

WHO OWNS AEO?

Marketing owns strategy. Insights owns measurement. Specialists execute the changes.

A proposed operating model, supported by emerging practitioner arguments.

20+

AI visibility tool providers reported by IAB

August 2026 [2]. Tracking is already in HubSpot; Dig One is integrating it too.*

Forecast: basic visibility increasingly becomes a feature. Interpretation remains a strategic responsibility.

01 THE OPERATING GAP

Semrush survey: 481 retained respondents. Self-reported, not an all-business census. [8]

22%

Fully integrated

SEO and AI-search work

40%

Manual checks

Main tracking method: ChatGPT checks

30%

Inaccurate descriptions

Reported incorrect AI portrayal

29%

Unclear positioning

Reported generic or unclear value

49%

Revenue measurement

Found AI pipeline or revenue impact hard to measure

45%

Visibility measurement

Found visibility in AI answers hard to measure

02 VISIBILITY IS ONLY PART OF THE STORY

83%

AI wording differed from homepages

Recurring descriptor uses absent from the corresponding homepage. 4,583 brands. [9]

Wording mismatch, not an inaccuracy rate.

43%

Brand mentions lost in summaries

Mentions omitted in AI summaries of a PR sample: 3,500+ links, 170 brands. [10]

Summarisation test, not live-search performance.

21%

Citation leaders were mention leaders

Most-cited domains also the most-mentioned brand in the topic study. 1,094 US topics. [11]

Five prompts per topic in ChatGPT; Jan-Jun 2026.

62%

Reported buying an unexpected brand

US AI-shopping users said an AI recommendation led to a purchase they would not otherwise consider. [12]

Survey of 1,011 LLM users; not causal lift.

03 ASSIGN RESPONSIBILITY BEFORE BUYING TOOLS

MARKETING

Own the strategic outcome

Choose the audience and position. Approve priorities and investment.

INSIGHTS

Own measurement and diagnosis

Set prompts, sampling and coding. Compare AI with human evidence.

SPECIALISTS

Own the interventions

SEO, content, PR, product and operations fix the diagnosed problems.

Evidence: Toluna advocates research audits; Meltwater assigns monitoring to Insights; Ipsos and Kantar place AI visibility within research and brand intelligence. [3-7] No consensus on exclusive ownership.

04 TEST THE POSITION BEFORE OPTIMISING

01

RELEVANT

Does it influence choice?

02

DISTINCTIVE

Why prefer us?

03

DELIVERABLE

Do we fulfil the promise?

04

SUBSTANTIATED

Can outsiders verify it?

SOURCES AND READING NOTES

[2] IAB measurement guidance Aug 2026	[8] Semrush operational survey Jun 2026
[9] Parse brand-language study Oct 2026	[10] Connective3 PR summary study Oct 2026
[11] Semrush topic study Jan-Jun 2026 data	[12] Adobe consumer survey Oct 2026

All percentages have different bases and must not be combined. Commercial-provider studies are not independent causal tests. The ownership model and four position tests are AEO Updates recommendations.

*HubSpot: April 14, 2026 announcement [1]. Dig One: first-party project information, not an independently verified public specification. The commissioning team is involved in the initiative.

Full methodology notes and 16 live source links accompany the Word article. PDF source labels above are clickable.