

Goal: Create a system that improves over time.



A BUYERS DO NOT CHOOSE THE MOST VISIBLE COMPANY. THEY CHOOSE THE COMPANY THEY UNDERSTAND AND TRUST.

CLARITY EARNS ATTENTION. TRUST EARNS THE DECISION.

The goal is progress, not perfection.

You do not need to implement everything at once. Start with the gaps that create the most friction for your buyers. Improve one page, strengthen one trust signal, answer one critical buyer question, and build from there.

AI has changed how buyers discover and evaluate information, but it has not changed the importance of clarity, credibility, and confidence. The companies that win will be the ones that make it easier for buyers to understand their expertise, validate their claims, and move forward with confidence.

The tools will continue to evolve. Helping buyers make better decisions will not.

TROUBLESHOOTING, TESTING & IMPROVING AI VISIBILITY

AI visibility is not a one-time project. AI systems change constantly, which means visibility should be monitored, tested, and refined over time.

The good news is that AI visibility is becoming measurable. What started as manual prompt testing is quickly evolving into a new category of visibility monitoring, citation analysis, and Answer Engine Optimization (AEO).

You can test visibility manually by asking AI systems the same questions buyers ask every day. You can also use platforms like HubSpot and emerging AEO tools to track:

- **AI referral traffic**
- **Citation trends**
- **Prompt visibility**
- **Conversational signals**
- **Competitive share of voice**
- **How brands appear across AI-generated answers**

When visibility declines or AI systems fail to recommend your company, the root cause is often tied to one of the four pillars. Buyers and AI systems may not clearly understand your expertise, discover your content, trust your claims, or connect your company to the problems you solve.

TEST VISIBILITY THE WAY BUYERS SEARCH

One of the simplest ways to evaluate your AI visibility is to test the market the same way your buyers do. Ask AI systems questions your prospects would naturally ask. Try:

- **broad category prompts**
- **specific use-case questions**
- **competitor comparison prompts**
- **industry-specific phrasing**
- **branded and non-branded searches**

Then compare results across multiple AI systems, including:

- **ChatGPT**
- **Claude**
- **Gemini**
- **Perplexity**

Pay attention to:

- **Which brands appear repeatedly**
- **Which sources are cited**
- **How competitors are described**
- **Whether your company appears at all**
- **And how accurately AI systems describe your business**

EXAMPLE VISIBILITY PROMPTS

Instead of testing simple keywords like:

- **“Top industrial automation software vendors”**
- **“best CRM software for XYZ industry”**
- **“B2B marketing agencies in Dallas”**

Test the kinds of questions real buyers ask AI systems:

- **“What are the best B2B marketing agencies for industrial companies?”**
- **“Which HubSpot agencies specialize in pipeline growth for mid-market B2B companies?”**
- **“What is the difference between demand generation and pipeline marketing?”**
- **“What are good alternatives to [competitor]?”**
- **“Which companies help manufacturers improve lead quality and pipeline visibility?”**
- **“What should I look for in a HubSpot onboarding partner?”**

You can manage this process manually with prompts and spreadsheets or operationalize visibility tracking through AI visibility platforms and tools built into broader marketing systems like HubSpot.



A VISIBILITY WITHOUT MEASUREMENT IS GUESSWORK.

THE FASTER YOU CAN IDENTIFY PATTERNS, GAPS, AND OPPORTUNITIES, THE FASTER YOU CAN IMPROVE HOW AI SYSTEMS UNDERSTAND AND RECOMMEND YOUR BRAND.



Field Tip:

Create a shared library of high-value buyer prompts and revisit them regularly.

Document the results over time so you can identify changes in visibility, messaging accuracy, citation patterns, and competitive positioning.

The goal is not to track a single result. The goal is to identify trends that reveal new opportunities and emerging gaps.

IDENTIFY VISIBILITY GAPS

If competitors consistently appear in AI-generated answers and your company does not, the issue is usually a signal gap.

AI systems may struggle to confidently connect your company to a specific category, capability, use case, or as a trusted expert in a particular subject. This is where visibility analysis becomes valuable.

Review:

- Which sources competitors are being cited from
- What content formats do AI systems reference most often
- How competitors position themselves
- Where your company lacks clarity or contextual depth
- And whether important content is easy for AI systems to retrieve



**IF AI CANNOT CONFIDENTLY
CONNECT YOUR BRAND TO A
PROBLEM CATEGORY, IT WILL
USUALLY CITE SOMEONE ELSE.**

AI SYSTEMS RECOMMEND BRANDS THEY CAN CLEARLY
ASSOCIATE WITH SPECIFIC PROBLEMS, CATEGORIES, AND
USE CASES.

USE TOOLS TO SAVE TIME

Like a compass pointing you in the right direction, you can use tools to monitor what improves visibility and, in some cases, take action. Platforms like Google Analytics, HubSpot, and emerging AEO tools are beginning to integrate:

- **AI referral tracking**
- **conversational analytics**
- **buyer signal monitoring**
- **content optimization insights**
- **and AI search visibility reporting**
- **accuracy of AI-generated company descriptions**
- **performance of refreshed content**
- **growth in non-branded discovery**

Add a "How did you find us?" field in your primary conversion forms.

Consider updating your primary conversion forms to include an open-text field and ask, "How did you find us?" While attribution will never be perfect, direct buyer feedback can provide valuable insight into how prospects discover your company.



Field Tip:

Save screenshots of AI-generated answers over time.

This creates a simple historical record for tracking:

- visibility improvements
- messaging accuracy
- citation trends
- and competitor movement

TRAIL CHECK:
VISIBILITY TEST

Run the following prompt in ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Perplexity, and Google AI Overviews:

Prompt: Who are the leading [category] providers for [audience]?

Question	Result
Did we appear?	
How were we described?	
Who appeared with us?	
Were citations accurate?	
What surprised us?	

KEEP TESTING AND REFINING

AI visibility is not a score to achieve. It’s a signal that helps you identify where buyers may be struggling to find, understand, trust, or choose your company.

The goal is not perfect visibility. **The goal is continuous improvement.**

STOP MEASURING THE WRONG THINGS

For years, B2B marketers have relied on traffic, clicks, form fills, and cost per lead to evaluate performance. Those metrics still have value, but they don't provide a complete view of how buyers discover, evaluate, and select solutions.

Today's buyers rarely follow a linear path. They discover ideas in LinkedIn feeds, ask questions in AI tools, validate vendors on review sites, consume content across multiple channels, and discuss options with peers long before they identify themselves as potential buyers.

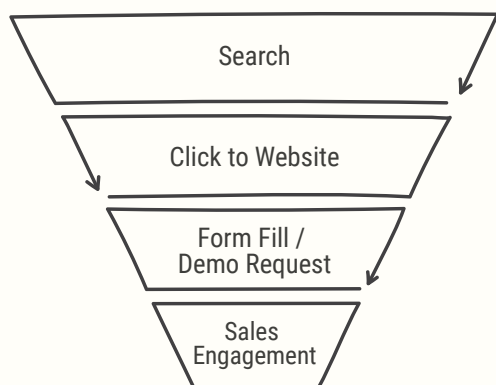
By the time they raise their hand, much of the research process has already happened. As a result, more of the buying journey is becoming invisible to traditional attribution systems.

THE B2B BUYING JOURNEY HAS FLIPPED

Discovery happens everywhere. Your website is where buyers validate and take action.

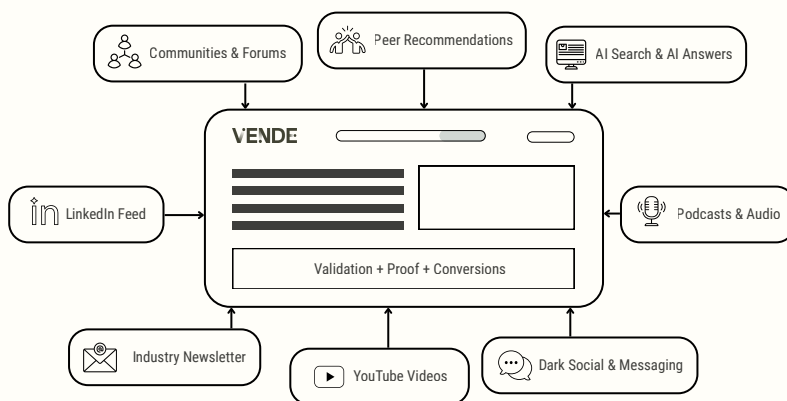
THE OLD MODEL

Discovery → Website → Conversion



THE NEW B2B REALITY

Discovery Everywhere → Website as Validation



WHERE BUYERS LEARN (AND DECIDE)



Buyers learn in more places than ever.



Much of it happens outside your website.



AI summarizes, compares, and forms opinions.



Trust is built before sales is involved.



The website is where buyers validate and act.

Your website is no longer the center of discovery. **It's your moment of truth.**

THE BUYER BLACKOUT

Many B2B teams are beginning to experience what we call the buyer blackout: a growing gap between how buyers actually buy and what traditional reporting systems can see.

AI has accelerated this shift by making it easier for buyers to gather information, evaluate alternatives, and narrow their options without ever visiting a website or filling out a form.

Your website remains important, but its role has changed. It's no longer the starting point for most buying journeys. It's where buyers go to validate claims, assess credibility, and decide whether to take the next step.

The challenge is that most reporting systems still give credit to the final conversion point. The channels and interactions that shape buyer decisions often receive little attention because they happen before traditional attribution systems can detect them.

When measurement begins with clicks, many of the activities that create future pipeline become difficult to recognize, justify, and scale.

FOLLOW THE FULL TRAIL

As discovery becomes distributed, marketers need broader measurement systems to understand how buyers move from awareness to pipeline.

We still need to track traffic, conversions, pipeline, and revenue. We also need to measure where the company is becoming more visible, more trusted, and more relevant to the buyers it wants to reach.

A prospect may first encounter your company in an AI-generated answer weeks or months before they visit your website, engage with content, or identify themselves as a potential buyer. That makes AI visibility one of the earliest measurable indicators in the modern buying journey.

Viewed through this lens, AI visibility is not a standalone metric. It's an upstream signal that can influence subsequent stages of the buyer journey.

A useful framework is to think about measurement in four layers:

1. **Presence**
2. **Signals**
3. **Buyer Momentum**
4. **Revenue**

Each layer provides a different view of pipeline creation.

These measurement layers help quantify the impact of the four AEO pillars. Discoverability influences Presence. Understanding and Trust influence Signals. Being Chosen often shows up through Buyer Momentum and ultimately Revenue. Together, they provide a more complete picture of how visibility becomes pipeline.

PRESENCE METRICS

Presence metrics answer a simple question:

Are we consistently showing up where buyers and AI systems go to learn?

Before buyers engage, convert, or enter pipeline, they need opportunities to discover your expertise. Presence metrics help measure whether your company is actively contributing information to the places where research and learning occur.

Examples include:

- **Mentions in AI-generated answers**
- **Citation share within your category**
- **Branded search growth**
- **Review site visibility**
- **Third-party mentions**
- **Share of voice in industry conversations**
- **Publishing frequency across key channels**
- **Thought leadership contributions**
- **Expert participation in industry events, podcasts, and webinars**



PRESENCE IS THE COST OF ADMISSION.

BUYERS AND AI SYSTEMS CANNOT LEARN FROM EXPERTISE THEY NEVER ENCOUNTER.

Presence is often the earliest indicator of future demand. If buyers and AI systems cannot consistently encounter your expertise, the rest of the journey never begins.

SIGNAL METRICS

Signal metrics answer a different question:

Are buyers leaning in?

Examples include:

- **Targeted engagement with content on your website**
- **Community growth**
- **Event attendance**
- **Repeat visits from target accounts**
- **Direct traffic growth**
- **Returning visitors**
- **Multi-touch content consumption**
- **Buying group engagement**

Signals often appear long before a form submission. They provide evidence that buyers are paying attention, building confidence, and exploring solutions. In a clickless world, these signals frequently reveal more about future pipeline than a single conversion event.

BUYER MOMENTUM METRICS

Buyer movement metrics answer the question:

Are buyers progressing toward pipeline?

This is where many organizations struggle.

Marketing reports often focus on activities. Buyer movement focuses on progression.

Examples include:

- **Target accounts coverage**
- **Engaged accounts**
- **Warm accounts**
- **Hot accounts**
- **Lifecycle stage progression**
- **Marketing-assisted opportunities**
- **Pipeline coverage**

These metrics provide visibility into how buyers move from awareness to engagement and eventually into active opportunities.

In our work with clients, we often see evidence of future pipeline long before a lead is created. A target account begins engaging with content. Additional contacts appear from the same organization. Engagement becomes more frequent. Buyers consume proof-oriented content and revisit key pages.

Those signals rarely show up in a traditional lead report, but they often indicate meaningful buying activity is already underway.

REVENUE METRICS

Revenue metrics answer the question every executive team ultimately cares about:

Is it moving the business?

Examples include:

- **Influenced opportunities**
- **Pipeline contribution**
- **Sales cycle velocity**
- **Close rates**
- **Pipeline quality**
- **Customer acquisition efficiency**

Revenue remains the destination.

The challenge is understanding which activities helped create it.

Organizations that focus exclusively on bottom-of-funnel metrics often miss the signals that explain why pipeline is growing, stagnating, or accelerating.

WHAT GETS MEASURED GETS FUNDED

We need to get measurement right because what gets funded shapes your future pipeline. As we've explored, in an AI-driven world, some of the most important signals appear way before a buyer fills out a form. When those signals are absent from reporting, they often become absent from planning and investment decisions as well.

The wrong dashboard can kill the right strategy.

Many of the activities that influence modern buyers occur before a lead is created and outside traditional attribution systems. If measurement begins with clicks and ends with form fills, it becomes difficult to see the broader system that creates pipeline.

- **Visibility creates awareness.**
- **Awareness creates engagement.**
- **Engagement creates trust.**
- **Trust creates pipeline.**

The challenge is that most dashboards start measuring halfway through that journey.

**Field Tip:**

During your next executive review, ask a different question:
How are buyers progressing, not just converting?

Look for evidence of:

- **Increased target account coverage**
- **Growing buying group depth**
- **Repeat engagement from key accounts**
- **Movement through lifecycle stages**
- **Marketing-assisted opportunities**
- **AI visibility trends and citation growth**

Those metrics often reveal future pipeline before it appears in a revenue report.

THE GOAL IS NOT TO REPLACE TRADITIONAL MARKETING METRICS.

The goal is to supplement traditional metrics with measures that reflect how modern buyers actually buy.

As AI, social platforms, communities, review sites, and peer networks continue to influence discovery, the companies with the clearest view of buyer behavior will make better decisions about where to invest.

The organizations that win will be the ones that measure what buyers actually do, not just what marketing systems can see.