HubSpot for Startups

The AEO Playbook for Startups



AI-powered search engines have become the go-to for half of US consumers, even surpassing traditional search engines. If your startup isn't showing up in LLMs, you're getting overshadowed by your competitors.

What is AEO?

Answer engine optimization (AEO) is the process of formatting, publishing, and distributing your content to improve your chances of showing up in large language model (LLM) chats, like ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini, AI overviews in Google Search, and voice assistants like Siri and Google Assistant.

4 strategies for startups to use AEO to grow

1

Boost brand awareness by showing up in LLM results

58% of buyers start their research process using AI tools. To boost your startup's presence across LLMs:

Create content in (and get published in) AI-friendly formats

FAQs, guides, and listicles get cited more frequently, as does recent content. "Create content for humans, but package it for AI," says Neil Patel on Marketing Against the Grain.

Publish content on channels AI trains on

"LLMs are training and heavily citing channels like Reddit, Quora, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Wikipedia," shares Aja Frost on HubSpot's Field Notes podcast.

2

Drive sales by converting LLM traffic

"Traffic that directly comes from LLMs converts at about 3x better than traditional search for us," says Aja Frost.

To convert LLM traffic into leads or customers:

Create comparison content

Build dedicated comparison pages. "Create content that answers every possible question a customer might have about their challenges and your solutions," says Beeri Amiel.

Publish transparent pricing

AI engines prefer citing sources with clear, accessible pricing information. At the bare minimum, include a range or starting price.

3

Acquire funding by showing up where investors are active

92% of VCs use AI to discover new investment opportunities.

To amplify your startup's presence where VCs conduct their research:

Start a YouTube channel

YouTube mentions are some of the strongest sources for AI visibility, and give you an opportunity to become a thought leader in your space.

Pursue high-quality media mentions

Media publications get cited by LLMs, and they're known to boost visibility among VCs and help drive more funding. Focus on niche sites like TechCrunch or BioSpace.

4

Attract talent by showcasing your company culture and being transparent

70% of job seekers use GenAI to research companies.

When your startup shows up in AI responses, you attract better talent. Here's how:

Be transparent with salary ranges, benefits, and culture

Varun Anand, Co-Founder of Clay, for example, shares about their hiring practices on LinkedIn.

Become a LinkedIn champion

Publish thought leadership on LinkedIn and contribute guest posts to industry publications. LinkedIn is the second-most cited domain on LLMs after Reddit.

Get started with AEO



Set your budget

Eli Schwartz recommends spending 10-15% of your AEO budget on tools, and the bulk on strategy and execution.

Audit your LLM results

Use AEO Grader to check where and how you currently show up (or don't).





Optimize your content

Update existing content to be LLM-friendly, using descriptive headlines, lists, Q&As, quotes, and stats.

Keep tabs on your AI results

Monitor AI visibility using XFunnel, LLM tracking tools, Google Analytics, and your CRM, and make ongoing updates.





Measure AEO ROI

Track AI traffic conversion rates, and return on AI-related content investments.

HubSpot for Startups

Save 30-90% on the tools you need to grow with HubSpot for Startups.

Apply now