

AEO READINESS ASSESSMENT

# Assess Your AEO Starting Point



# AEO Readiness Assessment



This worksheet helps you build an honest, data-grounded picture of where your business stands before you set up any monitoring tool or begin optimizing content for AI responses.

You'll evaluate three dimensions: content maturity, competitive presence in AI answers, and buyer query clarity. Together, they give you a baseline that makes every downstream AEO decision more grounded and more effective.

**Before you begin:** Have your organic search data ready (Google Search Console, Ahrefs, Semrush, or equivalent). You'll also need access to your CRM, recent sales call notes, and a browser with ChatGPT or Perplexity open.

## Section 1 — Assess your content maturity

Content maturity has two layers: your organic foundation and the structural quality of that content for AI extraction. Work through both before moving on.

### Part A: Your organic foundation

Identify your top 10–15 pages by organic traffic or impressions. List them below. These are your strongest candidates for appearing in AI-generated answers.

| Page URL or title | Organic traffic / impressions (approx.) |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------|
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If you have very few pages ranking organically, that's an important signal. Build organic presence first — give answer engines a reason to consider your content before AEO-specific optimization can take hold.

## Part B: Structural criteria for AI extraction

Open your top-performing pages and evaluate them against these criteria. Check each one your pages consistently meet, and use the notes column to flag specific pages that need work.

| Criterion                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Notes / page(s) that need work |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Leads with the answer</b><br>The first sentence or paragraph directly answers the primary question. The answer isn't buried behind a long introduction or three paragraphs of context-setting.       |                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Standalone sections</b><br>Each section can be extracted and still communicate a clear, complete idea — it doesn't rely on context from a previous section to make sense.                            |                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Structured formatting</b><br>Explicit headers, lists, and tables are used throughout. No walls of unbroken text, vague headers ('Our Approach', 'Learn More'), or sections that mix multiple topics. |                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Original data or proprietary insight</b><br>Pages include CRM insights, campaign performance data, case studies, or statistics your team generated. Not just commentary on public information.       |                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>FAQ sections with sub-questions</b><br>Each sub-question has its own heading and its own concise answer, formatted so AI can find and extract it independently.                                      |                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Product or brand tie-back</b><br>Major sections connect the content back to your product, expertise, or point of view. Educational content doesn't leave the brand connection implicit.              |                                |

## Content maturity summary

Based on your review, which pattern best describes your top pages? Select your answer, and add any notes.

- ☐ **Strong organic foundation + strong structural quality** — content is ready for AEO optimization. Focus can shift to competitive positioning and monitoring.
- ☐ **Strong organic foundation + weak structural quality** — good raw material that needs reformatting. Content exists but isn't built for AI extraction.
- ☐ **Weak organic foundation** — need to build organic presence first before AEO-specific optimization will move the needle.
- ☐ **Mixed** — some pages are strong, others need work. Prioritize restructuring the highest-traffic pages first.

Additional notes on your content maturity:

## Section 2 — Map your competitive landscape in AI answer engines

Your AEO competitors are whoever appears when your buyers ask AI tools questions about your category — not necessarily the same brands you track in traditional competitive analysis.

### Part A: Identify your competitors

List 3–5 brands your buyers actively compare you against. Think about names that come up in sales conversations, evaluation calls, and deal reviews.

| Competitor name | Why buyers compare you (context) |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|
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|                 |                                  |

## Part B: Run a manual AI audit

Open ChatGPT, Perplexity, or Google with AI Overviews enabled. Enter 5–10 queries that reflect how your buyers research solutions in your category. Use a mix of awareness, consideration, and decision-stage questions. Record what you observe below.

Try queries like: 'How do I solve [problem]?' (awareness), 'Best tools for [use case]' (consideration), '[Your brand] vs. [competitor]' (decision). AI responses vary by session and time of day — look for patterns across multiple queries, not definitive rankings from a single result.

| Query entered | Stage | Your brand appears? | Competitors mentioned |
|---------------|-------|---------------------|-----------------------|
|               |       |                     |                       |
|               |       |                     |                       |
|               |       |                     |                       |
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## Competitive landscape summary

Based on your audit, answer these questions.

**Which competitors appear most consistently across queries?**

**Which query types is your brand absent from (awareness, consideration, or decision)?**

**How is your brand described when it does appear — top recommendation, one option among several, or mostly absent?**

## Section 3 — Identify your buyer query patterns

Traditional keyword research tells you which terms have volume. Buyer query research tells you how real people phrase their problems when talking to AI. The gap between them is where many AEO strategies go wrong.

### Part A: Review your sources

Check each source you will use to compile buyer queries.

- ☐ **CRM support tickets and chat transcripts** — questions logged by buyers verbatim.
- ☐ **Sales call notes or recordings** — objections, questions, and concerns prospects raised.
- ☐ **Sales call transcripts** (if recorded) — 3–5 recent calls reviewed for verbatim buyer questions.
- ☐ **Social listening** — Reddit, Quora, or industry communities where buyers ask questions in natural language.
- ☐ **Keyword research tools** — filtered for question-format queries (how, why, best, should) rather than volume-first.

## Part B: Build your buyer query bank

Document 10–15 high-intent queries that reflect actual buyer behavior. Record the verbatim phrasing where possible. Assign each query a journey stage (Awareness, Consideration, or Decision) and note where you found it.

Queries that surface in multiple places — for example, a question that appears in both support tickets and a Reddit thread — are especially strong signals. They represent problems buyers genuinely care about, not just terms that happen to have search volume.

| Buyer query (verbatim phrasing) | Journey stage | Source(s) |
|---------------------------------|---------------|-----------|
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## Section 4 — Synthesize your findings

With all three dimensions evaluated, step back and look at how they connect. This synthesis is your actual AEO starting point.

**What is your most significant gap — content maturity, competitive presence, or buyer query clarity? What's the evidence?**

**Are your content gaps a formatting problem (structure needs work) or a coverage problem (content doesn't exist for these queries)?**

**If competitors are dominating AI responses in your category, what might explain it — authority signals, original data, product tie-back, or something else?**

**What are the two or three most important things this assessment revealed that you didn't already know?**

## Next steps

You now have an honest, data-grounded baseline across all three AEO readiness dimensions. Use the synthesis above to identify your most important gap and bring that finding into your implementation plan.