

AI Search and Local Business Report

A practical research guide to being understood, discovered and chosen in conversational search.



THE LOCAL DISCOVERY EDITION

Flento / Global research synthesis

THE CENTRAL SHIFT

Discovery is becoming a conversation.

Customers can ask longer questions, compare options and refine needs before visiting a website.

FIGURE 01 The practical response



01 RELIABLE FACTS

Locations, services and hours

02 USEFUL ANSWERS

Details that resolve real questions

03 MEASURED OUTCOMES

Visits, enquiries and bookings

NOTE No platform documentation guarantees that a business will be recommended.

HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

Evidence first. Then the operating playbook.

Six chapters connect what platforms publish with the work a local business can control.

01	How AI discovery works	04
02	Research and behaviour	06
03	Business and website readiness	09
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06	Action, method and sources	23

READ THE EVIDENCE. APPLY THE PLAYBOOK.

Use the charts for context and the later checklists for your own locations.

PLATFORM SCOPE

Four experiences. Different reporting.

Assess features and controls within each platform rather than treating AI search as one channel.

FIGURE 02 The main discovery surfaces

SURFACE	WHAT IT DOES	CHECK
Google AI Overviews	Summary in Search	Supporting links
Google AI Mode	Exploration and comparisons	Answer and citations
ChatGPT search	Search inside an assistant	OAI-SearchBot access
Microsoft AI	Copilot, Bing and partners	Citation reporting
READOUT	Check what a source link, search appearance or citation means on each platform.	

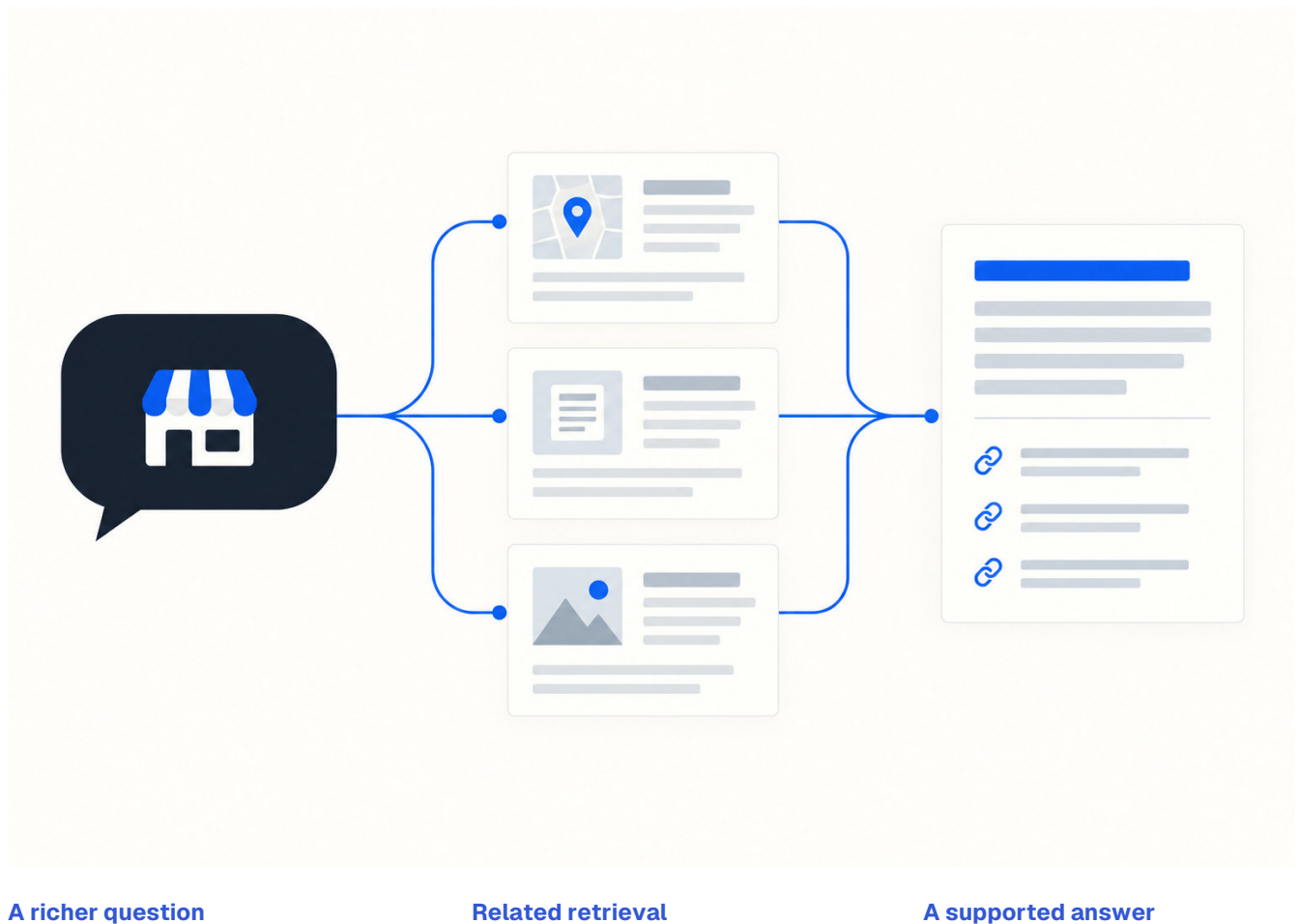
NOTE Availability and response composition vary. A source link is not a guaranteed position or customer outcome.

SEARCH-SYSTEM SEQUENCE

One question can prompt several related searches.

Google describes query fan-out across subtopics and sources.

FIGURE 03 Illustrative query fan-out



Eligibility is not a promise of citation.

The useful response is an accurate, relevant service page that answers a real decision question.

NOTE Illustration is conceptual; it does not represent a fixed platform ranking process.

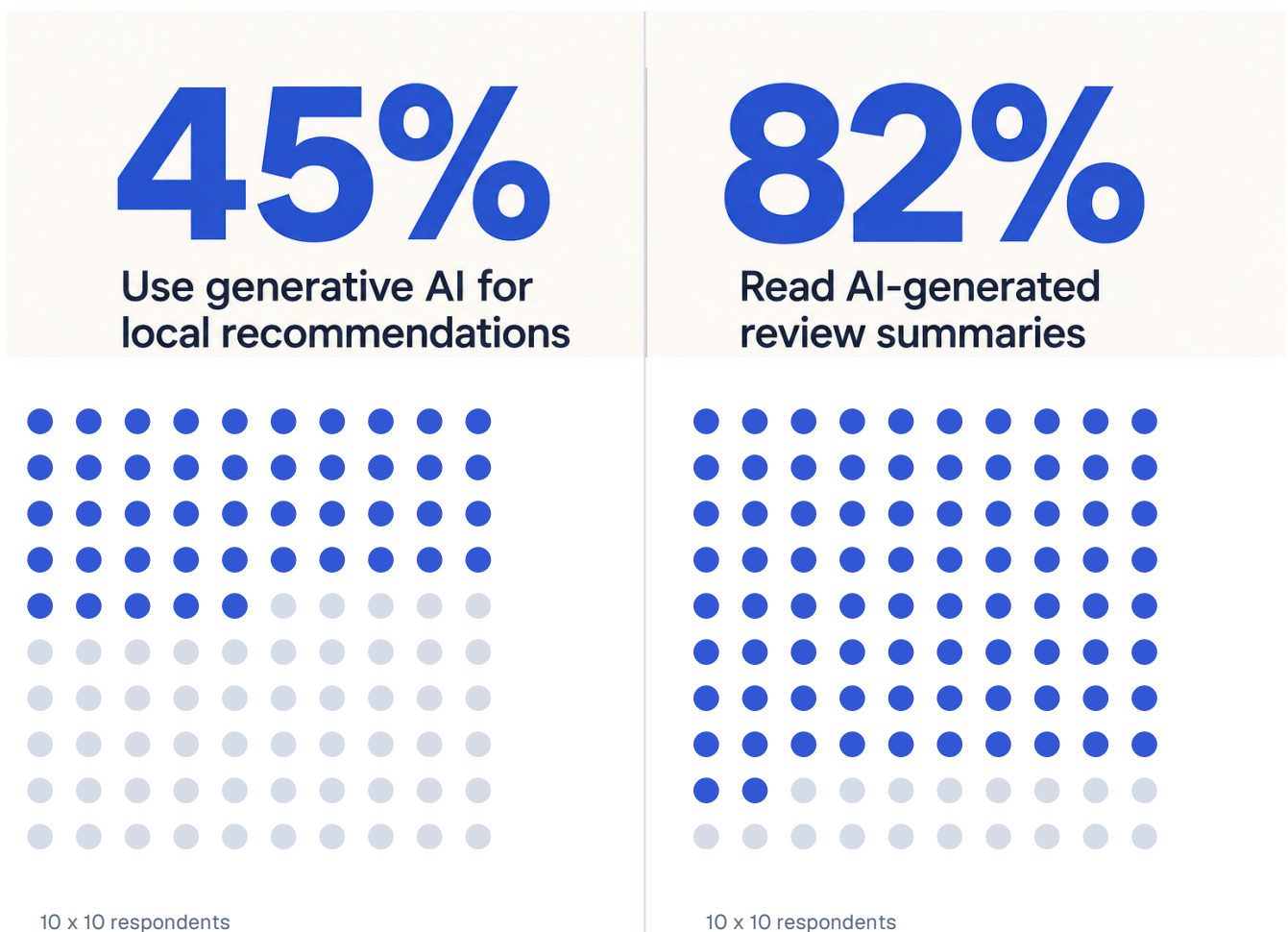
SOURCE A01

2026 SURVEY

AI is part of local recommendation behaviour.

BrightLocal SurveyMonkey panel: 1,002 US adults; reported behaviour and preferences.

FIGURE 04 Two different questions from the same survey



NOTE The questions describe different activities. Reading a summary is not the same as using an assistant to choose a business; neither percentage is a global adoption rate.

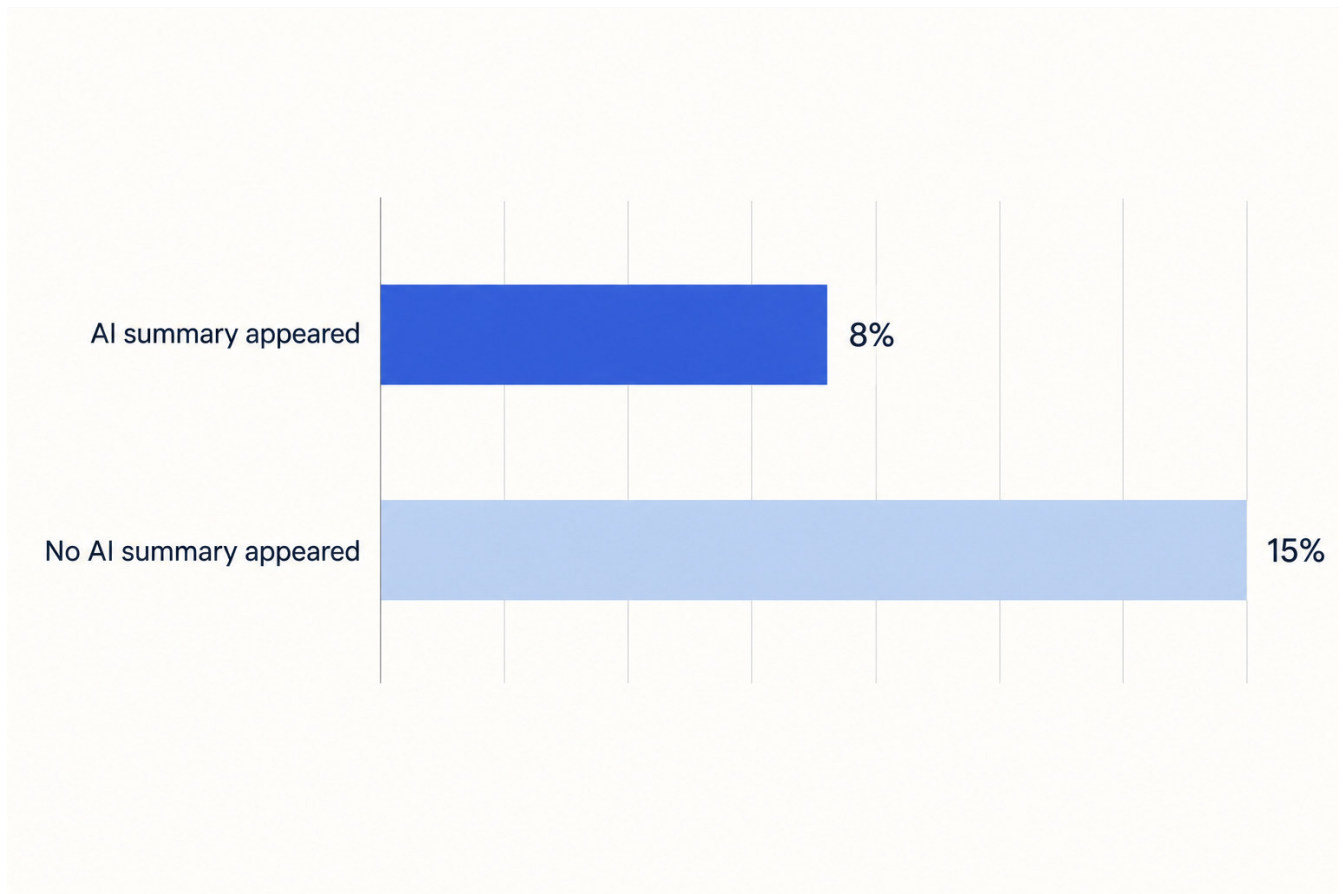
SOURCE R02

2025 STUDY

A summary coincided with fewer result clicks.

Pew analysed 68,879 Google searches from browsing records of 900 US adults.

FIGURE 05 Traditional-result click share of observed visits



READ THE STUDY CORRECTLY

These observed shares are not a randomized causal estimate of local-business traffic loss. The sample covers all searches, not only local queries.

NOTE Track answer visibility, visits and qualified outcomes separately in your own business.

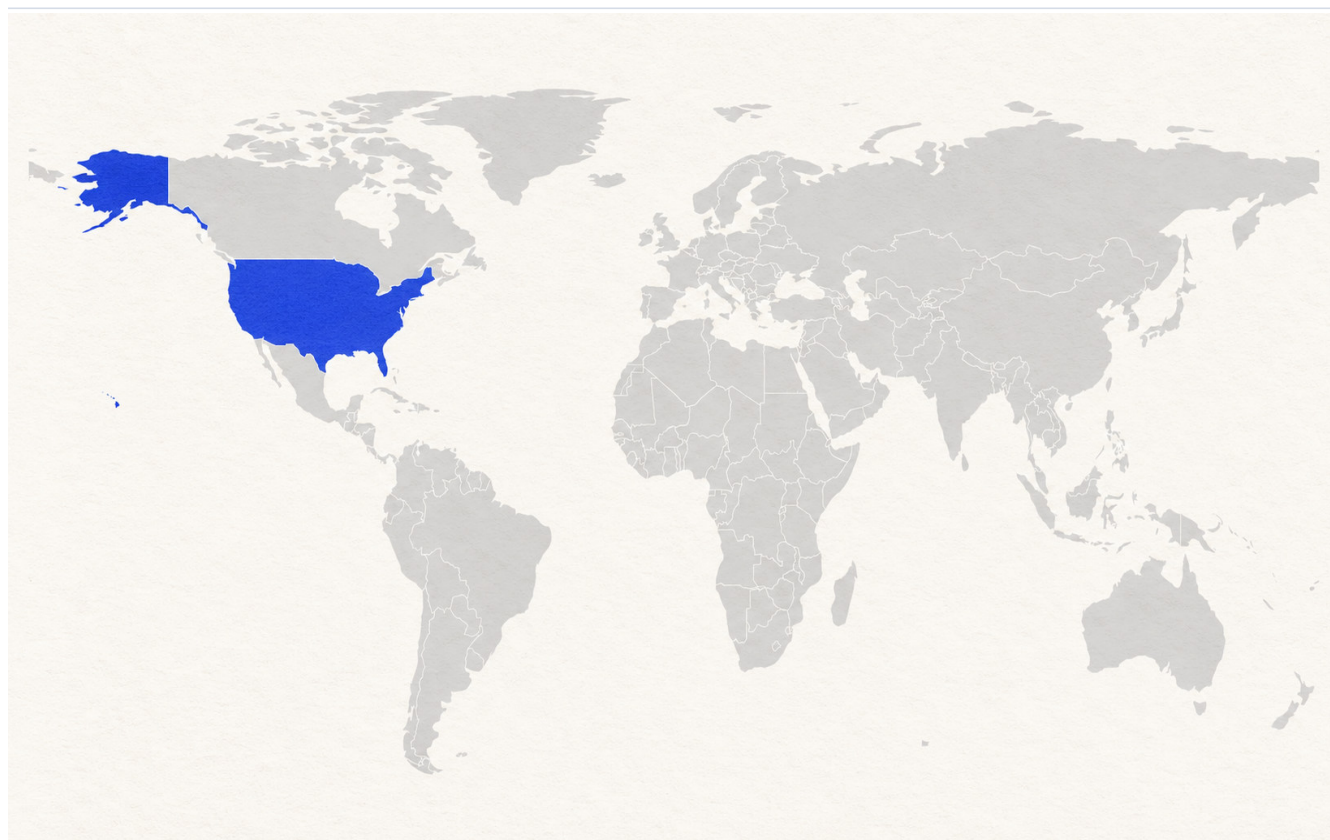
SOURCE R01

THE EVIDENCE LIMIT

US findings inform a global framework.

The two consumer studies in this report sampled US adults.

FIGURE 06 Study geography, not global adoption



 United States: cited consumer research

WHAT THE MAP DOES NOT SHOW

No country-by-country AI adoption, local lead volume or market share is inferred. The operating guidance is a Flento synthesis of platform documentation and bounded research.

NOTE Map geometry follows the source reference. US highlight denotes the study population only.

SOURCE R01 / R02

EVIDENCE SCOPE

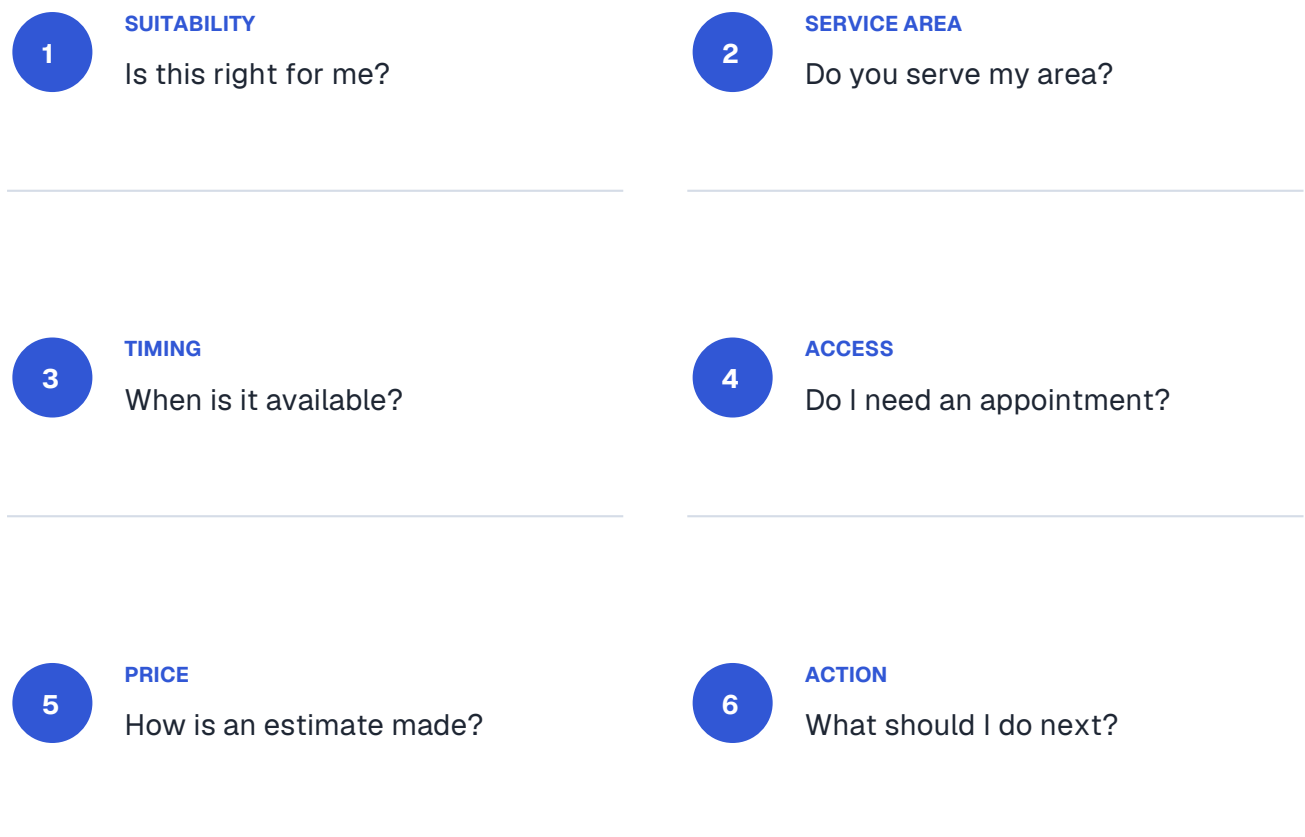
08

QUESTION-LED CONTENT

Start with the customer decision, not a keyword.

Collect real questions from enquiries, reception notes and customer conversations.

FIGURE 07 A practical question map



PUBLISH

Answer the real question on a relevant page, with a clear next step. Avoid a thin page for each wording variation.

LOCATION FACT SHEET

Make business facts reliable at the source.

Audit each location before scaling content or testing AI visibility.

FIGURE 08 Five facts every location should maintain



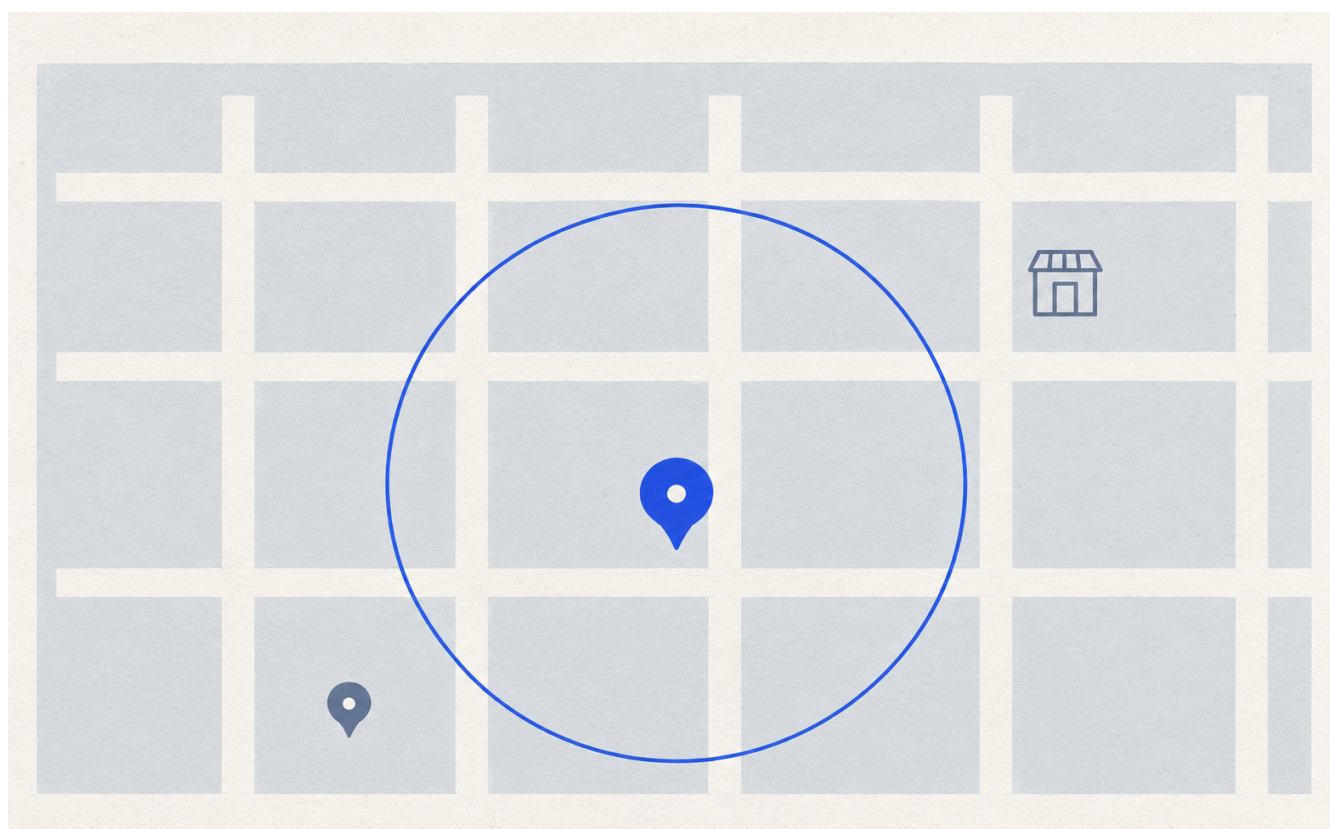
NOTE Assign ownership for changes and test the customer action route on mobile.

ONE LOCATION, ONE STORY

Help search systems and people identify the right branch.

A national page may not answer a question about an individual location.

FIGURE 09 Illustrative service-area schematic



■ Actual branch and illustrative service area

Publish the true address or service-area explanation, a direct contact route and the services offered by this location. Do not imply a staffed branch that does not exist.

NOTE Conceptual map, not ranking or coverage data. Correct third-party listings through their appropriate channels.

SOURCE A02 / A09

PUBLISH USEFUL DETAIL

Specific beats inflated.

Use genuine service knowledge, clear boundaries and a working next step.



FIGURE 10 A useful answer, illustrated with a fictional studio

WEAK CLAIM

“We restore every chair perfectly, fast.”

No process, no limits, no useful next action.

USEFUL ANSWER

“We assess the joint, timber and earlier repairs before recommending a method. Send photos for an initial discussion; the final estimate follows inspection.”

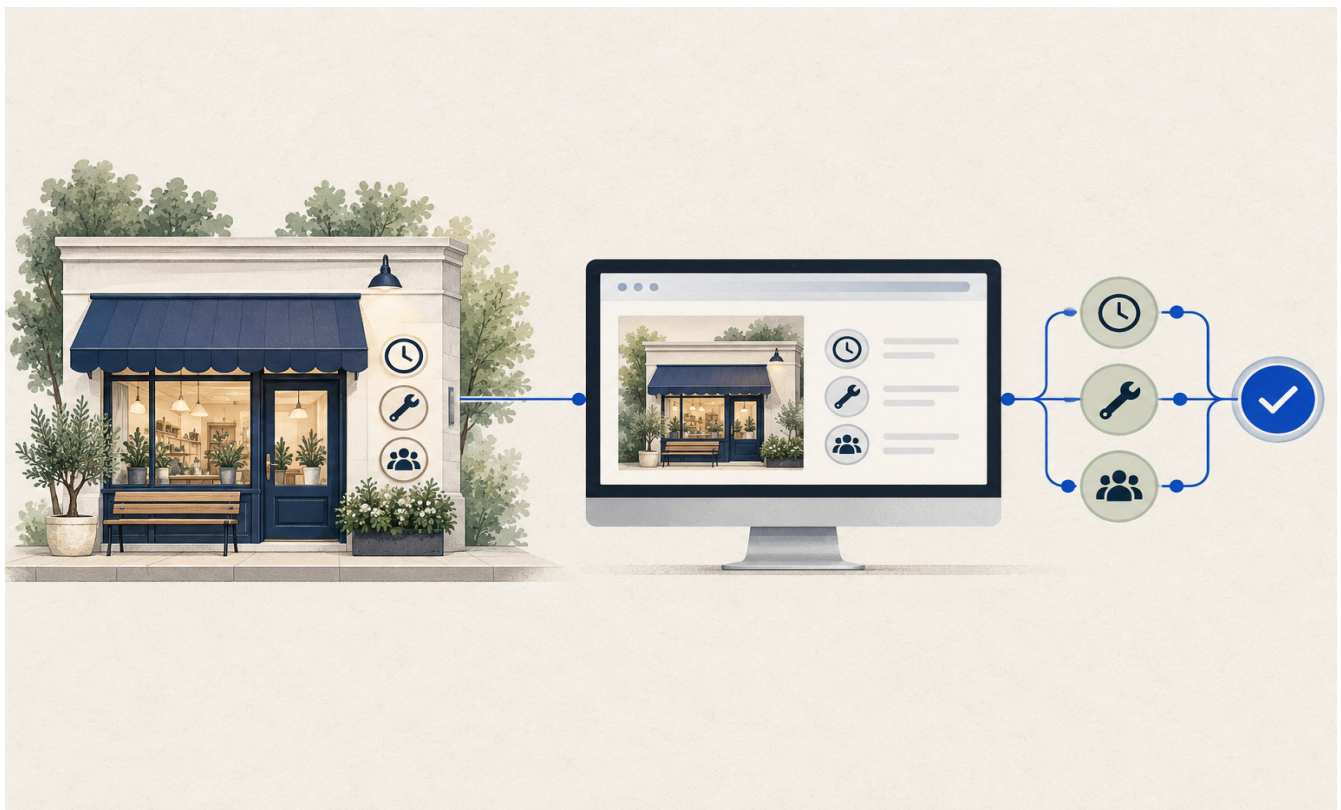
Check each material fact with the team. Do not add invented success rates, credentials or testimonials.

MARKUP AND PAGE CONTENT

Structured data should reflect what visitors see.

Use accurate LocalBusiness information and maintain it as the business changes.

FIGURE 11 Visible facts, markup and validation



01 VISIBLE PAGE

Show real, current business facts.

02 STRUCTURED DATA

Match fields to the visible page.

03 VALIDATE

Recheck after business changes.

WHAT MARKUP CANNOT PROMISE

It may support search understanding and eligibility for certain displays. It does not guarantee an AI citation. Google says no special AI schema or llms.txt file is required.

NOTE Choose the appropriate business type and validate with current Google documentation.

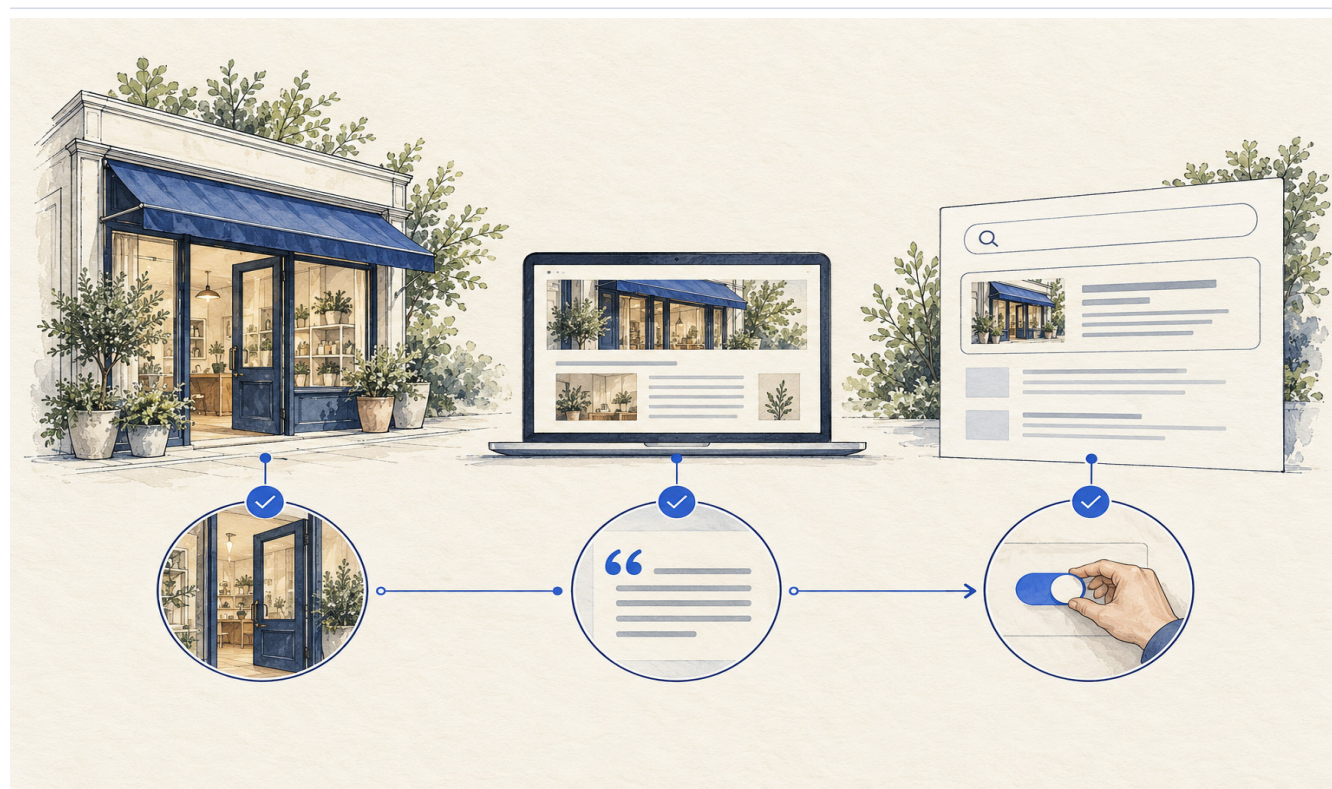
SOURCE A02 / A05

TECHNICAL ELIGIBILITY

Check access before chasing visibility.

A crawlable, usable page still has no guaranteed placement in an answer.

FIGURE 12 Three access checks



01 REACHABLE

Working, crawlable pages

02 PRESENTABLE

Review snippet restrictions

03 INTENTIONAL

Record participation choice

Confirm the participation setting with the responsible website owner; child properties may inherit a parent choice.

NOTE Review current platform documentation before changing controls.

SOURCE A02 / A03

SEPARATE POLICY CHOICES

Search access is not training access.

OpenAI documents independent crawler controls for different purposes.

FIGURE 13 Crawler purpose and operational choice

OAI-SearchBot Automated search discovery	Allow intended access in robots.txt and network controls
GPTBot Potential model training content	A separate training-policy decision
ChatGPT-User User-triggered requests	Not the control for Search inclusion

Blocking OAI-SearchBot can affect search answers; navigational links can still appear. Confirm the intended policy with the site owner.

NOTE Crawler definitions and current behaviour: OpenAI documentation.

SOURCE 001

EDITORIAL CONTROL

A draft needs an accountable editor.

Use AI to organize real information, then verify every material claim.

FIGURE 14 Four gates before publishing



SOURCE

Original notes

DRAFT

Plain explanation

VERIFY

Material claims

PUBLISH

Working action

QUALITY TEST

Would this page help a customer understand the service and decide what to do next? If not, improve the source information before producing more pages.

NOTE Avoid scaled, repetitive pages made mainly to manipulate search. Remove inaccuracies promptly.

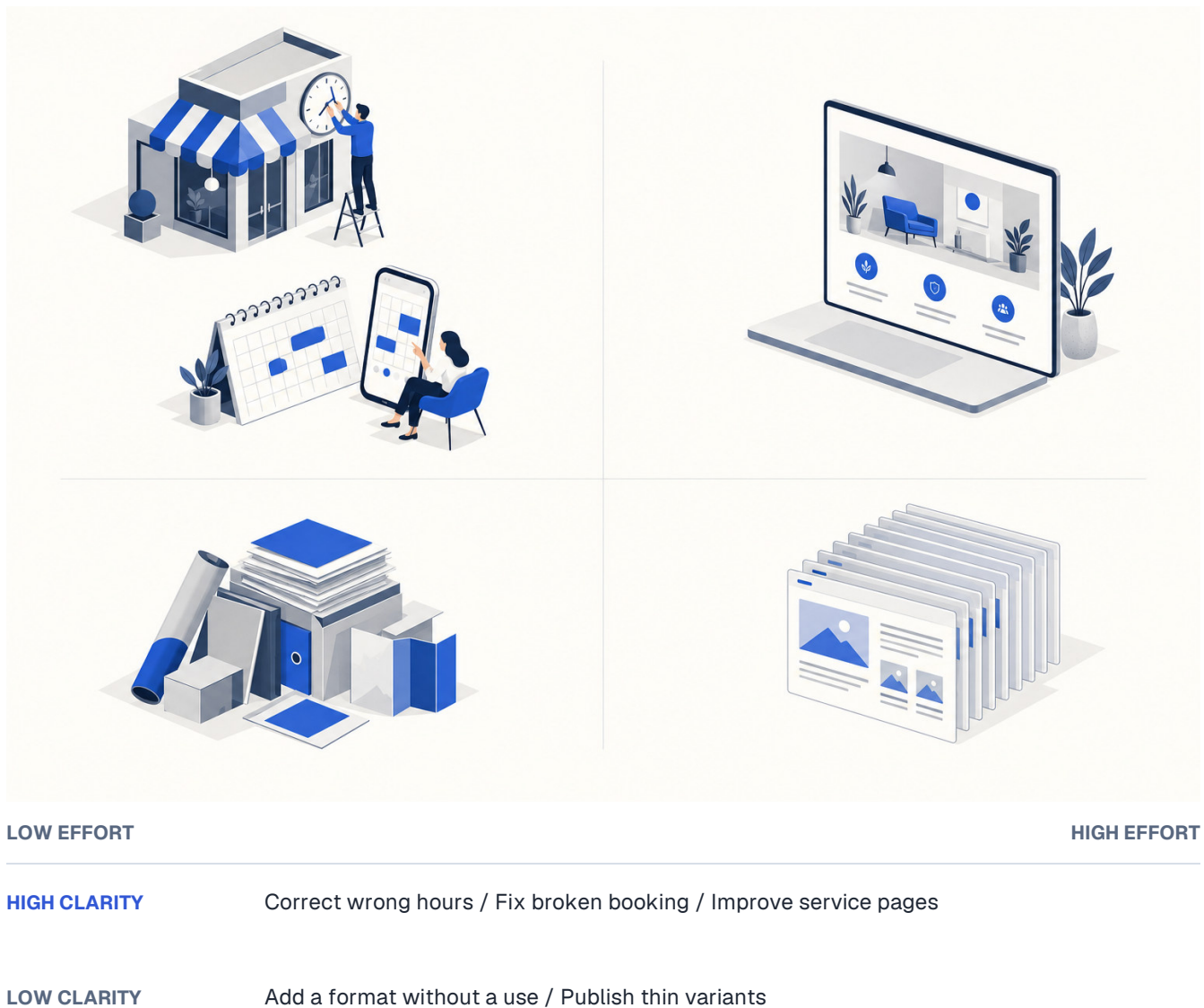
SOURCE A06 / A08

CHOOSE USEFUL WORK

Prioritize customer value over speculative tactics.

This matrix is an illustrative decision aid, not a measured ranking model.

FIGURE 15 Impact on customer clarity vs. implementation effort



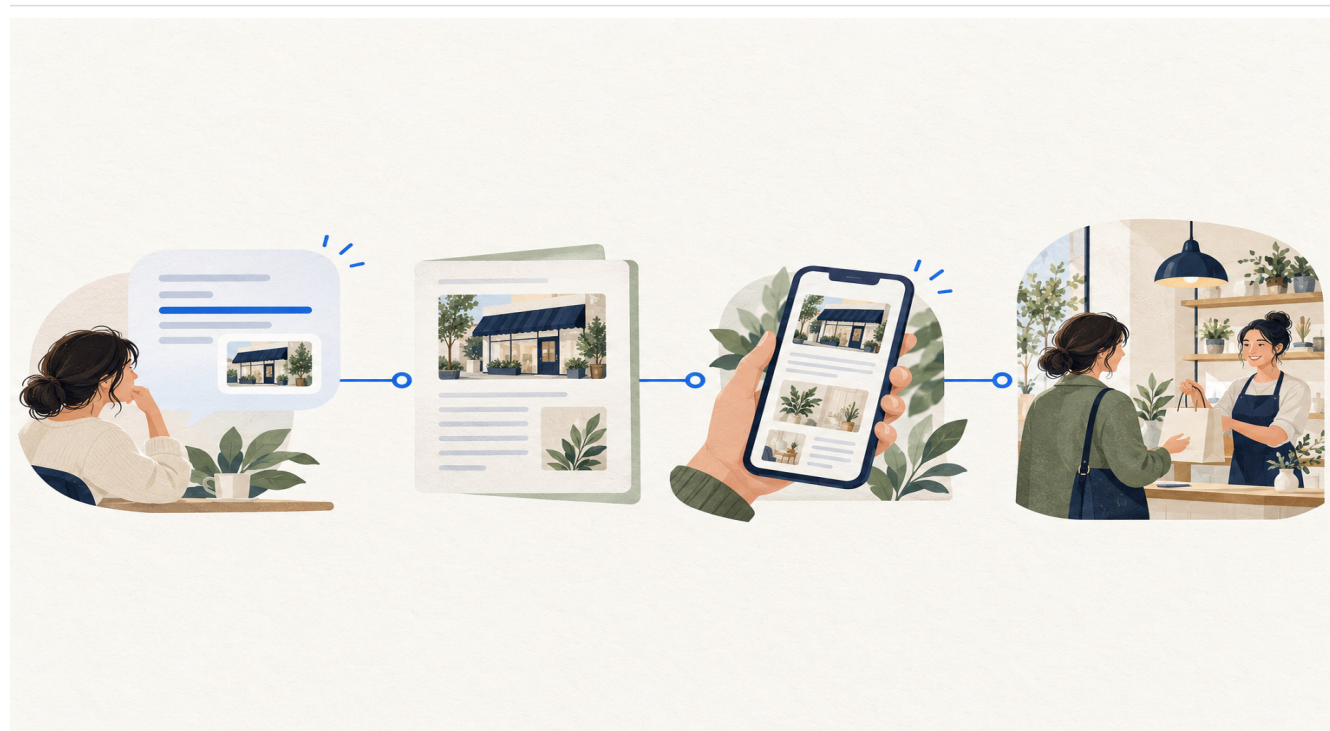
NOTE Example placements illustrate a decision framework. Assess value and effort for your own location.

KEEP UNITS DISTINCT

Mention. Citation. Visit. Outcome.

Each observation needs a different record and interpretation.

FIGURE 16 The visibility-to-outcome chain



MENTION

Named in an answer

CITATION

Linked as a source

VISIT

Website session

OUTCOME

Enquiry, booking or sale

A citation is not a visit. A mention is not a sale. Define the matching method and observation window before linking visibility to business results.

USE THE AVAILABLE REPORTS

Google and Bing count different events.

Read each platform's unit before comparing it with traffic or outcomes.

FIGURE 17 A platform-reporting comparison

GOOGLE SEARCH CONSOLE

Generative AI performance reports link impressions in supported AI Overviews and AI Mode experiences.

CHECK

Page, country, device, filters and aggregation. Property totals and page totals can differ.

BING WEBMASTER TOOLS

AI Performance reports cited pages, total citations and grounding-query context across supported experiences.

CHECK

Page-level activity and the documented scope. Citation measures are not ranking or authority scores.

Neither report is a complete worldwide count of unlinked brand mentions or confirmed customers.

NOTE Follow current platform reporting definitions and availability.

SOURCE A04 / M01 / M02

A REPEATABLE AUDIT

Record the conditions of every answer.

A single response cannot establish a stable global ranking.

FIGURE 18 A compact observation record



01 PROMPT

Exact customer question

02 SURFACE

Platform and search mode

03 CONTEXT

Language, location, account

04 RESULT

Name, citation, accuracy

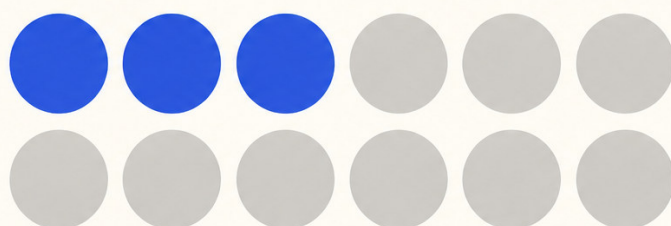
Preserve the prompt and answer, repeat a suitable sample, and define failed, unavailable and non-search responses before testing.

BOUNDED INFERENCE

An audit rate is only as broad as its test set.

Synthetic example, not measured Flento or market performance.

FIGURE 19 Three mentions in twelve valid observations



3 / 12

25% observed mention rate

Report the prompt set, repeats, platform and location conditions. Keep failed runs outside the valid denominator. This rate is not market share or a universal customer probability.

LOCALIZE THE QUESTION

Different markets require different answers.

Match the customer's language and real service conditions in each market.

FIGURE 20 A conceptual market-localization checklist



FOR EACH MARKET

1 Real customer questions 2 Accurate local facts 3 Complete next-step journey

An English-language city query is not a proxy for an entire region. Translate service facts carefully and validate language-version signals when appropriate.

NOTE Map pins are illustrative locations, not measured performance or coverage.

SOURCE A07

CORRECT THE SOURCE

Treat a wrong answer as an information problem.

Document the error and work through reliable correction routes.

FIGURE 21 A correction loop



01 DOCUMENT

Save the question, answer and source.

02 CORRECT

Fix owned facts and seek source updates.

03 RECHECK

Repeat under recorded conditions.

RECORD THE RESULT

Which detail was corrected? Did the cited source change? Use platform feedback without promising a timetable.

A WORKABLE SEQUENCE

Baseline. Improve. Observe again.

A bounded first month for business owners, agencies and multi-location teams.

FIGURE 22 A 30-day operating cycle



DAYS 01–07

AUDIT FACTS

Locations, pages, access and customer journey.

DAYS 08–14

FIX GAPS

Correct errors and add genuine detail.

DAYS 15–30

ASSESS

Reports, repeat observations and outcomes.

DECISION AT DAY 30

Which improvement had a verified customer benefit? Keep the evidence and choose the next useful change.

HOW THE REPORT WAS BUILT

Official guidance and bounded research findings.

A global desk-research synthesis with original Flento operating frameworks.

FIGURE 23 Evidence classes and limits

01 PLATFORM DOCUMENTATION

Google, OpenAI and Microsoft define supported behaviour, controls and reporting units.

02 TWO US RESEARCH SOURCES

BrightLocal: 1,002 adults. Pew: browsing records of 900 adults. Neither is a global local-business sample.

03 FLENTO FRAMEWORKS

The audit, content example, manual protocol and action plan are recommendations. The 3/12 rate is synthetic.

NOTE No worldwide AI market share or guaranteed ranking lift is claimed.

SOURCE R01 / R02

RESEARCH METHOD

PUBLISHER REFERENCES

Sources and further reading.

Select an entry in the PDF to open the publisher document.

A01	Google: AI features and website discovery	OPEN
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A02	Google: Optimizing for generative AI search	OPEN
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A03	Google: Search generative AI control	OPEN
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A04	Google: Generative AI performance report	OPEN
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O01	OpenAI: Search and training crawler controls	OPEN
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M01	Microsoft Bing: AI Performance	OPEN
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M02	Microsoft: AI Performance dashboard	OPEN
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PUBLISHER REFERENCES

Sources and further reading.

Select an entry in the PDF to open the publisher document.

R01 Pew Research Center: AI summaries and clicks **OPEN**

R02 BrightLocal: Local Consumer Review Survey 2026 **OPEN**

A05 Google: LocalBusiness structured data **OPEN**

A06 Google: Search spam policies **OPEN**

A07 Google: Localized website versions **OPEN**

A08 Google: Generative AI content guidance **OPEN**

A09 Google: Local ranking guidance **OPEN**

YOUR NEXT STEP

Be ready when customers come looking.

Keep the business understandable across profiles, pages and customer journeys. Measure visibility with care and keep improving the information you control.



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