KECUDO

SEARCH MARKETING SERIES

PREMIUM EDITION
II

Class 2

AEO

Answer Engine Optimization

How AI answers choose their sources, and how to become the page they quote: answer capsules, structure, schema, trust and the new 2026 reports.

2026 EDITION · MARKETING SERIES

About this book

This is Class 2 of the Kecudo **Search Marketing Series**, a three-part course on being found in search: SEO, AEO and GEO. It builds on Class 1 (SEO). If you are new to SEO, start there.

It is written for beginners and intermediate marketers, founders and freelancers. Each chapter covers one idea in plain language, then applies it to the running example, **Kecudo Coffee Co.**, a fictional online coffee shop whose numbers tie together across the whole series.

How to use it

- Read Part I in order; dip into Parts II and III as needed.
- Use arrow keys, swipe or the buttons to turn pages; open Contents any time.
- Finish with the 25-question self-assessment for your rating.

Data and sources

Kecudo Coffee Co. and all of its figures are fictional and for teaching only. Facts and research figures about AI search in 2026 come from published industry reporting, credited under the relevant pages. AI search changes quickly; check current guidance before acting.

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FOUNDATION PART I · FOUNDATIONS

Chapter One

From Search Engine to Answer Engine

A search engine gives you a list of places to look. An answer engine reads those places for you and replies in a few sentences, with links to the sources it trusted. Answer Engine Optimization (AEO) is the craft of becoming one of those sources.

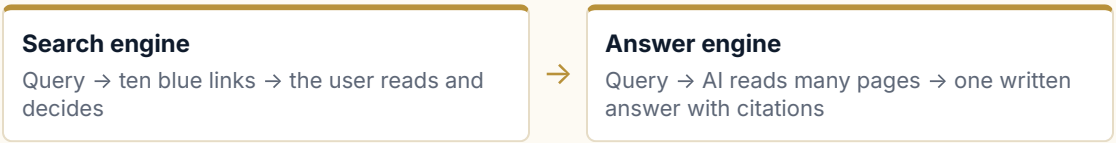


FIG 1.1 · *The shift AEO responds to: from ranking a page to being quoted in an answer.*

Where answers appear

Answer surface	What the user sees
Google AI Overviews	An AI summary above the regular results
Google AI Mode	A conversational answer page with follow-up questions
AI assistants	ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Perplexity and others answering directly
Classic answer features	Featured snippets, People Also Ask, voice assistants

Why Kecudo needs AEO

At the end of Class 1, Kecudo's pour-over guide still ranked near position 2, yet its clicks had fallen to 790 a month. AI answers were replying to the question before anyone scrolled to the link. The goal of this class: make Kecudo the source those answers quote.

> **AEO vs GEO.** This class covers being *the answer* to specific questions. Class 3 (GEO) covers how your *brand* is described and recommended across AI models.

FOUNDATION PART I · FOUNDATIONS

Chapter Two

How AI Answers Choose Their Sources

An AI answer is built in stages. Knowing those stages tells you where your page can win — or quietly drop out.

1. **Understand the question** and split it into related sub-questions ("query fan-out").
2. **Retrieve** pages that answer each sub-question, from the search index.
3. **Verify** claims against other sources; outliers and contradictions tend to be dropped.
4. **Write the answer** and attach citations to the passages it relied on.

Because of fan-out, a page can be cited for a question it doesn't rank for. In Ahrefs' 2026 study, only about 38% of pages cited in AI Overviews ranked in the top 10 — down from about 76% in its study the year before.

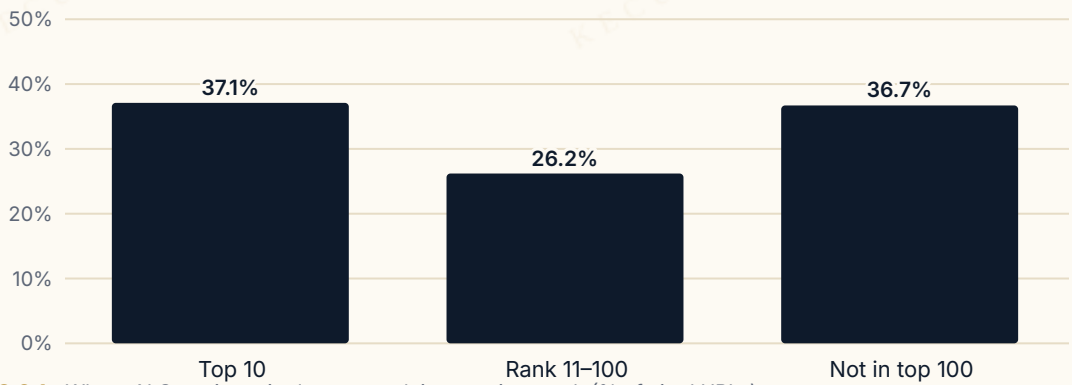


FIG 2.1 · *Where AI Overview-cited pages rank in organic search (% of cited URLs).*

Source: Ahrefs, "How AI Overview citations rank in the SERPs" (2026 study of 1.9M citations).

> **Two engines, two source lists.** Google's AI Overviews and AI Mode reached the same conclusion 86% of the time in one large study, yet cited almost none of the same pages. Doing well on one does not guarantee the other.

Sources: Momentic Research, "The State of SEO, AEO & GEO" (2026), citing Ahrefs; Tryanalyze, "Insights from 56 million AI Overviews".

FOUNDATION PART I · FOUNDATIONS

Chapter Three

Question Research: What People Ask AI

SEO starts with keywords; AEO starts with questions. People talk to AI in full sentences, add context and ask follow-ups. Your research has to capture the question, not just the phrase.

Where to find real questions

- **Support tickets and sales chats:** the exact words customers use.
- **People Also Ask** boxes and related searches on Google.
- **Forums and Reddit** threads in your niche.
- **Test prompts:** ask the AI assistants your customers use, and note the follow-ups they suggest.

Kecudo built a tracking list of 40 questions. Each one gets a target page, and the team checks monthly whether AI answers cite Kecudo for it.

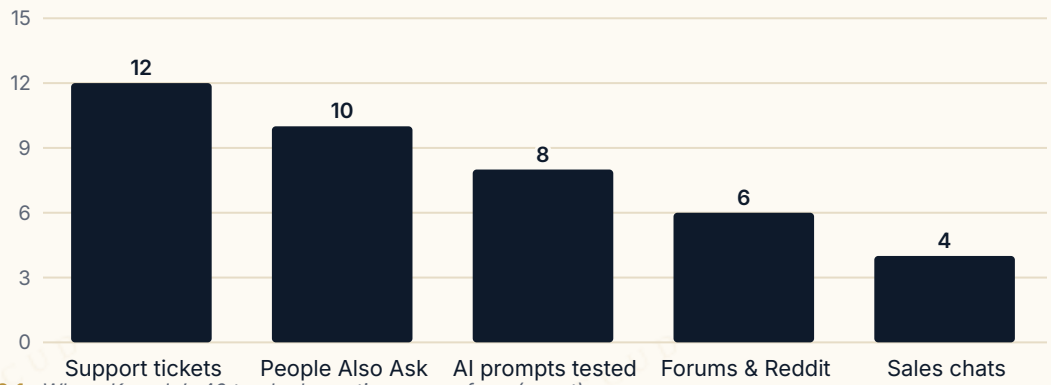


FIG 3.1 · *Where Kecudo's 40 tracked questions came from (count).*

Write the question down exactly

"What grind size for pour-over?" and "Why does my pour-over taste bitter?" need different answers. Keep the customer's wording, group close variants, and map each group to one page section.

Self-Assessment

Part A · Basics

Choose one answer per question. Answers lock once chosen; your score updates at the top of the page.

1 **The main goal of AEO is to make your content...**

- a The longest page on the topic
- b The source an AI answer quotes
- c Hidden from AI crawlers
- d Rank only for brand terms

2 **An "answer capsule" is...**

- a A 2–3 sentence answer right under the question heading
- b A pop-up survey
- c A paid ad format
- d A compressed image file

3 **"Query fan-out" means the AI...**

- a Shows more ads
- b Ignores the question
- c Splits a question into related sub-searches
- d Only reads page one

4 **Which schema type fits a page of questions and answers?**

- a Product
- b BreadcrumbList
- c LocalBusiness
- d FAQPage

5 **What remains the entry ticket for AI answers?**

- a Strong SEO fundamentals: crawlable, indexed, trusted pages
- b A bigger ad budget
- c An llms.txt file
- d Keyword stuffing

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Thank you for learning with Kecudo.

NEXT IN THE SERIES

Class 3 · GEO

Generative Engine Optimization: how AI models describe, compare and recommend your brand.

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