



Practical guide: Get your business mentioned by AI tools

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How AI tools decide who to mention

AI visibility is how often, and how accurately, tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity and Google's AI Overview mention your business when someone asks a question about your category. It is measured the way rankings are measured: a fixed set of questions, asked in the same tools each month, with the answers written down.

The starting number is uncomfortable for most businesses. McKinsey examined roughly 2.6 million citations given by AI tools in answers about 25 consumer brands, published in June 2026, and found that 1% of the sources cited were the brands' own websites. AI tools learn about your business mainly from what other people have published about you.

What it is not

It is not a rewrite of your website. Google states in writing that no special files, markup or structured data are needed to appear in AI Overviews or AI Mode. A page has to be indexed and eligible to show with a normal search snippet, and nothing beyond that.

It is not a position you can buy. Research at Carnegie Mellon University found that changing one word in a question moved the likelihood of a buyer being pointed to a particular brand by as much as 78.3%. Anyone promising you a place in AI answers is selling something they cannot deliver.



What changes when AI answers first

Website visits from direct traffic and search clicks are down 8% since 2023, according to McKinsey's State of the Consumer 2026. Among Gen Z buyers, 60% regularly use the AI overview at the top of a Google search and 28% already use AI tools when they shop. For baby boomers the figures are 29% and 16%. Four reasons to take this seriously now.

The recommendation happens before the visit

A buyer who asks an AI tool for a shortlist has already narrowed the field before any website is opened. If your business is absent from that answer, the quality of your website never comes into it.

You find out who you actually compete with

The names that keep appearing in answers to your category questions are your competitors in the eyes of the buyer, whatever your own list says. Several of my clients have found a name in that set they had never heard of.

The test costs an hour and a spreadsheet

There is no subscription needed to run this. Ten questions in four tools, recorded in a sheet, takes an afternoon the first time and about an hour a month afterwards.

It corrects your own facts

Running the test usually turns up an old address, a former company name or a directory entry describing a business you no longer are. Every one of those weakens what an AI tool believes about you, and each is quick to fix.



Where AI tools get their information

If 1% of citations come from company websites, the useful question is where the other 99% comes from. McKinsey gives the breakdown. Competitor and other brand websites accounted for 30% of citations on ChatGPT, 40% on Gemini and 29% on Perplexity. The rest came from retailers, publishers, review sites and forums.

The Business of Fashion and McKinsey reach the same conclusion in *The State of Fashion 2026*: reviews, blogs and affiliate posts make up around 80% of the sources AI tools use.

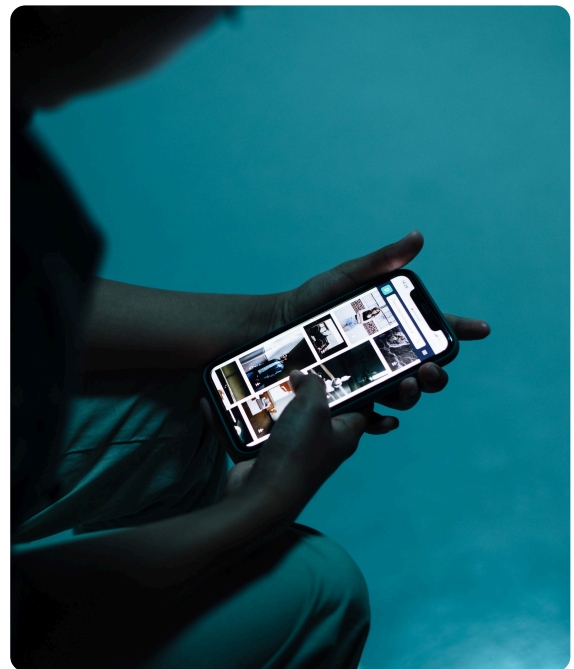
One technical point worth checking

Content assembled by JavaScript in the browser is invisible to many AI crawlers. A well-designed page can be unreadable to the tool you want reading it. Ask whoever built your site to confirm that your key pages display as text in the page source.

What this changes

The work that improves AI visibility mostly happens on other people's websites. Reviews on the platforms your customers use, trade press coverage, directory listings that agree with each other, expert citations, guest articles, and a complete Google Business Profile.

Most of that costs time rather than money, and a careful human buyer checks the same sources.



What to record, and how to score it

The test produces one number and one list. The number is how many of the four tools mention your business in an answer to a question that does not contain your name. The list is every website the tools cited instead of you.

Recognition when someone uses your name is a healthy sign and it does not count towards the score. Almost every business with a working website is recognised when named. Far fewer are recommended when they are not.

Where the score usually starts

Zero out of four is the normal position for a specialist firm or a small business with a good website and a short record of coverage elsewhere. Mentions in unbranded answers follow the same pattern as search rankings and arrive months after the work is done, so judge progress over two or three quarters.

Five things to record for every answer

Mentioned	Did the answer name your business
Linked	Was there a link, and to which page
Sources used	Every website the tool cited
Accurate	For named questions, is the description right
Competitors	The names that keep appearing

Your website is 1% of what AI tools read about you. The other 99% is what everyone else has published.



Actions to get your business found

01

Write the ten questions

Six without your name, the way a buyer asks before they know you exist. Who are the best X in Dubai. Recommend an X for a growing business. I need X without hiring someone full time.

Four with your name: who is your company, tell me about your website, is it any good, what does it charge.

02

Ask them in four tools

ChatGPT logged in with search switched on, because logged out it answers from memory. Perplexity, which shows its sources openly. Gemini logged in.

Then Google itself, noting whether an AI overview appears for the unbranded questions and whether you are in it.

03

Record five things every time

Mentioned, linked and to which page, every source used, accuracy on the named questions, and the competitors that appear. Use the table on page 5.

Copy the answer itself into the sheet as well. Wording changes between months and the change is the evidence.

04

Score it and date it

Count the tools that mention you on an unbranded question. That is your score out of four, and the date it was taken is part of the number.

Zero is a normal starting point and it is the baseline everything afterwards is measured against.

Actions to get your business found

05

Turn the sources into a work plan

Rank every website the tools cited by how often it appeared. Each one is a review to earn, a listing to correct, a publication to pitch or a question to answer in public.

That ranked list is your content and public relations work for the next three months.

06

Correct your own facts

Make the company name, address, licence description and services identical on your website, Google Business Profile, LinkedIn and every directory that lists you.

An AI tool that reads five listings agreeing with each other has more confidence in you than one reading five that differ.

07

Answer real questions in text

Add a page that answers the questions customers actually ask, in full sentences, displayed as text. State who you are, what you do, for whom, at what price and where.

Structured data is not required by Google for AI features, and it still helps machines confirm you are one business across several websites.

08

Repeat monthly, judge quarterly

Same questions, same tools, same sheet, once a month. Thirty minutes once the first run is done.

Review the score and the source list every quarter and decide what changes. A test that never changes a decision is a hobby.

A worked example

A made-up interior design firm in Dubai, fourteen staff, eleven years trading. The names and figures are invented. The pattern is the one I see most often.

What the first test showed

Score 1 out of 4. ChatGPT named the firm once in an unbranded answer, with no link. Perplexity, Gemini and Google's AI overview named five other firms and never mentioned it.

All four tools recognised the firm when it was named. Gemini gave an address it had left in 2023, taken from a free zone directory nobody had updated.

Two directory sites and one lifestyle magazine appeared in almost every answer. Three of the five competitors named were firms the owner had not been tracking.

The reading

Healthy recognition, no authority. The buying question was being answered entirely by two directories and one magazine.

What was done, and what changed

Month 1: the old address corrected in nine places, and the Google Business Profile completed with services, photographs and opening hours.

Months 1 to 3: both directory profiles rewritten and paid for at the level that allows a full description, and 22 completed projects asked for a review.

Month 4: one article pitched and published in the magazine that kept appearing.

Month 7: score 3 out of 4, linked in two of them, and the firm appearing as a source in answers about its own category.

The cost

Two directory listings, an hour a month, and the time to ask for reviews. No agency, no retainer and no software.



The one-page AI visibility log

Print this page or copy the headings into a spreadsheet. Same questions, same tools, once a month.

OUR TEN QUESTIONS: SIX WITHOUT OUR NAME, FOUR WITH IT

DATE RUN · TOOLS USED · SCORE OUT OF FOUR

ACCURACY: ANYTHING THE TOOLS GOT WRONG ABOUT US

WEBSITES CITED INSTEAD OF US, RANKED BY HOW OFTEN THEY APPEARED

COMPETITORS NAMED AGAIN THIS MONTH

THIS MONTH'S THREE ACTIONS

Mistakes to avoid and sources to read

Six mistakes I see most often

- ☐ Paying a retainer for a position nobody is able to promise.
- ☐ Buying a visibility score with no list of sources behind it.
- ☐ Rewriting the website for AI when Google asks for nothing special.
- ☐ Asking only questions that contain your own name.
- ☐ Testing once, so there is no baseline to measure against.
- ☐ Leaving directory listings that give your address three different ways.

A note on the evidence

The citation study covered consumer goods in two countries using one measurement tool. A law firm or a clinic may see a different split. The behaviour figures come from a survey rather than measured activity. The overall finding holds. The exact percentages will vary by sector.

Sources

McKinsey, State of the Consumer 2026: When tech acceleration and cost pressures collide, 22 June 2026. The Business of Fashion and McKinsey, The State of Fashion 2026, November 2025. Oguz Acar and David Schweidel, Preparing Your Brand for Agentic AI, Harvard Business Review, March to April 2026. Google Search Central, AI features and your website, checked 21 August 2026.

Related reading

On ataylorcmo.com, under Insights: AI visibility, how to get your business mentioned by ChatGPT, Gemini and Google AI. Also: the AI audit for SMEs. Related guides in this series: Gather competitor intelligence, and Build a marketing plan, at ataylorcmo.com/guides.



Conclusion

Ten questions, four tools, one spreadsheet, once a month. That is the whole method, and it costs an afternoon to start.

The score tells you where you stand. The list of websites cited instead of you tells you what to do about it. Almost none of that work is on your own website, which is the part most businesses find surprising and the reason so much money is spent in the wrong place.

Next step

I offer a 30 minute discovery call at no charge, and I will run the ten questions on your category beforehand.

Book at ataylorcmo.com, or write to adam@ataylorcmo.com.



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MSc, FCIM, CDMP. A marketing leader with more than 20 years of international experience driving growth, market expansion and competitive positioning across luxury retail, real estate, free zones, automotive and mega-events.

I work as a fractional chief marketing officer for owners, executives and boards in the UAE, the UK and internationally. My career includes Group Head of Marketing at Emaar, Director of Events and Entertainment at Expo 2020 Dubai, and marketing leadership of a UAE free zone, with more than 5,000 events and activations delivered for premium brands.

Credentials

MSc Marketing. Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Marketing. Certified Digital Marketing Professional.

Experience

More than 20 years across the UAE, the wider Middle East, the UK and global markets.

Specialisms

Marketing strategy, brand positioning, UAE market entry, growth and marketing return on investment, events and experiential, and board governance.

Brands and organisations

Emaar · Expo 2020 Dubai · The Dubai Mall · IFZA · Al Tayer Motors · Ferrari · Gucci · Harvey Nichols · Bloomingdale's · Dolce and Gabbana

Contact

If you have a question about this guide, or want a second opinion on what the AI tools say about your business, write or call. I reply within one working day.



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