

JUNE 2026

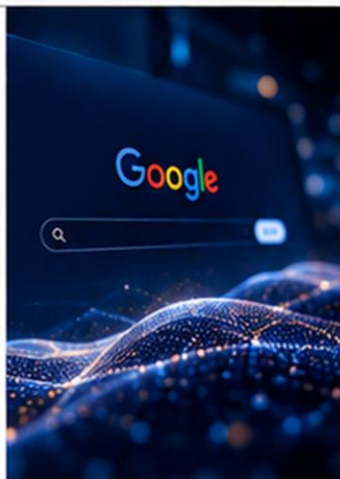
NEWS LETTER



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SEO NEWS

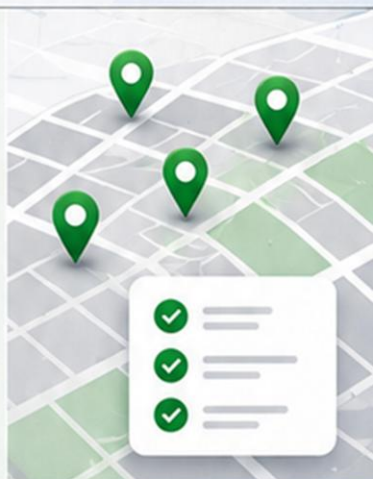
Google Just Made
Its Biggest Search
Change in 25 Years.
SEO Is Not Dead.



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Answer Engine
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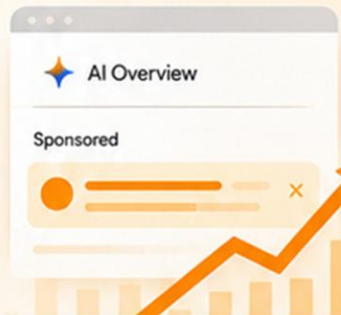
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Google Just Made Its Biggest Search Change in 25 Years. SEO Is Not Dead.

Search didn't disappear. It evolved — and so did the work we do to keep you visible.

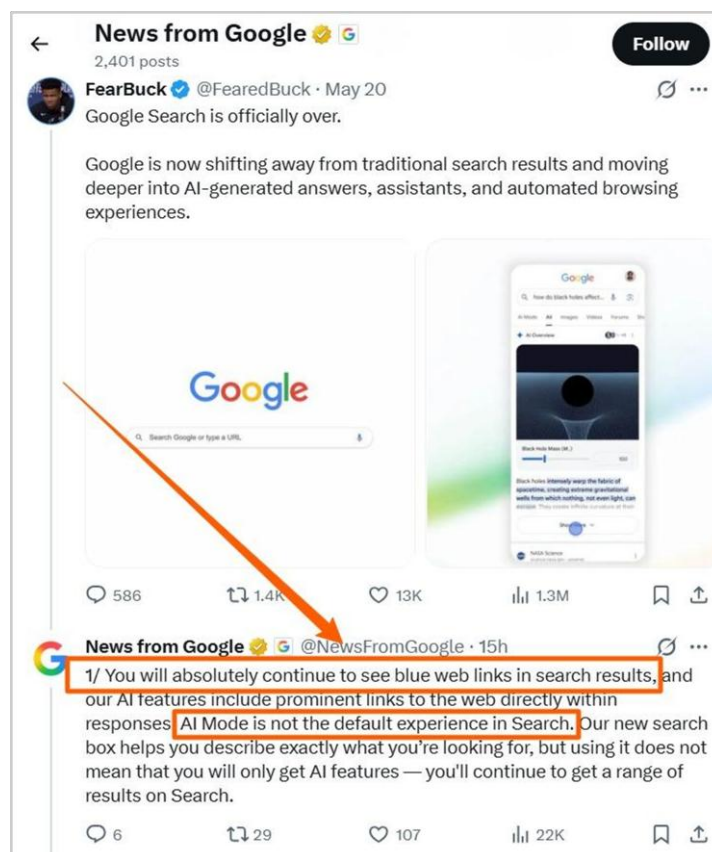


You may have seen the headlines. At Google I/O 2026, Google [announced](#) what it called the biggest upgrade to Search in over 25 years — a more conversational, AI-powered experience built around Gemini. Instead of only returning a list of links, Search now generates summarized answers, comparisons, follow-up suggestions, and AI Overviews directly on the results page.

It's a real shift. If your impressions, click-through rates, or traffic patterns have moved recently, this is likely part of the reason. So it's fair to ask the question on everyone's mind: **is SEO dead?** The short answer is no — and Google itself has confirmed why.

Straight From Google: The Blue Links Aren't Going Anywhere

There's a lot of noise online claiming "Google Search is over." Google's own communications team pushed back directly. Their official statement is unambiguous: you will **absolutely continue to see blue web links** in search results, AI features include prominent links to the web, and — critically — **AI Mode is not the default experience in Search.**



Source: Google's official "News from Google" account confirming blue links remain and AI Mode is not the default.

In other words, the foundation of search — websites earning visibility through quality and relevance — is still intact. What's changed is *where* and *how* your business gets discovered.

What Actually Changed

Search is moving from a navigation tool into a decision-support system. People are asking longer, more conversational questions, and AI is summarizing answers before they ever click. That means visibility is no longer measured by rankings alone — your brand can now show up inside AI Overviews, conversational answers, product comparisons, and even AI assistants like ChatGPT, Gemini, and Perplexity.

Here's the part that matters: the brands AI systems trust and surface are the ones with **strong topical authority, well-structured content, consistent trust signals, and genuine credibility**. Those are exactly the things good SEO has always built. The fundamentals didn't get weaker — they got more important.

SEO Didn't Die. It Expanded.

The mistake businesses make right now is assuming they need to abandon SEO. The opposite is true. The brands winning in AI search aren't dropping SEO — they're **expanding it** to cover the new surfaces where customers discover them. That's the shift from traditional SEO into AEO (Answer Engine Optimization) and GEO (Generative Engine Optimization).

What We're Already Doing For You

You don't need to navigate this alone — we've already built it into our work. Here's how we're protecting and growing your visibility across AI-driven search:

- **AEO / GEO optimization** — structuring your content so it's eligible to appear in AI-generated answers and generative search results, not just the traditional listings.
- **AI Overviews tracking** — monitoring whether you're showing up in Google's AI answers and making the on-page and schema changes that improve your eligibility.
- **LLM visibility monitoring** — tracking how and where your brand is mentioned across ChatGPT, Gemini, and Perplexity, then building strategies to strengthen that presence.
- **AI traffic attribution** — identifying visitors arriving from AI search engines so we can connect this work to real visits, engagement, and leads.
- **AI visibility audits** — pinpointing the highest-impact opportunities to improve how you appear across the entire AI search landscape.

The Bottom Line

Google changed search. The blue links are still here, AI Mode isn't the default, and the fundamentals of earning trust and authority matter more than ever. SEO didn't die — it grew up. And the work we're doing has grown right along with it, so your business stays visible no matter how people choose to search.

Have questions about how this affects your business specifically? **Reply to this email and our team will walk you through it.**

2

Answer Engine Optimization (AEO): The Essential Checklist for Multi-Location Brands

Why being found inside AI answers is the next frontier for your business.



Search has fundamentally changed. Platforms like ChatGPT, Perplexity, Gemini, and Google AI Overviews no longer just hand customers a list of blue links. They read the web, then write a single synthesized answer. When someone asks one of these tools to recommend a business, the AI decides which brands to name and which to leave out.

For multi-location businesses, this shift is critical. If your brand is not part of the AI answer, the customer never sees you, no matter how strong your reputation is locally. Answer Engine Optimization (AEO) is the practice of making sure your business is the one the AI chooses to cite.

The shift is already here

- **1 in 10** of U.S. internet users now turn to AI-first search experiences.
- **16%** of all Google desktop searches now include an AI Overview.
- **800 million** people now use ChatGPT every week, up from 400 million in early 2025.

The challenge: Answer engines give short, summarized results, so there is room for only a handful of businesses in any response. If a customer asks for “best dentist open late near me” and your content does not clearly state your hours and services, the AI will skip you, even if you are the best in town.

Where AI Answers Come From

Understanding what these platforms read makes it clear why AEO works. Generative engines pull from two kinds of sources:

- **Background knowledge:** structured data they were trained on, such as Wikipedia, news publishers, and large public web crawls.
- **Live information:** your website, your business listings on Google and Yelp, customer reviews, forums, and niche industry directories.

This is the key insight: third-party sources such as directories and review sites can account for nearly half of the citations AI tools use for opinion-based questions, and niche industry platforms supply a large share of the rest. Your own website matters, but so does everything written about you elsewhere.

AEO and SEO Work Together

AEO does not replace SEO, it builds on it. Both depend on the same foundation of accurate information and trustworthy content. The difference is what each one optimizes for.

Traditional SEO	Answer Engine Optimization (AEO)
Goal Rank higher in search results.	Goal Be cited inside AI-generated answers.
Measured by SERP positions and click-through rates.	Measured by Citation frequency, tone, and factual accuracy.
Focus Keywords, backlinks, technical health.	Focus Structured content, brand trust, reviews.

Your AEO Checklist

These are the priorities that move the needle for multi-location brands. Work through them location by location.

1. Strengthen reviews and reputation

AI models weigh sentiment and consistency heavily, which makes this the highest-leverage area for multi-location brands.

- Audit review volume, recency, and ratings across Google, Yelp, and industry-specific platforms for every location.
- Send automated review requests within 24 to 48 hours of completing a service, while the experience is fresh.
- Maintain a 4.0+ star rating across all major platforms, for every location, not just your top performers.
- Reply to every review within a day or two with a personalized, professional response.
- Encourage customers to describe the specific service they received. Detailed reviews give AI more to cite than a bare star rating.

3. Make your content AI-ready

Content needs to be easy for an AI to extract while still reading well for a human.

- Open key pages with a short summary of the main takeaways, then use question-based headers that match how people actually ask.
- Write clear, factual, declarative answers, and weave in local cues: city names, neighborhoods, service areas, and price ranges.
- Add LocalBusiness and FAQ schema markup to every location page so AI can read your details cleanly.
- Give each location its own landing page with unique content. Avoid copying the same description across locations.

4. Build authority and earn mentions

Being cited by reputable third parties signals trust to generative models.

- Earn coverage in local press for community events, and contribute expert commentary in your industry.
- Participate authentically in forums and communities relevant to your field, prioritizing helpful answers over self-promotion.
- Build relationships with journalists and creators in your niche, and keep a steady cadence of mentions over time.

5. Monitor, measure, and correct

AI visibility changes quickly, so tracking keeps your brand accurately represented.

- Track how often your brand is mentioned in AI answers, along with the tone and the factual accuracy of those mentions.
- Flag and fix inaccuracies, such as wrong hours, services, or pricing, as soon as they appear.
- Watch which content formats AI tools cite most, and refresh your best-performing pages with new data and examples.

Critical for multi-location brands

AI models aggregate reviews and data at scale. A few underperforming locations can distort how your entire brand is described across every AI platform. Prioritize consistency across all locations, not just your strongest ones.

How We Help You Win the AI Era

This is exactly the work our team manages for you. We do not just track AI visibility, we actively improve it across every one of your locations:

- Track your visibility across ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, Claude, and Google AI Overviews.
- Implement the on-site structure, schema, and expert-written content that earn AI citations.
- Manage and grow reviews across all your locations to build the trust signals AI relies on.
- Monitor how your brand is described in AI answers and correct inaccuracies before they spread.
- Benchmark you against competitors to find the gaps where they are cited and you are not.
- Report on AI referral traffic and conversions so you can see real impact, not just opinions.

The early-mover advantage in AEO is closing fast. Competition for AI answers is still far lower than traditional SEO, which means now is the moment to get ahead of your competitors.

Ready to lead the generative era? Reach out to your account team to get started.

3

Google Dropped FAQ Rich Results. Your FAQ Schema Just Got A New Job.



If you saw the headlines and reached for the delete button, hold on. Google quietly [retired](#) the *visual* FAQ rich result this month — but the markup behind it is still perfectly valid, and it's now doing more useful work than the blue stars ever did. Here's what actually changed, and why we're leaving FAQ schema right where it is.

What actually changed

Google added a deprecation notice to its FAQ structured-data documentation. The short version, on three dates:

May 7	FAQ rich results stopped appearing in Google Search.
June 2026	The FAQ appearance filter, the rich-result report, and Rich Results Test support go away.
Aug 2026	FAQ support is removed from the Search Console API — adjust any reporting calls before then.

This isn't a surprise so much as a finale. Google has been pulling back FAQ rich results since 2023, when it first limited them to authoritative government and health sites. This deprecation closes out that three-year wind-down for everyone.

The part most people miss: Google itself says you can leave FAQ structured data in place. The markup won't cause problems, and **FAQPage is still a valid Schema.org type**. What Google removed is a *display feature* — not the schema, and not the value of structuring your content as clear questions and answers.

Where the value moved: AI search

Here's the timing nobody can ignore. As Google steps back from FAQ rich results, FAQ-style content has become standard advice for the surfaces that are actually growing — AI answer engines. ChatGPT, Claude, Perplexity, Gemini, Google's AI Mode and the rest don't reward a blue rich-result widget. They reward content they can parse, lift, and cite cleanly.

That is exactly what FAQ schema produces: explicit question-and-answer pairs, machine-readable, with the answer sitting right next to the question. It's some of the most "extraction-friendly" markup you can put on a page — and it still feeds the engines that don't follow Google's lead, like Bing and voice assistants.

So the move here isn't to strip FAQs. It's to recognize that the same structure Google is retiring from its SERP is the structure AI search is leaning into. You built it for one audience; it now serves a bigger one.

What we're doing about it

1. **Keeping FAQ schema on your pages.** It's valid, it's harmless, and it's working for AI and non-Google engines.
2. **Cleaning up reporting before August.** Anything pulling FAQ data through the Search Console API gets migrated so dashboards don't break.
3. **Writing FAQs for answers, not widgets.** Real questions, direct answers, near the top of the page — the format AI engines quote.
4. **Tracking AI visibility, not just Google rankings.** Where your brand shows up in AI answers is the metric that's quietly mattering more each quarter.

Want to know how your site looks to AI search?

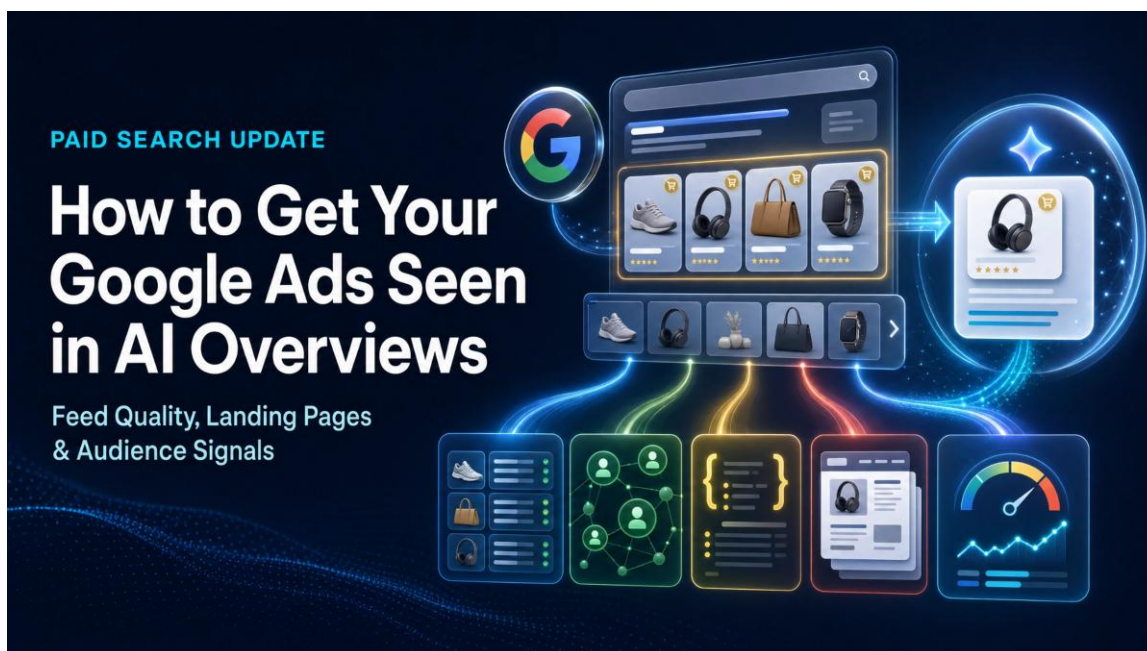
We'll run a GEO/AEO audit — how parse-able your content is, where your FAQ schema helps, and where your brand surfaces across ChatGPT, Perplexity, Gemini and AI Mode. Reply to this email to request one.

Bottom line: Google removed a feature, not a best practice. The FAQ schema you already have keeps earning — it just changed where it gets paid.

4

How to Get Your Google Ads Seen in AI Overviews

Feed quality, landing page content, and audience signals now decide whether your Shopping, Performance Max, and AI Max campaigns show up inside AI-generated answers.



AI Overviews are quietly rewriting the rules for paid search. As Google answers more queries directly on the results page, advertisers face fewer clicks to compete for and a new imperative: getting their ads surfaced inside the AI-generated response itself. Campaign selection matters, but it is only the starting point. Feed data, on-page content, audience inputs, and the tone of your creative all influence whether your ad earns a spot.

Start with the campaigns Google favors

Google has been clear about which campaign types are best positioned for AI Overviews: Shopping, Performance Max, and AI Max for Search. Notably, these are the same automated, lower-control formats that many experienced marketers have been slow to embrace. The common thread is keyword flexibility — each one leans on intent signals rather than rigid keyword matching to decide when an ad should appear.

- Shopping — the original keywordless campaign. Performance hinges on feed quality, so invest in strong product titles, thorough descriptions, high-quality images, and the optional feed attributes. When a shopper asks a high-intent question, the overview can surface a product carousel above or below the summary.
- Performance Max — blends page content, feed data, and audience insights to decide where and when ads serve. Turning on Final URL expansion lets Google pull from your page content to match more queries.
- AI Max for Search — treats your existing keywords as an intent signal rather than a hard target, then expands beyond them. Pair it with broad match, smart bidding, and Final URL expansion to reach searches traditional targeting would miss.

Six best practices for AI Overview visibility

To improve the odds of your ad being chosen as the featured selection in an overview, optimize across creative, copy, schema, and the signals that build brand authority.

1. **Diversify your assets.** Supply varied headlines and descriptions plus informative image and video assets. Provide visuals in square (1:1), landscape (1.91:1), and vertical (4:5 or 9:16) formats so they fit across different response layouts.
2. **Write conversationally.** Google matches ads to the user's intent and the content of the overview itself, so trade generic sales language for assistive, helpful phrasing. Retire tired calls to action like "Buy now."
3. **Be clear and informative.** Answer the who, what, how, and why of a query. Use at least three to five headlines framed as answers or helpful summaries, and back them with a context-rich landing page — the more relevant content Final URL expansion can draw from, the more chances your ad has to appear.
4. **Tighten schema and links.** Make sure schema markup is thorough and aligned with your page content, and link out to reputable sources to build authority. Loop in your SEO team to get this right.
5. **Guide the automation with audience signals.** Since these campaigns hand control to Google, steer them with strong first-party audience signals, exclusions, and negative keywords so the system learns toward conversions that match your intent.
6. **Monitor for brand alignment.** Review the search terms report, the landing pages produced by Final URL expansion, and any automatically created assets. Use account-level exclusions and copy adjustments to keep your message consistent with your offer.

The bottom line

The move to conversational AI Overviews shifts the goal from chasing clicks to maximizing visibility right on the results page. Advertisers who lean into Google's recommended campaign types — and pair them with clean feed data, information-first landing pages, intent-signaling creative, and solid schema — can turn this disruption into a new growth channel rather than a lost one.

5

Google Ads Call Recording Will Default to “Yes” on July 1 — Check Your Settings



Starting **July 1, 2026**, Google Ads will automatically switch the “Call recording” setting to **“Yes”** for any account that hasn’t already made a selection. If you rely on call ads or call extensions to generate phone leads, this is a setting worth reviewing before the deadline.

What’s Changing

Until now, Google measured a call conversion primarily by duration — if a call lasted longer than a set number of seconds, it was counted as a successful lead. That approach has an obvious flaw: a long call could just as easily be a wrong number or a robocall as a genuine prospect.

To address this, Google is shifting toward AI-qualified call leads. Instead of relying on call length alone, Google’s AI will evaluate the actual content of recorded calls to determine whether a real, commercially meaningful conversation took place. The system looks for intent signals — a caller asking about specific services, scheduling a consultation, or showing readiness to buy.

Because that evaluation depends on having a recording to analyze, Google is making call recording the default. As Google’s notice puts it: if you leave the setting empty after June 30, 2026, you consent to having it updated to “Yes,” along with acceptance of the associated Call Ads Supplemental Terms.

Who Is Affected (and Who Isn't)

- **Accounts with no prior selection:** Recording switches on automatically on July 1.
- **Accounts that already opted out:** Your "No" setting is preserved — nothing changes.
- **Healthcare and financial services businesses:** Google has indicated recording will remain off for accounts identified in these categories, given the sensitivity of those conversations.

This change currently applies to eligible call ads in supported regions, including the U.S. and Canada.

How the New Conversion Logic Works

Google is layering its signals in order of reliability:

1. **Primary — call recording:** If recording is on, all calls are recorded and evaluated by AI, and only qualified calls count as conversions.
2. **Secondary — call duration:** If a call can't be recorded, the old duration threshold still applies.
3. **Tertiary — ad interaction:** In rare cases where a Google forwarding number isn't available, conversions are classified using ad interaction data.

On the reporting side, your Call Details reports will include an AI-generated summary of each call plus descriptive hashtags such as #HighIntent or #ConsultationScheduled, giving you a faster read on lead quality.

What You Should Do Before June 30

Treat this as a measurement decision, not just a checkbox.

- **Check the setting now.** In your account settings, confirm whether call recording is currently set to "Yes," "No," or left unselected. If you don't want the default applied, change it to "No" before June 30.
- **Review your call setup.** Confirm that call reporting is enabled and that Google forwarding numbers are active where you need them.
- **Decide whether AI qualification helps your model.** For call-heavy businesses, evaluating lead quality rather than just call length can sharpen optimization and reduce wasted spend. The value depends on your call volume and how much qualification already happens in your sales process.
- **Handle compliance.** Call recording is subject to local and state laws, several of which require notifying or obtaining consent from callers. Make sure your stakeholders are aware and that your practices align with the rules in the regions you operate in.

The Bigger Picture

You can still turn recording off at any time after it's enabled — this isn't a permanent switch. But the direction of travel is clear: Google Ads is moving from simply counting whether a call happened to understanding what was said. For advertisers who depend on the phone, the smart move is to make a deliberate choice before the default makes it for you.