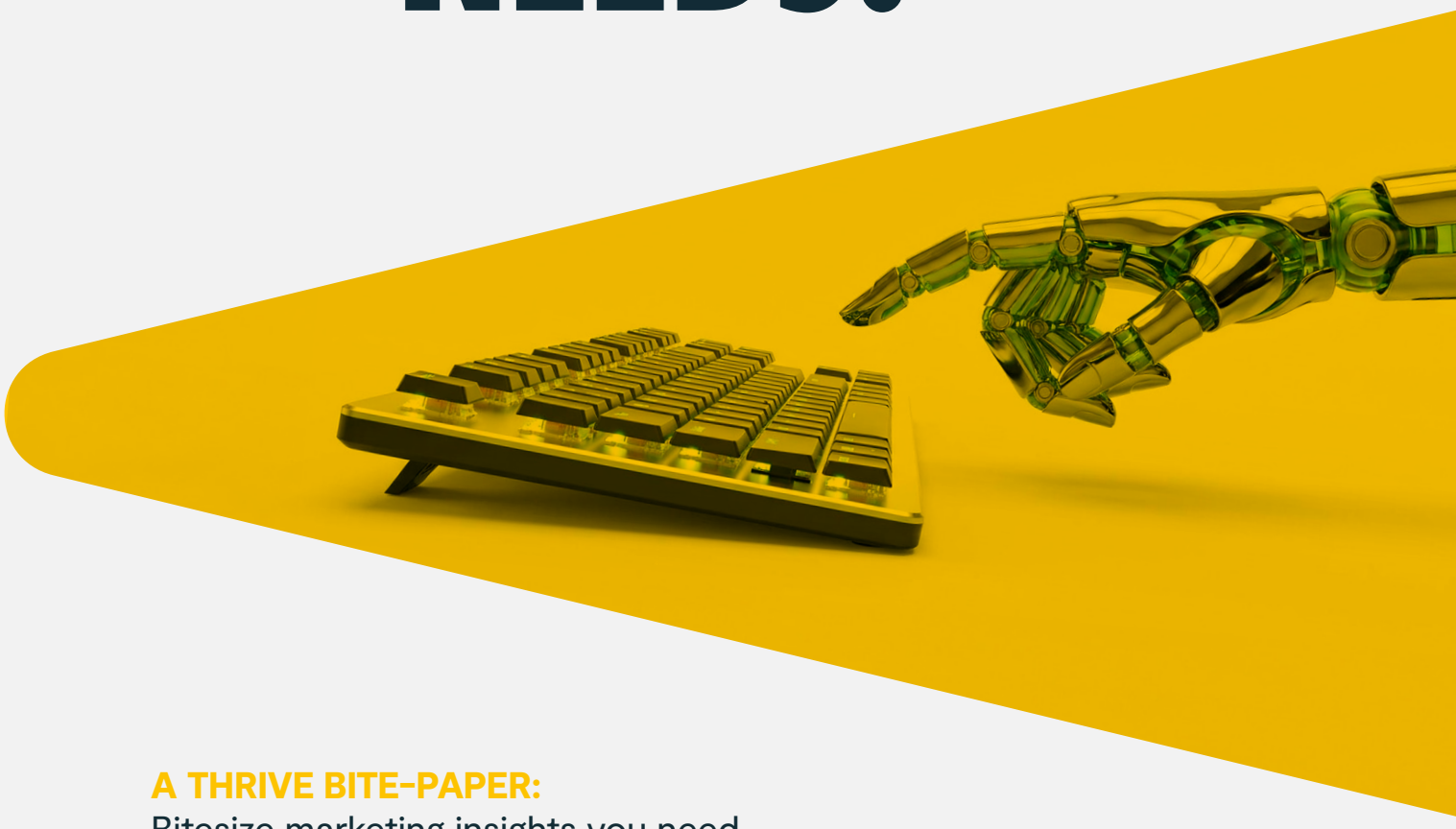
thrive

FROM RANKINGS TO RECOMMENDATIONS.

5 PILLARS EVERY GEO STRATEGY NEEDS.



A THRIVE BITE-PAPER:
Bitesize marketing insights you need to know, in under 10 minutes.

INTRODUCTION

AI powered search tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and Copilot are continuing to reshape how brands are discovered, compared, and evaluated. If your brand isn't in a position to be recommended by these tools, you risk not being visible when your audience goes looking, and the implications to business can be significant.

50%

OF TRADITIONAL SEARCH TRAFFIC WILL BE REPLACED WITH GENERATIVE AI BY 2028

(Gartner)

Naturally, digital marketing professionals felt that the process to help brands be recommended by these AI search tools needed a new acronym. Of which GEO - Generative Engine Optimisation - appears to be the winner.

Whilst at Thrive, we aren't quite sure it warranted a new acronym (we are still optimising for search). GEO consists of techniques and practices that'll increase the probability that your brand is recommended accurately and favourably by AI systems when they generate responses to user queries. It builds on the foundations of traditional SEO but instead of optimising for keywords and rankings, we are optimising for recommendations and citations.

In this bite-paper we've set out five practical pillars that should be part of every businesses GEO strategy.

01
A SOLID TECHNICAL FOUNDATION

Before AI systems can recommend or cite your business, they must be able to find, read and understand your website. Technical SEO has always been the bedrock of search visibility and is equally important in the context of GEO.

The first step is ensuring AI search tools can access your website content, which may require some reconfiguration of your robots.txt file. Once it can access your site, it needs to be able to find and extract the information quickly, making site speed and core web vitals non-negotiable.

Schema markup is another important technical optimisation. It is a type of structured data which helps AI search tools better understand your website content.

Organisational schema markup is a key one to prioritise as it explicitly tells AI search tools information about who you are and what you do. This should be added to your homepage and about us page. Other types of schema markup include product, local business, software, and FAQ and should be added where it is appropriate to do so.

"Whilst technical SEO and audience-first content remain as important as they've ever been, the key difference with GEO is managing where else AI can obtain information about your brand — whether that's your own social media channels, or third-party sources such as review platforms, community forums, and news and industry websites."

George Head of Digital

02
CLEAR HOMEPAGE POSITIONING

AI models learn about who a business is and what it does from the words it uses on its website. Vague “marketing speak” gives them nothing to work with whereas clear, specific language gives them clarity on who you are and what you offer. Making it far more likely you are incorporated into AI-generated answers.

A websites homepage is often the most cited page and is where AI models turn to first to gain an understanding of your business. To assist AI engines, the opening section of the homepage should explicitly communicate the below:

- **WHAT YOU DO**
- **HOW YOU DO IT**
- **THE PROBLEM YOU SOLVE**
- **THE MAIN BENEFIT**
- **WHO CAN BENEFIT MOST**

IMPORTANT!

Optimising for AI does risk overlooking what can make a brand memorable to humans. “Marketing speak” still has a roll to ensure your brand has personality, is memorable, and stands out from others in your industry. It’s therefore important to get an appropriate balance between what is right for AI and what is right for humans.

03
ESTABLISHING ON-SITE CREDIBILITY & AUTHORITY

With users often turning to AI search tools to seek validation, look for alternatives and compare available options. Being able to demonstrate both credibility and authority on your website is key to increasing the chances of being recommended by AI search engines.

HERE'S 3 WAYS TO DO THIS:

TESTIMONIAL QUOTES

Featuring text-based testimonials is much easier for AI crawlers to understand and extract in its answers than when using third party review plug-ins.

PROOF POINTS

"Trusted by over 10,000 customers, used by over 70% of the industry." Using stats such as these communicate your position in the market and are once again easy for AI to understand and surface in its responses.

CASE STUDIES

Name dropping some of your larger customers and how your product or service has helped them is another excellent way to demonstrate credibility and authority.

04
AUDIENCE FIRST CONTENT

Content which answers key questions and covers topics authoritatively and in depth is much more likely to be cited in the responses of AI systems. An audience first mindset to content needs to be taken and should focus on the topics that are most important to your actual or potential customers.

Think about the challenges they face, the questions they need answering, and the information they might need. If they are asking your customer service or sales team these questions, then they are most likely asking AI the same and you want to be visible when they do!

Google's EEAT (Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, Trustworthiness) framework is how AI engines assess content and select which to cite.

HERE'S 4 WAYS YOU CAN BOOST YOUR CONTENTS EEAT RATING:

1. **Discuss real world experiences/ anecdotes about the topic.**
2. **Use author bios to showcase qualifications, credentials and professional experience.**
3. **Include up-to-date stats from credible sources.**
4. **Amplify content using sources relevant to your industry.**

FAQ sections are another way to increase AI citations and when used together with FAQ schema markup, these provide AI systems with a simple question and answer format which is easy for them to extract and incorporate into their responses.

As with content topics, FAQs should be audience first and should answer the genuine questions of your customers (and potential customers) completely and accurately.

05
MAXIMISING THIRD PARTY SOURCES

Whilst with traditional SEO, third party sources were used to build website authority by acquiring backlinks. In the world of GEO, they are used to support credibility.

AI systems don't just use your website to build a picture of your business. They pull together information about you from right across the web including review platforms, community forums, social media, as well as news and industry websites.

How these third-party sources are used and managed is a key part of any GEO strategy. They represent a chance to provide additional content about your business which AI can learn from and draw on. They also provide an additional layer of validation and credibility which can support you in being recommended.

REVIEW PLATFORMS: With users often using AI systems to compare options or validate decision making. What customers are saying about you and your products/ services on review platforms can influence the likelihood of AI recommending you.

For this reason, generating positive customer reviews is now more important than it's ever been.

COMMUNITY FORUMS: Forum platforms such as Reddit and Quora are often cited by AI tools. Businesses who appear positively in these conversations are again more likely to be recommended.

Being present on these channels, engaging with users and contributing helpfully to the conversations is a way to demonstrate your expertise and develop trust and credibility within these platforms.

SOCIAL MEDIA: LinkedIn, YouTube and Facebook are all amongst the top cited domains by AI search tools. These channels represent an opportunity to reinforce your brand positioning and are great platforms to amplify your website content and showcase your expertise.

NEWS & INDUSTRY WEBSITES: Whether organically or through PR. Coverage on news or industry websites add a further layer of authority and credibility which AI tools draw on when constructing their responses.

SUMMARY

SEO, GEO... regardless of the acronym AI-powered search tools are not going anywhere and are having a genuine impact on how brands are being found and the purchasing decisions that customers and businesses are making.

The five pillars we've outlined here are designed to work together to increase the probability of your brand being recommended or cited by AI search engines.

1 A SOLID TECHNICAL FOUNDATION
2 CLEAR HOMEPAGE POSITIONING
3 ESTABLISHING ON-SITE READIBILITY & AUTHORITY
4 AUDIENCE FIRST CONTENT
5 MAXIMISING THIRD PARTY SOURCES

If you'd like to discuss what a GEO strategy could look like for your business, we'd love to hear from you.

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