

AEO: THE NEW ERA OF SEARCH

What can I help with?

How Is Answer Engine Optimization Causing a Seismic Shift in How Your Customers Search?



THE NEW ERA OF SEARCH

Search has changed.

For years, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) has been a primary tool for getting your audience to start their research with your brand.

Companies climbed on top of each other to have the coveted top-ranked listing on Google – this desirable digital real estate is the foundation of Google's billion-dollar paid search money machine.

But artificial intelligence (AI) has created a new force that is reshaping your audience's discovery process: **Answer Engine Optimization (AEO)**.

This isn't a minor update. It's a fundamental shift in how people, including your industrial buyers, find information.

As we explore AEO in more depth, the big takeaway for a successful strategy is:

Find the questions your audience is asking and answer them.



SEO VS. AEO

SEO

SEO has been the bedrock of search. Its core objective is to organically improve your website's ranking on traditional search engine results pages (SERPs) for relevant keywords – ex: “dependable high-pressure valves.”

Key Goals of SEO

Website Traffic: Drive users to your site through organic search.

Keyword Ranking: Position your content high on SERPs for specific *terms*.

Domain Authority: Build trust and credibility with search engines over time.

Brand Awareness: Increase your brand's visibility to a broader audience.

Clicks to your website are what you chase.



High Pressure Equipment Company
[www.highpressure.com - products - high-pressure...](#)

High Pressure Valves, Fittings and Tubing

High Pressure Equipment Company has developed a line of High Pressure products to assure safe and easy plumbing for 30,000, 40,000 and 60,000 psi.

Ultra High Pressure Valves 40,000 psi High Pressure Valves Valve Options

Missing: *dependable* | Show results with: *dependable*

Barkdale
[https://www.barkdale.com - products - high-pressure...](#)

High Pressure Valves for Oil and Gas

Barkdale's High Pressure 4140 Series 4-way valves provide superior control for fluids and gasses up to 15,000 psi (1,035 bar) in the toughest industrial ...

Precision High Pressure
[https://precisionhighpressure.com](#)

Precision High Pressure is the premier supplier of high ...

Our Products. Needle Valves - Ball Valves - Relief Valves - Check Valves - Block & Bleed Valves - Air Operated Valves - Adapter & Couplings - Fittings.

haskel.com
[https://www.haskel.com - ... - Products](#)

BuTech Subsea Valves | Haskel High-Pressure Tech

BuTech subsea valves meet performance, safety and reliability expectations in the deepest water and harshest environments in the offshore industry.

Valv-Trol
[https://valv-trol.com - high-pressure-valve](#)

High Pressure Valve

The Valv-Trol High Pressure Balanced Valves offer the smoothest operation in applications up to 3,500 PSI (240 Bar) requiring the dependable control of liquids.

SEO VS. AEO

AEO

AEO focuses on getting your content directly consumed by AI-powered answer engines, like ChatGPT or Gemini, or in AI Overviews in Google results. This often means appearing in "zero-click" scenarios.

Key Goals of AEO

Direct Answers: Provide concise, accurate answers that AI can extract and present.

Voice Search Dominance: Be the source for spoken queries.

Question Ranking: Position your brand as the authoritative source for specific *questions*.

Efficient Information Delivery: Meet the growing demand for immediate, precise answers.

**Showing up in answers
is what you chase.**

What can I help with?

Ask anything

+



SEO AND AEO

Magic happens when you **leverage SEO and AEO together** with their respective strengths.

Keyword Research Feeds Both

SEO: Identifies high-volume keywords and long-tail phrases.

AEO: Refines this research to identify specific *questions* related to those keywords.

Both: Use common industrial search terms to identify the questions your audience is asking, then create content optimized for SEO and AEO.

Structure Matters for Both

SEO: Google prefers well-organized, readable content.

AEO: AI models require structured, easy-to-parse information to extract answers.

Both: Implement clear headings (questions), bullet points, numbered lists, and tables. This improves user experience (good for SEO) and makes your content easily digestible for AI (essential for AEO).



THE RISE OF ZERO-CLICK SEARCHES

Zero-click results in AEO are searches when people get their answers directly from either the AI overview above organic search results or the AI interface, without clicking through to a website.

This shift has significantly impacted digital content strategies. Search engines like Google increasingly prioritize featured snippets, knowledge panels, and People Also Ask boxes. People want immediate answers.

While this saves time for users, it reduces organic traffic to websites, forcing marketers to adapt. Brands must now focus on structuring content to rank in zero-click spaces, such as clear headings, concise answers, and schema markup.

The impact of zero-click include:

- **More competition for visibility**
- **"Winners" gain significant authority and brand exposure, even without people going to their website**



Changing Demographics in B2B Buyers

A major driver for AEO's rise is the increasing influence of Millennial and Gen Z decision-makers, even at industrial and technical companies. These digital natives now comprise a significant portion of B2B buyers, and they want self-service.

They want concise answers instantly and conversationally, favoring direct answers over sifting through multiple search results. This shift means industrial companies need to change their search strategy.

THE RISKS OF DOING NOTHING

Web traffic will drop.

As search engines evolve to deliver AI-driven, instant answers, doing nothing results in a **passive decline** – your content fades from relevance, leading to a loss of organic exposure.

Brands that ignore AEO strategies fall into a **competitive disadvantage** as AI systems prioritize and source content from better-optimized competitors. This means your rivals gain authority and trust, while your content is overlooked.

Additionally, failure to adapt results in **diminished brand presence** – your brand's voice and expertise are absent from AI-generated answers, causing you to miss valuable opportunities.

Without strategic AEO efforts, your business risks falling behind in visibility, traffic, and credibility in a rapidly changing digital landscape.



INVEST IN AN AEO AUDIT

How can your brand capitalize on AEO?

Find the questions your audience is asking and answer them.

The first step in the process is a thorough audit – specifically done through the lens of AEO.

Current Landscape Audit: How are you currently doing with AEO? How do you stack up against competitors?

Keyword/Phrase Audit: What relevant keywords or questions offer the best opportunity? Where are we currently winning?

Technical Audit: What structural changes are needed to improve the likelihood of us showing up?

Content Audit: What content adjustments or additions could help us show up?



HOW DO YOU FIND THE RIGHT KEYWORDS/QUESTIONS?

A key factor to a successful AEO strategy is understanding what your audience is searching. There are tools to help find the key terms and questions related to your niche, such as Semrush. Here's a quick look into how to find that.

Step 1: Sign in to Semrush and click on Keyword Overview on the left-hand side.

Step 2: Type in your relevant keywords (you can have multiple, so add more!)

Step 3: Enter your website domain (this is optional, but it makes the results more relevant to your niche!)

Step 4: Click on the Questions tab to see common questions related to the keywords you added. "Volume" is how many times that question is being searched.

Step 5: You can view results based on:

Broad Match: question includes your keywords and related phrases

Phrase Match: question includes those keywords together in a various order

Exact Match: question includes those keywords in that specific order

Step-by-Step Example on Semrush

The screenshot shows the Semrush Keyword Magic Tool interface for the keyword "diaphragm pump". The tool is set to "All Keywords" and "Broad Match". The results are sorted by "Volume". The interface displays a list of keywords and their associated questions, along with their search volume and intent.

SEM RUSH

diaphragm pump

Keyword Magic Tool: diaphragm pump

United States | Currency: USD

All Questions All Keywords Broad Match Phrase Match Exact Match Related

diaphragm pump

Show related keywords

All keywords: 308 Total Volume: 1,760 Average KD: 20%

Keyword	Intent	Volume
<input type="checkbox"/> how does a diaphragm pump work #41	I	210
<input type="checkbox"/> what is a diaphragm pump #21	I	170
<input type="checkbox"/> how does a diaphragm pump operate #18	I	70
<input type="checkbox"/> how do diaphragm pumps work #66	I	40
<input type="checkbox"/> how does diaphragm pump work #45	I	40
<input type="checkbox"/> how to tell if fuel pump diaphragm is bad outboard	n/a	30
<input type="checkbox"/> what is diaphragm pump #49	I	30



STRUCTURED FOR ROBOTS, READ BY HUMANS

As you develop content to be AEO-friendly, there are common tactics that help you be more likely to show up in AEO. However, while you structure the content to draw attention from the "robots", don't forget the **actual content needs to be clear for your readers**. Otherwise, they won't trust your brand.

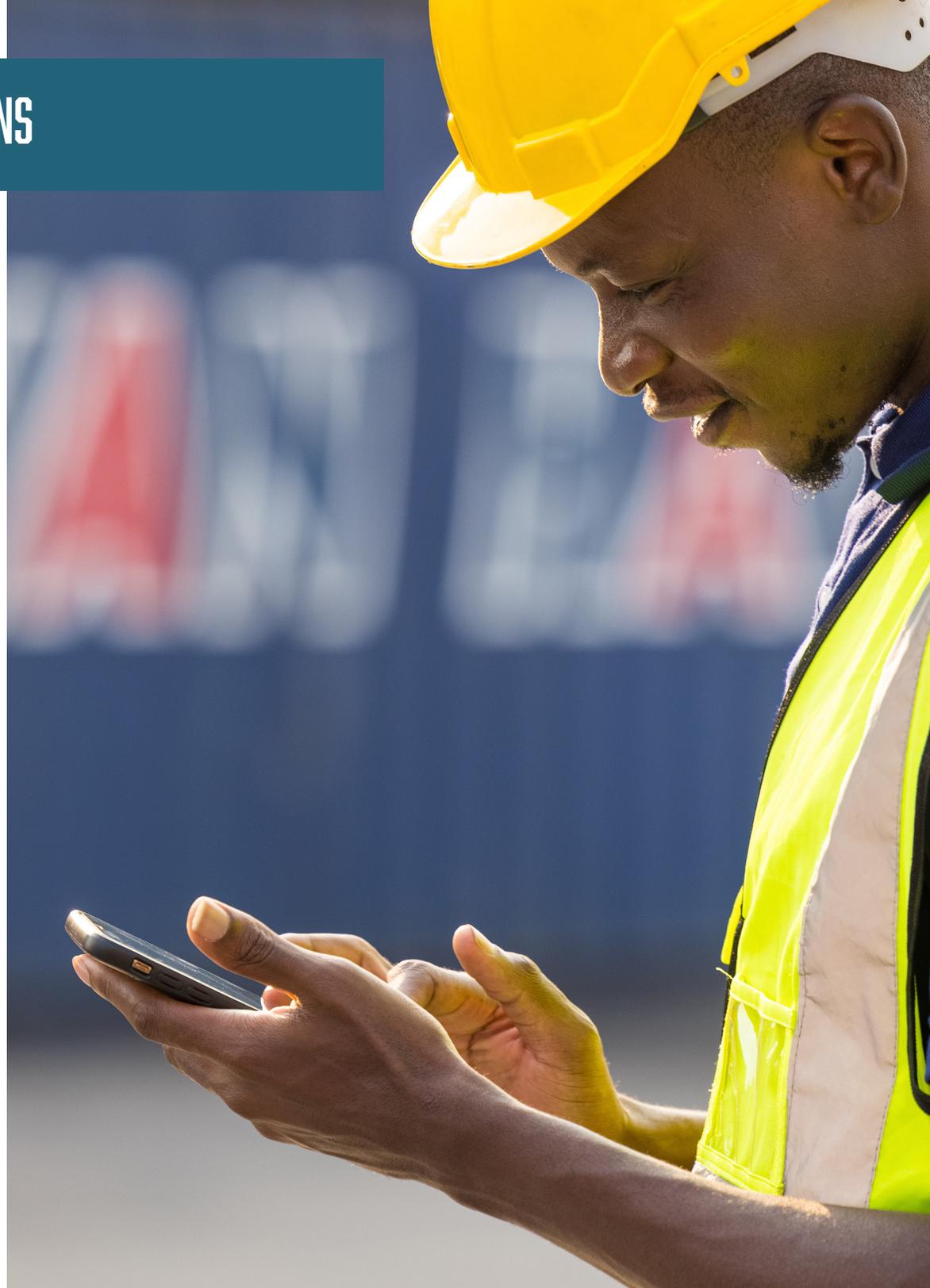
Think like your customer: What precise questions do they ask about your products, services, or industry challenges?

Research Tools: Check out "People Also Ask" sections in Google and keyword research tools to uncover these question-based queries.

Direct Answers: Start your content with the most direct and concise answer to the question, then elaborate.

Scannable Formats: Use clear headings (H2s, H3s) as questions, bullet points, numbered lists, and tables. AI models thrive on well-organized information.

Conciseness: Aim for clear, digestible answers, often 40-50 words for featured snippets.



CRITICAL 'UNDER-THE-HOOD' INFORMATION

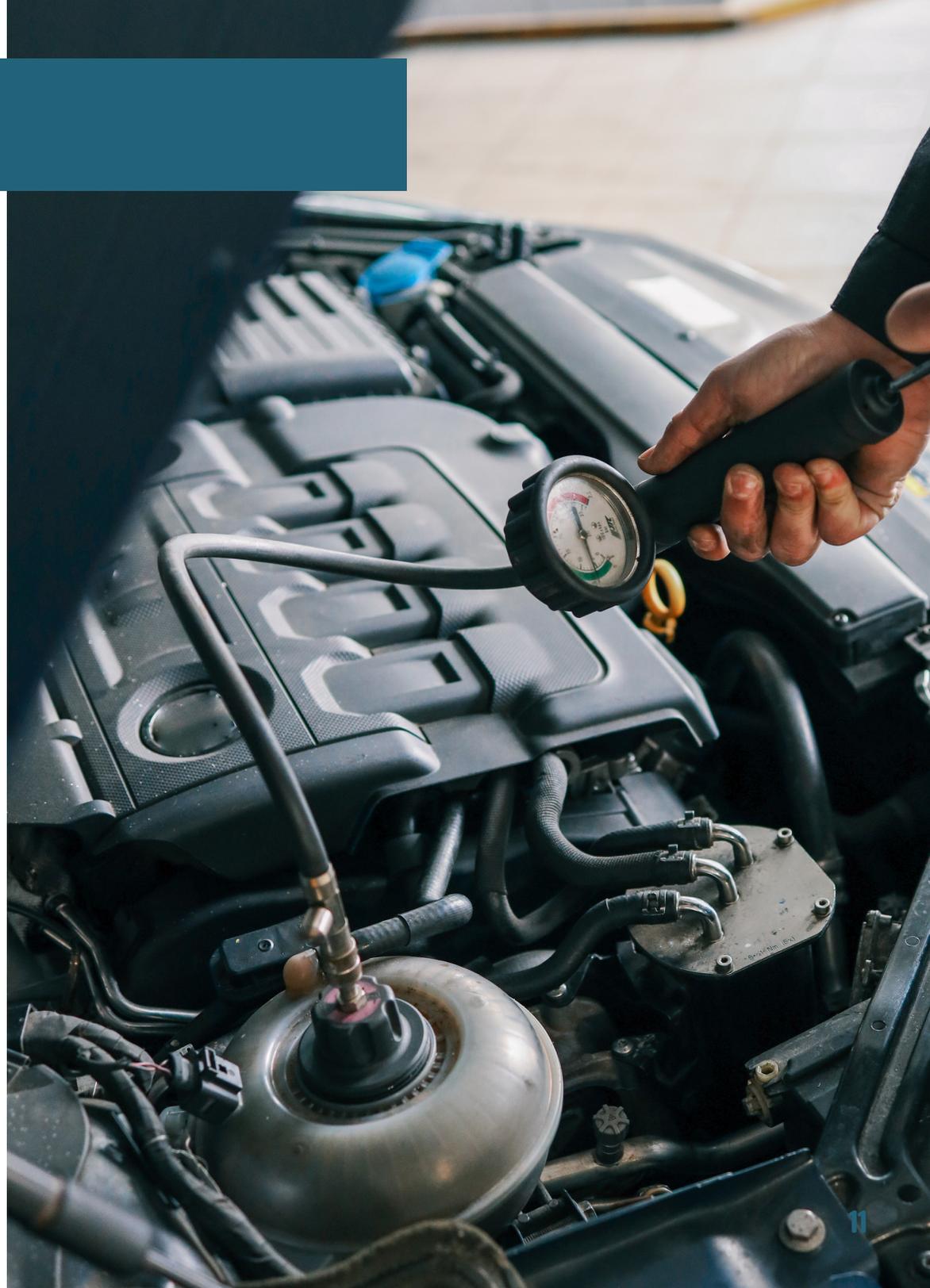
Schema markup is crucial for AEO because it provides search engines with explicit, structured data about your content.

This "cheat sheet" helps AI-powered search engines understand your page's context, entities, and relationships. That way, AI can deliver direct, accurate answers in featured snippets, "People Also Ask" sections, and voice responses.

Speak AI's Language: Schema markup (code that tells search engines what your content is about) helps AI better understand and extract valuable information.

Relevant Schema: Implement *FAQ* schema for Q&A content, *HowTo* schema for instructional guides, and *Product* schema for detailed specifications.

Without properly structured schema, your content might be overlooked and leave your brand on the outside of the "AEO club."



BUILDING TOPICAL AUTHORITY

Topical authority is highly coveted in AEO because it signals to AI-powered search engines that your content is a credible and comprehensive source of information on a particular subject.

By consistently publishing in-depth, high-quality content that covers all facets of a topic, you establish expertise. **You are the authority.**

This helps AI models trust your content, making it more likely to be selected for direct answers, featured snippets, and voice search responses.

Deep Expertise: Create comprehensive, fact-rich content that covers topics thoroughly. AI prioritizes sources that demonstrate deep expertise.

Cited Sources: Link to authoritative external sources and include author bylines with relevant credentials.

Thought Leadership: Use an Always-On Content strategy to consistently publish educational content that positions your company as an industry leader.



ALWAYS-ON CONTENT

Considering that the vast majority of your total addressable audience isn't actively looking to buy your offering, consistently developing thought leadership is a great way to build trust. Not only that, it's a great way to show up in AEO.

Boosts AEO: Create an Always-On Content plan based around the key questions you found in your AEO audit.

Get More for Your Marketing \$\$\$: With a content calendar in place, you can see the whole picture and "slice and dice" bigger content pieces into a lot of smaller pieces to get more for your marketing budget.

Strengthen Your Lead Gen: If your audience has been consuming your educational content, they will see you as the authority when the time comes for them to need your product. As a result, your lead gen and product messaging is more likely to land.

