

THE LOCAL SEO, AEO & GEO PLAYBOOK

Get Your Business **Recommended** by ChatGPT

How local businesses win more customers from Google, ChatGPT & Gemini, in 30 days. A plain-English plan, no tech skills needed.

Who's the best plumber near me?

Here are the top-rated options:

1

Your Business Name

★★★★★

Local SEO

AEO

GEO

30-Day Plan

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Get Your Business Recommended by ChatGPT

The Local SEO, AEO & GEO Playbook: How Local Businesses
Win More Customers from Google, ChatGPT & Gemini, in 30
Days



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The Local SEO, AEO & GEO Playbook

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Before You Start

This is a short book on purpose. You don't need 300 pages of theory to fix this problem. You need to understand how AI decides who to recommend, then spend a few focused weeks fixing the things that make you invisible.

Every part ends with something to do. If you only read and never act, nothing changes. If you act on even half of it, you'll be ahead of most of your competitors, because most of them haven't started yet.

Introduction: The Question Your Customers Are Already Asking

Picture a woman standing in her kitchen at 9 p.m. Water is spreading across the floor from under the sink. She doesn't open a phone book. She might not even open Google. She picks up her phone and types, or says out loud: *"Who's a good emergency plumber near me that's open now?"*

A few seconds later, an AI assistant gives her two or three names. Maybe a short reason for each. Maybe a phone number.

She calls the first one.

That's the whole sale. There was no page two of results, no comparing ten websites, no scrolling past ads. The AI made a shortlist, and if your business wasn't on it, you never had a chance. You didn't lose the job. You were never in the room.

This is already happening

This isn't a prediction about the future. A 2026 BrightLocal study found that 45% of consumers had used AI tools to look for local businesses, up from just 6% a year earlier. That's one of the fastest behavior shifts I've seen in more than a decade of working in search.

Now the uncomfortable part. A 2026 study by SOCi looked at hundreds of thousands of local business locations and found that ChatGPT recommended only about 1.2% of them. The rest were simply not mentioned.

So customers are asking AI more and more, and AI is naming very few businesses. That gap is the opportunity this book is about.

Why good businesses get left out

Here's what surprises most owners: AI doesn't skip you because you're bad at what you do. It skips you because it isn't sure about you.

AI assistants don't "know" your business the way a loyal customer does. They piece together a picture from what's written about you across the internet: your Google profile, your website, review sites, directories, local news, forum threads, and more. When that picture is clear, consistent, and full of real evidence, the AI feels safe recommending you. When it's thin, messy, or contradictory, the AI picks someone it understands better.

Think of it like a new neighbor asking around for a dentist. If three people mention the same office and say similar good things, she'll call that one. If she hears one vague mention and can't find much else, she'll keep looking. AI works in a surprisingly similar way.

The good news? Almost everything that makes AI unsure about you is fixable, and most of it doesn't need a big budget. It needs attention and consistency.

SEO, AEO, and GEO in plain English

You'll see these three terms on the cover. Here's what they mean, without the jargon:

- **SEO (Search Engine Optimization):** getting your business to show up in regular Google results and on Google Maps. This is the foundation, and it still matters.
- **AEO (Answer Engine Optimization):** making your business the clear, direct answer when someone asks a question, whether in Google's AI answers, a voice assistant, or a chatbot.
- **GEO (Generative Engine Optimization):** making sure AI tools like ChatGPT and Gemini understand your business, trust it, and name it when they write a recommendation.

You don't need to remember the labels. They overlap, and this book treats them as one job: making your business easy to find, easy to understand, and easy to recommend, everywhere customers look.

Who this book is for

This book is for you if:

- You own or market a business that serves customers in a specific area
- You get some business from Google but have no idea whether AI tools ever mention you
- You've heard terms like AEO, GEO, or "AI search" and want a straight explanation without the hype
- You'd rather do the work yourself, or at least understand it well enough to check what an agency is doing

You don't need to be technical. Where something is technical, like adding a bit of code to your website, I'll explain it simply and give you a template to copy.

What this book is not

It's not a trick or a hack. There's no secret phrase that makes ChatGPT recommend you. Anyone selling that is selling you a story. What works is boring in the best way: be clear about who you are, be consistent everywhere, and give the internet real proof that customers like you.

It's also not a promise of instant results. AI tools refresh their information at different speeds. Some changes show up in weeks; others take a few months. The businesses that win are the ones that start now and keep going.

How to use this book

Read Parts 1 and 2 first. They explain how AI picks businesses and show you how to test where you stand today. That test is your starting line, so don't skip it.

Parts 3 to 8 are the fixes, roughly in the order they matter. Part 9 turns everything into a 30-day plan. Part 10 shows you how to track progress. The Toolkit at the end has checklists, prompts, and templates you can use straight away.

Keep a notebook or a simple spreadsheet open while you read. You'll be writing down a lot of small things to fix, and it feels good to cross them off.

PART 1

How AI Decides Which Local Business to Name

You can't fix something you don't understand, so let's start here. I'll keep it simple, because the core idea really is simple.

AI doesn't rank. It recommends.

Traditional Google search gives people a long list and lets them choose. An AI assistant does the choosing for them. It reads a lot of information, forms an opinion, and hands back a short answer.

That changes the game. On Google, being number seven still got you some clicks. In an AI answer, there often isn't a number seven. There are two or three names, and everyone else is invisible.

So the question stops being "How do I rank higher?" and becomes "How do I become one of the few businesses the AI feels confident naming?"

Where AI gets its information

When someone asks for a local recommendation, AI tools typically draw on a mix of sources. The exact mix differs between ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, Copilot, and Google's AI features, and it changes over time. But the ingredients are broadly the same:

- 1. Search engine results.** Many AI assistants run live web searches behind the scenes and read the pages that come back. If you don't show up in regular search, you're less likely to show up in AI answers.
- 2. Map and business listing data.** Your Google Business Profile, Apple Business Connect, Bing Places, and the data providers that feed many apps and directories.
- 3. Review platforms.** Google reviews, Yelp, Facebook, and industry sites like Healthgrades, Avvo, Houzz, or Angi, depending on your field.

- 4. Your own website.** Especially pages that clearly say what you do, where you do it, and who you do it for.
- 5. What others say about you.** Local news, community blogs, "best of" lists, Reddit and forum threads, chamber of commerce pages, supplier and partner sites.

No single source decides everything. The AI is looking across all of them.

The three things AI is really checking

When I strip it down, an AI assistant is trying to answer three questions about your business before it recommends you.

1. Do I know exactly who this is?

AI thinks in "entities": distinct, identifiable things. Your business is an entity with a name, a location, a category, a phone number, and a set of services. If your name is written three different ways, your old address still shows on two directories, and your website never clearly says what city you serve, the AI isn't sure these scattered pieces are all the same business. Uncertainty is the enemy.

2. Is this business a good match for this question?

If someone asks for "a pediatric dentist who's good with anxious kids," the AI looks for evidence that a business actually does pediatric dentistry and is good with anxious kids. Not a vague "family dental care" page. Specific words, in specific places, backed up by reviews that mention the same thing.

3. Do other people agree this business is good?

This is about consensus. One glowing statement on your own website carries little weight. Twenty reviews that mention your fast response, a local news piece about your business, and a Reddit comment recommending you all point in the same direction. When many independent sources agree, the AI feels safe.

Why "just do SEO" isn't the full answer

If you've done traditional local SEO, you already have a head start. A strong Google Business Profile, good reviews, and a solid website all help with AI too.

But AI leans harder on a few things that old-school SEO often treated as optional:

- **Consistency everywhere**, not just on Google
- **Specific, descriptive language** about services and situations, not generic marketing lines
- **Mentions on other websites**, even without a link
- **Review content**, meaning what people actually write, not just your star average
- **Clear, direct answers** to the questions customers really ask

In other words, AI rewards businesses that are easy to understand and easy to verify. That's the thread running through every part of this book.

A simple way to think about it

Imagine the AI is a very fast, very careful assistant who has never visited your town. Before recommending anyone, it reads everything it can find. It wants to answer the customer correctly, and it really doesn't want to embarrass itself by recommending a business that's closed, in the wrong area, or poorly reviewed.

Your job is to make that assistant's research easy and its conclusion obvious.

DO THIS NOW:

Write down the five questions customers most often ask before they hire you. Use their words, not industry jargon. Keep this list handy. You'll use it in the next part.

PART 2

The 20-Minute Self-Audit

Before you fix anything, find out where you stand. This takes about 20 minutes and costs nothing. It's also the most eye-opening thing in this book. Most owners I've walked through it are surprised, and not always pleasantly.

Step 1: Set up a fair test

AI answers can be shaped by your past conversations and your location. To get a cleaner picture:

- Use a private or incognito browser window, or log out of your accounts
- If a tool has memory or personalization settings, turn them off for the test, or use a fresh account
- If you can, ask a friend or relative in your service area to run the same prompts on their phone

You won't get a perfectly neutral result. Nobody does. But you'll get close enough to see the pattern.

Step 2: Ask the questions your customers ask

Run each of these prompts in at least three tools: ChatGPT, Google (look at the AI Overview or AI Mode answer if it appears), and one more such as Gemini, Perplexity, or Microsoft Copilot. Swap in your own service and city.

1. "Who is the best [service] in [city]?"
2. "Can you recommend a [service] near [neighborhood or zip code]?"
3. "I need a [service] for [specific problem]. Who should I call in [city]?"
4. "Which [service] in [city] has the best reviews?"
5. "Is [your business name] in [city] any good?"
6. "What are the alternatives to [your biggest competitor] in [city]?"

Then add two or three of the customer questions you wrote down at the end of Part 1. Those are often the most revealing, because they're specific.

Step 3: Record what you see

Make a simple table like this one and fill it in for every prompt:

Prompt	Tool	Named?	Position	Who else was named	What AI said about you	Wrong facts?
Best [service] in [city]	ChatGPT					
Best [service] in [city]	Google AI					
Best [service] in [city]	Gemini					

Don't just note whether you appeared. Pay attention to **the reasons** the AI gives for the businesses it names. Those reasons are a cheat sheet. If every recommended competitor is described as "known for same-day service" or "highly rated for pediatric care," the AI is telling you what evidence it found and valued.

Step 4: Check what the AI believes about you

Prompt 5, "Is [your business] any good?", deserves extra attention. Read the answer slowly and check:

- Is your business described correctly? Right services, right area?
- Are your hours, address, or phone number wrong anywhere?
- Does it mention an old name, an old location, or a service you stopped offering?
- Does it mix you up with a business that has a similar name?
- What does it say people praise or complain about?

Any wrong fact here usually traces back to a wrong fact somewhere online. Write each one down. You'll hunt them down in Part 3.

Step 5: Read the patterns

Once your table is full, step back and look for patterns. Here's how to read the most common results:

What you found	What it usually means	Where to focus
You're not named anywhere	The AI doesn't have a clear, confident picture of you	Parts 3, 4, and 5
Named for your name but not for services	Your identity is clear but your service details are thin	Parts 5 and 8
Named, but with wrong details	Inconsistent listings somewhere online	Part 3
Competitors named with specific praise, you're not	Their reviews and mentions say more than yours	Parts 6 and 7
You appear in Google AI but not ChatGPT, or vice versa	Strong on some platforms, weak on others	Parts 3 and 7

A word about results changing

You'll notice that asking the same question twice can give slightly different answers. That's normal. AI responses vary. This is exactly why one test isn't enough and why Part 10 shows you how to track over time. For now, you're looking for the general picture, not a precise score.

DO THIS NOW:

Complete the audit table and save it with today's date. This is your baseline. In 30 and 90 days you'll run it again and compare.

END OF FREE SAMPLE

You've found the problem. The full book shows you how to fix it.

You've seen how AI chooses which local businesses to name, and how to test where you stand. The full playbook walks you through every fix:

- Part 3: Fix your facts across Google, Apple, Bing, Yelp and directories
- Part 4: Your Google Business Profile, done properly
- Part 5: Make your website the source of truth, with schema templates
- Part 6: Reviews that actually say something
- Part 7: Get mentioned where AI reads
- Part 8: Content that gets quoted
- Parts 9 and 10: The 30-day action plan and how to measure progress
- The Toolkit: checklists, prompt bank, schema code, review and outreach scripts

Get the full book

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Your customers are asking AI who to call. Is it naming you?

More and more people now ask ChatGPT, Gemini, and Google's AI to recommend a local business. The AI names two or three, and everyone else is invisible. This book shows you, step by step, how to become one of the names it trusts.

- How AI tools decide which local businesses to recommend
- A free 20-minute audit to see where you stand today
- How to fix the listings, profiles, and pages that confuse AI
- How to earn reviews and mentions that AI actually reads
- A week-by-week 30-day action plan, plus ready-to-use templates

Written in plain English for owners of dental offices, law firms, clinics, home service companies, salons, restaurants, and every business that depends on local customers.

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