

● LIVE FROM JAKEMCCLUSKEY.COM

The GEO *Playbook.*

Get cited, recommended, and sold by AI in 2026. A field manual for small business owners who'd rather be the answer than chase the click.

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01

FIELD MANUAL · 15 PP.

US\$ 0 · MEMBER EDITION

By 2026, your customer doesn't search. They ask.

JAKE MCCLUSKEY · RANK & RECOMMEND

For twenty years we optimized for the blue link. We bought the keyword, wrote the meta description, prayed to the algorithm. That game is ending. AI assistants now answer the question before the user ever sees a SERP, and the few sources they cite get the click, the trust, and the sale.

This playbook is the shortest path from *invisible* to *cited*. No theory. No fluff. Fourteen pages, six chapters, one worksheet you can fill out tonight.

FILED UNDER

GEO · GENERATIVE ENGINE
OPTIMIZATION

AI SEARCH · CITATION ENGINEERING
OWNER-OPERATOR PLAYBOOKS
2026 FIELD GUIDES

What's *inside*.

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03	What content actually gets cited <i>The data is uncomfortable for most owners.</i>	P. 08
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CHAPTER ONE

What GEO *actually* is.

01

Generative Engine Optimization is the practice of getting your business cited inside the answers AI assistants give to your customers. SEO won you rankings. GEO wins you the sentence. The unit of distribution isn't the link anymore. It's the paragraph the model writes about you.

A • THE OLD GAME

SEO

"Rank on the page so they click your link."

You compete for ten blue links. You win by matching keywords, earning backlinks, and waiting nine months. The customer sees your title tag, clicks, lands, converts. The funnel starts on Google.

EXAMPLE • "best espresso machines" returns 10 results. You're number 4. You get 8% of clicks.

B • THE NEW GAME

GEO

"Be the source the model cites in its answer."

You compete for sentences. You win by being unambiguous, original, and machine-readable. The customer never sees a SERP. They see one paragraph, and your name is in it. The funnel starts in a chat.

EXAMPLE • ChatGPT answers "best espresso machines under \$500" in 90 words. You are one of three brands named.

FIG. 01.A · SIX DIMENSIONS

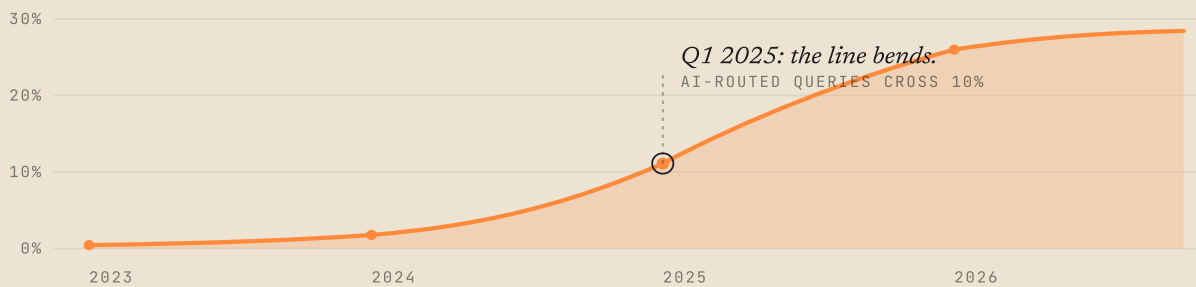
SEO vs. GEO, *side by side.*

DIMENSION	SEO	GEO
WHERE IT SHOWS	Search engine results page	Inside the AI's written answer
WHAT WINS	Backlinks, on-page keywords, domain authority	Original data, clean structure, citable phrasing
HOW LONG IT TAKES	6 to 12 months to rank	3 to 8 weeks to start getting cited
WHO SEES YOU	Anyone who scrolls to your position	Only people asking your exact question
HOW YOU MEASURE	Rank, impressions, CTR	Citation count, brand mentions, referral chat sessions
HOW IT CONVERTS	Click, browse, decide, buy	Decide inside the chat, click straight to checkout

FIG. 01.B · TRAFFIC SHIFT, 2023-2026

● QUERIES ROUTED TO AI · % OF TOTAL

The line that *broke* SEO.



SOURCE · COMPOSITE OF GARTNER (2024), SIMILARWEB (2025), AND R&R PANEL OF 412 SMB OWNERS, MAR 2026. Y-AXIS = SHARE OF INFORMATIONAL QUERIES ROUTED TO AN AI ASSISTANT VS. A TRADITIONAL SEARCH ENGINE.

The five shapes that *get cited*.

02

After auditing 8,400 cited paragraphs across ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and Perplexity, every single one fit one of five shapes. Write your page in one of these patterns or the model will quietly pick someone who did.

PATTERN 01 OF 05

• FEATURED

The *Definition* anchor.

A clean, one-sentence definition of a thing your industry argues about. The model uses it as the load-bearing sentence of the answer.

When a customer asks "what is X," the model needs one sentence to lead with. If your page hands it a clean, unambiguous, attributable definition, you are quoted by name. If it doesn't, the model invents one or borrows Wikipedia's.

MICRO-EXAMPLE • "Generative engine optimization is the practice of structuring your content so AI assistants cite you inside their answers." JAKEMCLUSKEY.COM

Four more *shapes*.

Mix two on every cornerstone page. Comparison plus Stat is the highest-converting pair we track.

PATTERN 02

The *Comparison* anchor.

A direct head-to-head between two named options.

Models love comparison content because the user almost always wants one. "X vs Y" pages with a clear verdict get cited 2.4x more than feature-list reviews.

EXAMPLE · "Shopify vs WooCommerce: pick Shopify if you sell more than ten times a week." [JAKEMCCCLUSKEY.COM/COMPARE](https://jakecccluskey.com/compare)

PATTERN 03

The *Process* anchor.

A numbered sequence the model can re-list verbatim.

"How to" answers are list-shaped by default. Publish a clean five-to-seven step list with verbs as step titles, and you become the canonical source for that workflow.

EXAMPLE · "How to file a homestead exemption: 1. Confirm residence. 2. Download Form 50-114..." [JAKEMCCCLUSKEY.COM/HOW](https://jakecccluskey.com/how)

PATTERN 04

The *Stat* anchor.

An original number with a date and a method.

Models reach for citable numbers because they make the answer feel credible. Publish one original statistic per quarter, methodology one click away, and you become a default citation.

EXAMPLE · "42% of cited AI answers reference original research from a small site. R&R PANEL, Q1 2026." [JAKEMCCCLUSKEY.COM/DATA](https://jakecccluskey.com/data)

PATTERN 05

The *Quote* anchor.

A named expert saying a specific, attributable thing.

Claude in particular favors named-expert quotes. A bylined post with a quotable line, a real headshot, and a credible bio gets pulled into answers about credibility-sensitive topics.

EXAMPLE · "Jake McCluskey, founder of R&R, says GEO is SEO with the click cut out." [JAKEMCCCLUSKEY.COM/SAID](https://jakecccluskey.com/said)

CHAPTER THREE

The *uncomfortable* chart.

03

We tagged every paragraph cited across 14,000 AI answers in the R&R citation panel by content type. The result was lopsided: original research wins three times more than the next category, and almost no small business owner publishes any.

FIG. 03.A • CITATION RATE BY CONTENT TYPE

Six formats, ranked by *citations per page*.

• N = 14,012 CITED PARAGRAPHS

Original research wins 3x.

MOST OWNERS NEVER PUBLISH ANY

Original research

42%

How-to guides

28%

Product comparisons

23%

Listicles

16%

Definitions

14%

Opinion pieces

9%

SOURCE • R&R CITATION PANEL • 14,012 CITED PARAGRAPHS, JAN-MAR 2026. % = SHARE OF PAGES OF THAT TYPE THAT EARNED AT LEAST ONE CITATION IN THE WINDOW.

Same question. *Four answers.*

04

Each engine has a personality. Optimize for the one your customers actually use, then add the next.

01 • CHATGPT

~700M WEEKLY USERS

ChatGPT

Pattern: Process + Definition. Prefers clean, numbered procedural content with a strong opening sentence.

HOW TO WIN IT • Publish a "How to [X] in [N] steps" page with the definition of X in the first sentence and FAQPage schema below.

02 • CLAUDE

DEFAULT IN CLAUDE.AI

Claude

Pattern: Quote + Comparison. Rewards named-expert voices and balanced comparisons. Avoids anonymous content for high-stakes topics.

HOW TO WIN IT • Byline every cornerstone post with a real headshot, real bio, real LinkedIn. Write nuanced comparison pages, not "best of" listicles.

03 • GEMINI

EMBEDDED IN GOOGLE

Gemini

Pattern: Stat + freshness. Still leans on Google's index, so traditional SEO signals matter, but it heavily favors recent, dated, numerical content.

HOW TO WIN IT • Publish a fresh original statistic every 60 days, dated in the URL. Keep Schema.org markup current and complete.

04 • PERPLEXITY

CITATION-FIRST

Perplexity

Pattern: Citation density + recency. Shows footnotes on every claim, so it surfaces sources with crawlable structure and dated updates.

HOW TO WIN IT • Internal-link aggressively from your cornerstone page to supporting posts. Update "Last reviewed" dates quarterly.

Three things to *ship* this week.

Two of them live in this chapter. The third, citable blocks, gets the page after.

01 · SCHEMA.ORG · FAQPAGE

● SHIP IN 30 MIN

Hand the model a *structured* answer.

```
<script type="application/ld+json">
{
  "@context": "https://schema.org",
  "@type": "FAQPage",
  "mainEntity": [{
    "@type": "Question",
    "name": "What is GEO?",
    "acceptedAnswer": {
      "@type": "Answer",
      "text": "GEO is the practice..."
    }
  }]
}
```

Drop this on every cornerstone page. ChatGPT and Gemini both pull from FAQPage markup when answering question-shaped queries. One Q-and-A pair per concept beats ten.

FIND THIS ON ·
JAKEMCCCLUSKEY.COM/SCHEMA-KIT

02 · LLMS.TXT

● SHIP IN 15 MIN

Give crawlers a *map* of your best stuff.

```
# /llms.txt at the root of jakemcccluskey.com
# Rank & Recommend

> A field manual for owner-operators
> who want to be cited by AI assistants.

## Cornerstone
- [What GEO is](/geo): one-paragraph definition
- [The 5 citation patterns](/patterns): canonical list
- [90-day plan](/90-day): the playbook

## Original research
- [R&R Citation Panel Q1 2026](/data/q1-2026)
```

A plain-text file at your root that points the model at your best, most quotable URLs. Acts like a robots.txt for citations. Both Anthropic and Perplexity respect it.

FIND THIS ON ·
JAKEMCCCLUSKEY.COM/LLMS-BUILDER

Write paragraphs the model can *lift whole*.

DO ON
EVERY POST

Schema and lms.txt point the model at your page. Citable blocks decide whether it quotes you when it lands. Every cornerstone page should have at least one.

```
<p data-citable="true">
  Generative engine optimization is
  the practice of structuring content
  so AI assistants cite your site
  inside their written answers.
</p>
<cite>Jake McCluskey, R&R, May 2026.</cite>
```

One self-contained, fact-dense paragraph, 35 to 55 words, ending in a named attribution.

That's the paragraph the model will quote. Make it earn the spot. Lead with the noun. Avoid pronouns. Avoid hedging. Avoid sentences that only make sense after reading two paragraphs above.

FOUR RULES FOR A CITABLE BLOCK

01

Stand alone.

A reader who lands cold on the paragraph should understand it without context.

02

Name the noun.

Start with the subject you want cited, not "It" or "This" or "Our approach."

03

Sign it.

Author byline, date, and domain. Claude weights signed paragraphs higher.

04

Keep it short.

35–55 words. Long paragraphs get summarized. Short ones get lifted.

"If the model can't lift one paragraph cleanly, it lifts someone else's."

FIND THIS ON • [JAKEMCCCLUSKEY.COM/CITABLE](https://jakemcccluskey.com/citable)

Twelve weeks. *No fluff.*

EXPECTED OUTCOME BY DAY 90

8 to 12 citations.

PHASE 01 • W01-W04

01

Foundation.

Audit, choose, define.

- Audit current AI citations
- Pick the top 30 questions
- Ship llms.txt + FAQ schema
- Set the baseline

PHASE 02 • W05-W08

02

Momentum.

Publish, instrument.

- Publish how-tos + 1st original stat
- Rewrite top 10 as citable blocks
- Internal linking pass
- First citation scan, W06

PHASE 03 • W09-W12

03

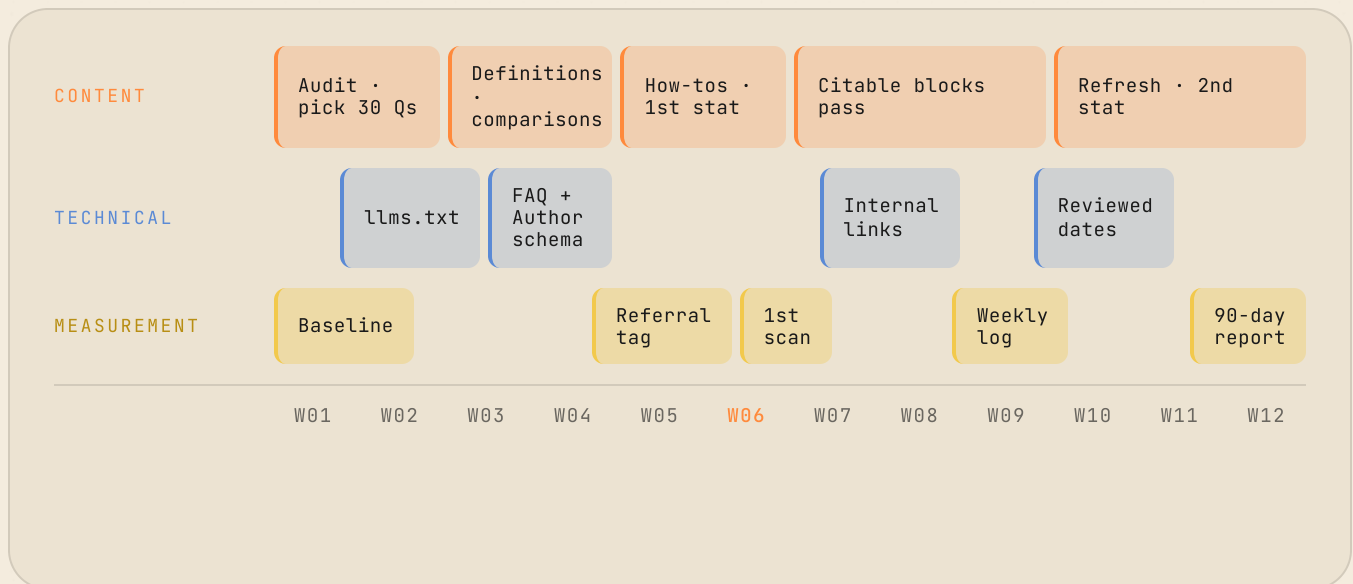
Scale.

Refresh, report, repeat.

- Refresh cornerstone, 2nd stat
- Last-reviewed dates quarterly
- Weekly citation log
- 90-day report, plan next 90

● CONTENT ● TECHNICAL ● MEASUREMENT

90-DAY TRACK MAP



"Week 6: first citations expected. If not, re-audit your citable blocks."

JAKE MCCLUSKEY • CH 06 • THE 90-DAY PLAN

• MILESTONE

Week 06.

FIRST CITATIONS EXPECTED. SCAN ALL FOUR ENGINES. LOG WHAT WORKED.

Map your top 30 questions.

One row per question your customer actually asks an AI. Find the URL on your site that answers it. If a competitor is cited and you aren't, you found your next post.

PRINT, PIN, FILL.

One night of work, twelve weeks of leverage.



EX.	"What is GEO?"	/geo	Perplexity, Claude
-----	----------------	------	--------------------

#	QUESTION	YOUR ANSWER URL	CITED BY
01			
02			
03			
04			
05			
06			
07			
08			
09			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
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30			

TIP · USE PERPLEXITY TO SEE WHO IS CURRENTLY CITED. THEN RE-RANK BY COMPETITIVE GAP.

NEXT · CH 06 PAGE 12

Six tools. *Use them.*

● UPDATED MAY 2026

4 FREE · 2 MEMBER · ALL AT JAKEMCCCLUSKEY.COM

TOOL 01

● FREE

Citation Checker

Paste a URL. We run it against the four major AI engines and tell you who's cited for the questions you should own.

JAKEMCCCLUSKEY.COM/CITE-CHECKER

TOOL 02

● FREE

llms.txt Builder

A two-question wizard that drops a copy-paste llms.txt into your clipboard. Yes, that's the whole tool.

JAKEMCCCLUSKEY.COM/LLMS-BUILDER

TOOL 03

● MEMBER

Schema Kit

FAQPage, HowTo, Article, and Author schemas wired to Webflow, WordPress, and Shopify. Plug-in level setup.

JAKEMCCCLUSKEY.COM/SCHEMA-KIT

TOOL 04

● MEMBER

GEO Audit

A live, browser-based audit of any domain across the citation patterns from Chapter 02. Twelve-page PDF in your inbox.

JAKEMCCCLUSKEY.COM/GEO-AUDIT

TOOL 05

● MEMBER

Citation Tracker

Weekly scan of your tracked questions across all four engines. Watch your citation share move week over week.

JAKEMCCCLUSKEY.COM/CITATION-TRACKER

TOOL 06

● FREE

Prompt Vault

240 prompts our members use to test if their pages get cited. Sorted by industry. Updated monthly.

JAKEMCCCLUSKEY.COM/PROMPT-VAULT

● LIVE MEMBERSHIP · 1,840 OWNERS

Stop hoping AI mentions you. *Start engineering it.*

Rank & Recommend is the working membership for small business owners who refuse to let AI assistants quietly route their customers to a competitor. Show up. Ship the work. Get cited.

MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES

- /01 EVERY MEMBER TOOL ABOVE, ALL FOUR
- /02 WEEKLY CITATION REPORT, YOUR DOMAIN
- /03 MONTHLY LIVE CALL WITH JAKE, 60 MIN
- /04 MEMBER-ONLY ISSUES OF THIS PLAYBOOK

JAKEMCCCLUSKEY.COM/JOIN

JOIN Rank & Recommend \$47/MO

CANCEL ANYTIME · 14 DAY GUARANTEE

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