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How Generative Engine Optimization (GEO) Rewrites the Rules of Search

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It's the end of search as we know it, and marketers feel fine. Sort of.

For over two decades, SEO was the default playbook for visibility online. It spawned an entire industry of keyword stuffers, backlink brokers, content optimizers, and auditing tools, along with the professionals and agencies to operate them. But in 2025, search has been shifting [away](#) from traditional browsers toward LLM platforms. With Apple's announcement that AI-native search engines like Perplexity and Claude will be built into Safari, Google's distribution chokehold is [in question](#). The foundation of the \$80 billion+ SEO market just cracked.

A new paradigm is emerging, one driven not by page rank, but by language models. We're entering Act II of search: Generative Engine Optimization (GEO).

From links to language models

Traditional search was built on links. GEO is built on language.

In the SEO era, visibility meant ranking high on a results page. Page ranks were determined by indexing sites based on keyword matching, content depth and breadth,

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like “in summary” or bullet-point formatting help LLMs extract and reproduce content effectively.

It’s also worth noting that the LLM market is also fundamentally different from the traditional search market in terms of business model and incentives. Classic search engines like Google monetized user traffic through ads; users paid with their data and attention. In contrast, most LLMs are paywalled, subscription-driven services. This

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brand or content is cited or used as a source in model-generated answers. In a world of AI-generated outputs, GEO means optimizing for what the model *chooses* to reference, not just whether or where you appear in traditional search. That shift is revamping how we define and measure brand visibility and performance.

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Of course, GEO is still in its experimental phase, much like the early days of SEO. With every major model update, we risk relearning (or unlearning) how to best interact with these systems. Just as Google's search algorithm updates once caused companies to scramble to counter fluctuating rankings, LLM providers are still tuning the rules behind what their models cite. Multiple schools of thought are emerging: some GEO tactics are fairly well understood (e.g., being mentioned in source documents LLMs cite), while other

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that layer, and you own the budget behind it.

That's the monopolistic potential: not just serving insights, but becoming *the* channel. If SEO was a decentralized, data-adjacent market, GEO can be the inverse — centralized, API-driven, and embedded directly into brand workflows. Ultimately, GEO by itself is perhaps the most obvious wedge, especially as we see a shift in search behavior, but ultimately, it's really a wedge into performance marketing, more broadly. The same brand

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