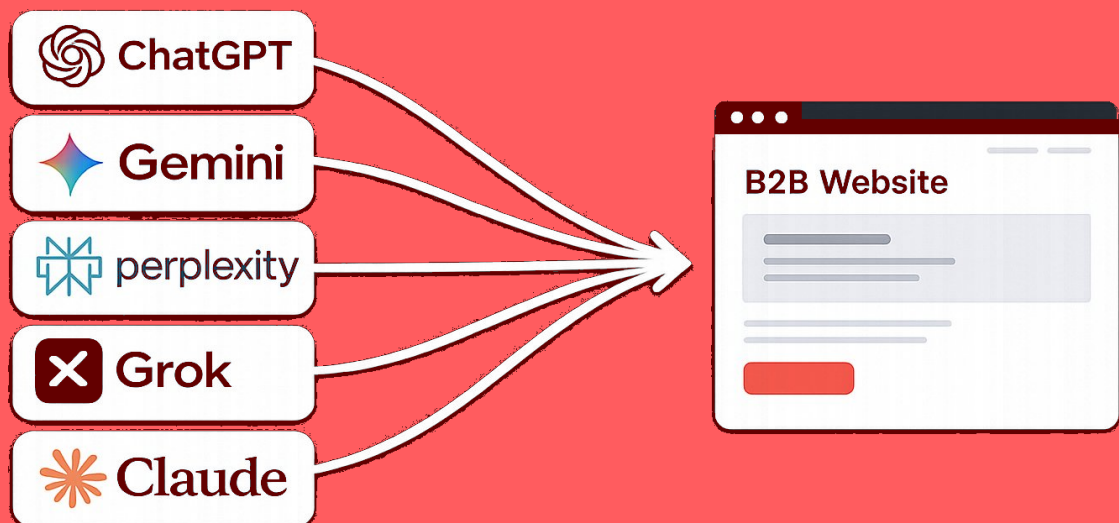


The AEO Playbook for Europe

The actionable guide for
B2B teams to win AI search



TL;DR

What this paper covers

Discovery is changing. B2B buyers now shortlist vendors inside AI engines before they ever visit your website. If you are not in the AI answer, you are not in the deal. The good news: your website is your most powerful asset in AI search and the one you control completely. This guide gives you the playbook to make it work.

Built on data from the Optise Website Platform, which tracks AI visibility across thousands of European B2B websites.

77%

of B2B websites have zero AI visibility

89%

of B2B buyers use AI for vendor research

15.9%

Conversion rate from ChatGPT visits to leads

32.7%

of EU adults used generative AI in 2025

WHO THIS IS FOR

- B2B CEOs and founders who want more customers
- Marketing and growth leaders responsible for organic discovery
- Web teams who run the website day to day
- RevOps and sales ops responsible for pipeline

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- The 5-step build order
- The 30/60/90 plan
- Page blueprints

01

Discovery Is Shifting in Europe

You will learn

- How fast AI search is growing in Europe
- How visible you are in AI search right now
- The difference between AI Search and AI Agents

01 DISCOVERY IS SHIFTING IN EUROPE

The scale of the shift

AI search is growing fast. Buyers are asking AI engines, you want to be in the answer.

Europe's B2B discovery has shifted from search and click to ask and decide. 89% of B2B buyers now use generative AI as a key research source. The shortlist can form before a buyer ever visits your website.

1.1bn

AI referral visits in June 2025
Similarweb

89%

of B2B buyers use AI to research vendors
Forrester

15.9%

ChatGPT visit-to-lead conversion rate
Seer Interactive

58%

of consumers replaced search with AI
Capgemini 2025

Did you know?

32.7% of EU adults used generative AI in 2025.
Eurostat.

63.8% of 16-24 year olds used generative AI in 2025.
Eurostat.

Where do you sit today?

The AI Visibility Maturity Model

Three levels cover most B2B teams. Find where you are, then follow the action for that level.

1

Level 1, Invisible

Day 30

Not showing up in any AI engine for your key prompts.
Ship 3-5 pages structured for AI citation.

2

Level 2, Citable

Day 60

Mentioned or cited for some shortlist prompts.
Build out the full prompt pack. Fix FITq gaps.

3

Level 3, Evaluable

Day 90

Consistently cited and easy for agents to assess.
Add RACE content, earn third-party validation, measure inclusion.

Did you know?

77% of B2B websites have zero visibility in AI engines.
Optise Platform Data.

AEO vs GEO vs SEO

What's the difference and why your website matters more than ever.

SEO Search Engine Optimisation

You optimise to rank in Google. Success is a click. Visibility ends the moment someone gets the answer elsewhere.

AEO Answer Engine Optimisation

You optimise to be cited in AI search answers. Success is being the source ChatGPT, Gemini and more select for your category.

GEO Generative Engine Optimisation

You optimise for consistent presence across all generative discovery, every prompt type, every language, backed by third-party corroboration.

How they compare

	SEO	AEO	GEO
Goal	Rank high in Google	Get cited in AI answers	Win all generative discovery
Tactics	Keywords, links, technical	Clear pages, FAQs, technical structure	Validation, freshness, breadth
Metric	Traffic and rankings	Citations and inclusion share	Presence across all prompts

AI Search vs AI Agents

AI Search is where buyers find you. AI Agents are what will shortlist for them.

Your website is the centre of gravity for both.
Right now, discovery is moving to AI search. The next wave will be AI agents that handle discovery, evaluation and even purchasing on behalf of the buyer.

AI Search

ChatGPT, Perplexity, Gemini

A buyer asks a question and reads the answer. The shortlist forms before they ever click a link and then visit your site.

AI Agents

Automated procurement workflows

A buyer delegates the research entirely. The agent evaluates vendors and builds a shortlist automatically.

	AI Search	AI Agents
Who acts	The buyer asks, reads and visits your site.	The agent researches and shortlists for them.
How you get cut	Not cited in the answer. Buyer never sees you.	Page too vague to evaluate. Agent filters you out silently.
What your site needs	Easy to select, extract and cite in an answer.	Easy to evaluate, verify and trust at a glance.
How to optimise	FITq: structure every page for citation.	RACE: structure every page for evaluation.

02

What This Means for B2B Teams

You will learn

- Why AI visitors are your best leads
- How AI decides what answer comes up
- What makes Europe different

02 WHAT THIS MEANS FOR B2B TEAMS

AI visitors are your best leads

Research shows ChatGPT visitors convert at a higher rate than any other source.



Source: Seer Interactive

The three metrics that matter now

Inclusion

Is your brand present in the AI output for your top 10 decision prompts?
Test weekly: type your prompts into ChatGPT and Perplexity.

Citation

Are your URLs being linked? Even unlinked citations shape buyer opinions.
Search your brand in Perplexity to check.

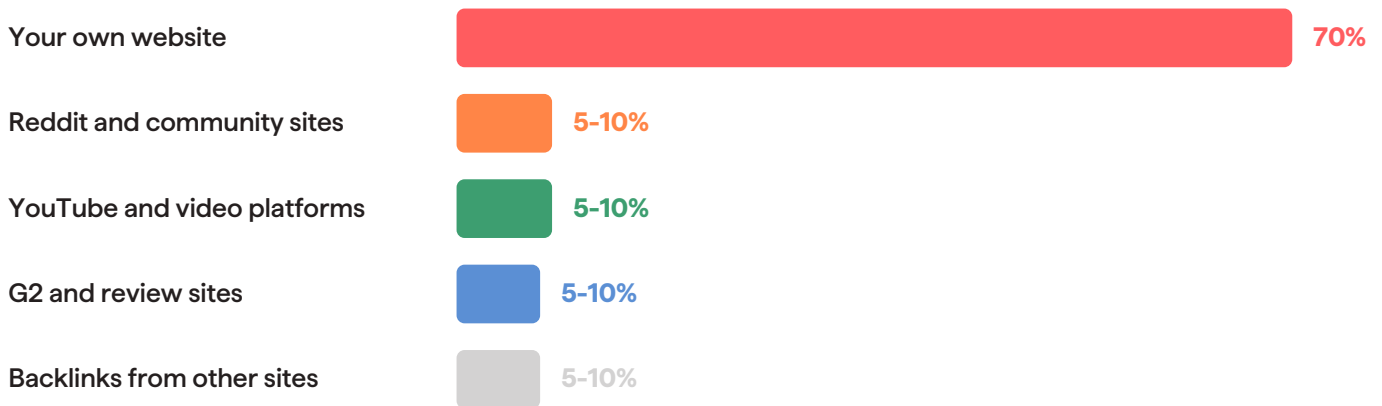
Prominence

How early does your brand appear? First mention carries the most weight.
Note if you appear in the first sentence or at the end.

02 WHAT THIS MEANS FOR B2B TEAMS

Where to Start

What sources do AI engines use to decide its answers?



Your action plan to get started

Start with low-effort, high-impact actions. They compound fast.

Action	Effort	Pipeline impact
Build your prompt pack Find the 10 prompts that decide deals in your market	Low	High impact
Use BLUF on every page Put the answer in the first 40-60 words	Low	High impact
Build a trust centre Remove the fear that kills EU deals	Medium	High impact
Implement IndexNow Tell AI engines when your pages change	Low	Medium impact
Write competitor comparison pages Get cited when buyers compare options	Medium	High impact
Audit your third-party profiles Fix how AI describes you on G2 and Capterra	Low	High impact
Expand into a second language Reach buyers who search in their own language	High	Medium impact

Winning AI Search in Europe

Europe has rules, languages, and trust expectations that change everything.

GDPR first

GDPR compliance, EU data residency and a clear DPA are conversion blockers. Get these in place before anything else.

Multilingual signals

AI sees contradictions across language versions. Use one source-of-truth block per key claim across all languages.

EU AI Act context

Fully applicable from August 2026. Buyers already ask which tools they can trust. Buyers who ask about AI compliance are already shortlisting by it.

The questions EU buyers ask AI engines about your tool

Your site must answer every one of these clearly.

● Is [tool] GDPR compliant?

● Is customer data stored in the EU?

● Does [tool] offer EU data residency?

● Can I get a DPA for [tool]?

● Who are the subprocessors and where?

● What data is collected and for how long?

● Does [tool] use third-party AI providers?

● What security standards does [tool] meet?

03

Your Playbook to Win AI Search

You will learn

- FITq and RACE, the two frameworks you need
- The 5-step build order from prompt pack to fresh pages
- The 30/60/90 plan and page blueprints

Your AEO To-Do List

- 1 Know your starting point**
Type your category and use cases into ChatGPT and Perplexity. Note every gap.
- 2 Find what buyers actually search for**
Use AnswerThePublic or Google "People Also Ask" before you write anything.
- 3 Pick your 10 priority prompts**
These 10 prompts become the foundation of your entire AEO content plan.
- 4 Build a page for each priority prompt**
One prompt, one page. Each page must answer the question completely.
- 5 Build the pages AI cites most**
Alternatives, comparisons, pricing, implementation, use cases, trust centre.
- 6 Lead every page with the direct answer**
First 40-60 words = the answer. No preamble, no history, no context.
- 7 Structure content so AI can extract it**
Tables, bullet lists and FAQs. AI extracts structure, not paragraphs.
- 8 Add FAQPage and HowTo schema markup**
Tell AI engines exactly what type of content is on each page.
- 9 Make your site technically clean**
Plain HTML, under 2 seconds, last updated date clearly visible.
- 10 Add trust signals to every page**
Author name, date and a real source for every claim on the page.
- 11 Be honest about your limitations**
"Not ideal for" section on every key page. Honest pages get cited more.
- 12 Keep your third-party profiles accurate**
G2, Capterra, TrustRadius, Reddit and YouTube. AI reads all of these.
- 13 Install IndexNow for fast re-indexing**
Tells AI engines within hours when you update or add a page.
- 14 Refresh your top pages every month**
Update the data, improve the opening answer and change the date.
- 15 Track your AI visibility monthly**
Use a platform like Optise to see where you rank for your top prompts.

The FITq™ Framework

An Optise framework for getting your pages cited by AI search engines. Four signals determine whether AI selects your page or skips it.

The good news: all of this is on your website. You own it. You control it.

Findability

F

Content must be in the HTML, not hidden behind scripts. Googlebot only crawls the first 15MB of a page. Bloated or script-heavy pages get skipped entirely.

Intent match

I

AI rewards pages that answer the exact question asked. Mirror real buyer prompts in your headings: 'what is', 'how to', 'does X work for Y'.

Trust

T

AI is risk-averse. Clear authors, visible update dates, specific data-backed claims. AI engines heavily favour recently updated pages. Show the last updated date on every page you want cited.

Quoteability

q

Tables, bullet lists, short definitions and clear sectioning are citation signals, not just formatting. Structure your content so machines can extract it and humans enjoy reading it.

FITq™: Publishing Checklist

Run every item before a page goes live. Each one is a citation signal.

FINDABILITY

- ☐ Every word is in plain HTML, no JavaScript rendering required
- ☐ Test load time — it must be under 2 seconds on mobile

QUOTEABILITY

- ☐ Add a table or bullet list to every key decision page
- ☐ Each answer block stands alone and can be quoted in isolation

INTENT MATCH

- ☐ Rewrite headings to match how buyers phrase AI prompts
- ☐ The opening sentence answers the question — no preamble

SCHEMA

- ☐ Add FAQPage schema to every FAQ that is visible on the page
- ☐ Add HowTo schema to every numbered step-by-step section

TRUST

- ☐ Show the author name on every content page
- ☐ Display the date this page was last updated
- ☐ Link every statistic or claim to its original source

BLUF (BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT)

- ☐ Write the answer in the first 40-60 words of the page
- ☐ State the conclusion first, then explain the reasoning

The RACE™ Framework

An Optise framework for AI agent readiness. When a buyer delegates research to an AI agent, RACE determines whether you make the shortlist.

The good news: all of this is on your website. You own it. You control it.

Requirements

R

State prerequisites clearly: systems, data, roles, access, time. A page vague on requirements gets filtered out, not because you're a bad fit, but because the agent cannot verify you're a good one.

Actions

A

Write next steps as a process. Who does what, how long it takes, what 'done' means. A clear implementation table is more valuable than any marketing copy.

Constraints

C

'Not ideal for' is not weakness, it is risk reduction. The best comparisons in 2026 are honest. AI engines trust sources that admit limitations over those that claim to do everything.

Evidence

E

Proof is what turns evaluation into a decision. Evidence belongs above the fold, not buried in PDFs. If buyers have to dig for your proof, you've already lost.

RACE™: Publishing Checklist

Use this to audit every page an AI agent might evaluate you on.

REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ List every system, data input, role and access level required
- ☐ Replace "contact us to learn more" with the actual specification

ACTIONS

- ☐ Every step has one named owner and a realistic time estimate
- ☐ Define what "done" means in concrete, measurable terms
- ☐ Present steps as a table, not a block of text

CONSTRAINTS

- ☐ Write a "not ideal for" section and name the specific cases
- ☐ Surface edge cases openly rather than leaving them out
- ☐ Include a fair comparison — your product and alternatives

EVIDENCE

- ☐ Move your strongest proof above the fold on the page
- ☐ Case study results must be visible without any clicks
- ☐ Replace vague claims with numbers and named sources

The 5-Step Build Order

Five steps to become visible, citable, and evaluable.

01

Build a shortlist prompt pack

Write 25–50 prompts exactly how European buyers ask in AI engines. Pick the 10 that decide deals. For each: check if you show up today, assign one target page.

02

Ship the minimum viable AEO pages

5 competitor comparisons · 3 problem-to-solution pages
· 1 glossary hub · 1 pricing explainer · 1 implementation page · 1 trust centre · 1 alternatives page

03

Make every page easy to extract and cite

Start with a 40–60 word BLUF. Use question-style headings. Include proof above the fold. Show 'last updated'. Run the FITq checklist on every page before publishing.

04

Earn third-party validation outside your site

Audit G2, Capterra, TrustRadius, TechRadar. One stale review on a high-citation source is worth more to fix than ten new blog posts.

05

Keep it fresh on a schedule

Monthly: refresh top decision pages. Weekly: pages showing in AI answers or sales calls. Quarterly: full prompt pack audit, what have you won? What have you lost?

The 30/60/90 Plan

A practical build order tied to the three maturity levels.
Start at level one and move up.

30 days

Become Citable

- 1. Search your brand on ChatGPT and Perplexity — see where you stand
- 2. Build your prompt pack: the 10 prompts that decide deals
- 3. Build pages that directly answer those prompts on your website
- 4. Use BLUF: put the answer in the first 40-60 words of every page
- 5. Structure content with tables, FAQs and headings that mirror prompts

60 days

Become Evaluable

- 6. Make your site technically clean: HTML-rendered, fast, last updated visible
- 7. Add trust signals: author names, data sources, GDPR and DPA info
- 8. Be honest about limitations: add "not ideal for" sections to key pages
- 9. Earn third-party presence: G2, Capterra, Reddit, YouTube, Wikipedia

90 days

Become Consistent

- 10. Implement IndexNow to tell AI engines when your pages change
- 11. Keep claims consistent across all language versions of your site
- 12. Refresh key pages regularly — AI engines favour recently updated content
- 13. Track inclusion, citation and prominence monthly on ChatGPT and Perplexity

Page Blueprints

Four pages every B2B team should ship. Each one is structured to be cited.

1. Alternatives page

"What should we consider?"

- BLUF: best options for the category, stated directly
- "Best for / not ideal for" — be blunt
- Comparison table covering the top 4-6 options for Europe
- FAQs with FAQPage schema. Last updated date clearly visible.

2. Competitor vs you

"Which one is better for us?"

- Open with a verdict by buyer segment, not a generic claim
- Comparison table: pricing, implementation, differentiators
- Trust section: GDPR, data residency and DPA in plain terms

3. Implementation page

"How hard is it, and what do we need?"

- Timeline range + clear definition of "done"
- Requirements table: systems, people, inputs listed
- Data handling section: EU buyers will look for this every time

4. Trust centre

Remove fear. In Europe, fear kills deals.

- Plain-language GDPR summary, not legal copy
- Subprocessors list with update policy: buyers will check this
- Clear CTA explaining exactly how to request the DPA

CONCLUSION

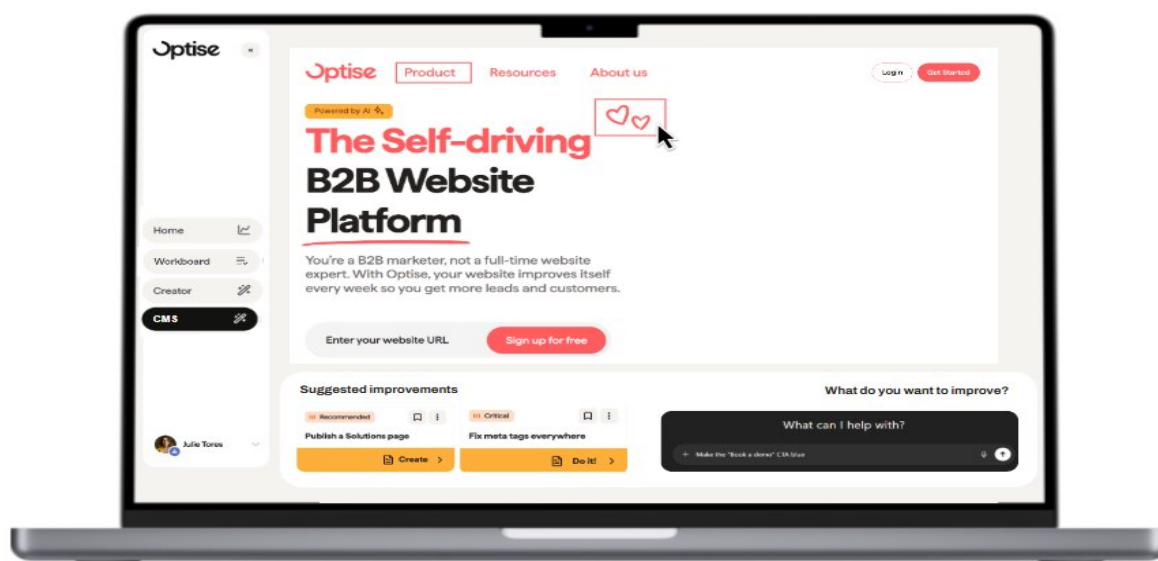
AI discovery in Europe is already shaping shortlists.

AI search changes who gets considered, the shortlist can form before a buyer ever visits your website. AI agents change how vendors get evaluated, vagueness gets you filtered out silently.

The winners in 2026 are the companies that optimise their website to be cited by AI engines and show up as the recommended answer.

Btw...

The Optise B2B Website Platform can do all of this for you.



Sign up for our free trial on optise.com



77% of B2B websites are invisible in AI engines right now.

Ready to become visible in AI search?

www.optise.com

worked in collaboration with

