

The AI-First PR Content Playbook

How PR Teams Win Visibility, Credibility, and Trust in AI Search



Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| The AI Dilemma | 3 |
| AI Is Rewriting Your Story..... | 3 |
| SEO vs. AEO: How AI Finds, Trusts, and Uses Your Content | 4 |
| The New PR Scoreboard and the AI Trust Hierarchy | 5 |
| Your AEO Action Plan | 6 |
| The SOAR Content Framework™ | 7 |
| 1. Structure..... | 8 |
| 2. Originality..... | 9 |
| 3. Authority | 9 |
| 4. Recency | 10 |
| Get Your AEO on Track in 90 Days | 11 |
| Days 1–30: Build the Foundation | 11 |
| Days 31–60: Start Reinforcing Authority and Originality | 11 |
| Days 61–90: Scale and Sustain Visibility | 12 |
| The Bigger Picture | 12 |
| Run an AI Brand Narrative Audit | 13 |
| Prompts to Assess Your AI Brand Narrative..... | 13 |
| How to Interpret the Results | 14 |
| How Often to Run an AI Narrative Audit | 14 |
| Final Thought: PR’s Moment to Lead | 15 |
| It’s Time To get Started | 15 |
| Footnotes | 15 |

The AI Dilemma

PR has never been easy. Over the last 20 years, communicators have had to adapt repeatedly to dramatically shifting landscapes.



Social media reshaped distribution and engagement. Smartphones and the always-on news cycle accelerated how quickly information spreads. By 2021, the “fake news” movement had deeply eroded public confidence, with the Edelman Trust Index showing that more people distrusted the media than trusted it.

In 2023, generative AI arrived at scale and flooded the digital space with unprecedented noise. Today, communicators face the most consequential shift yet: the move from traditional search to **Answer Engine Optimization (AEO)**.

AI Is Rewriting Your Story

Here is the urgent reality: AI is telling your story before your audience ever reads your words.

A powerful algorithmic middleman now stands between what you publish and what people absorb. In today’s zero-click environment, buyers form opinions without visiting your website. When generative AI summaries appear on search results pages, users click traditional links only about 8% of the time. When AI Overviews dominate results, click-through rates can drop by 34.5%.¹

Maximizing visibility now requires writing for that middleman, the large language model (LLM). If your narrative does not survive AI synthesis, it will not win Position Zero.



What is Position Zero?

The top of the search experience where AI summarizes information for users before they see traditional results.

SEO vs. AEO: How AI Finds, Trusts, and Uses Your Content

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and AEO share foundations, but they serve fundamentally different outcomes.

- **SEO is about discovery.**
It helps content rank so users can click through to a source.
- **AEO is about synthesis.**
It ensures content is trusted, extracted, summarized, and cited directly within AI-generated answers.

In an AI-driven search environment, visibility increasingly happens without a click.



“I like to compare where we are right now to what it was like to be in marketing in 1999, when Google had just launched... The companies that figured it out early were the companies that leapfrogged the incumbents.”

—Noah Greenberg, CEO, Stacker, [How to Master Your PR Content Mix for AI Search?](#) (00:06:39.074)

Large language models act as **consensus engines**, pulling information from multiple trusted sources to generate a single response. **As a result, success is no longer defined by rankings or traffic alone, but by whether your content becomes part of the answer.**

AI systems (ChatGPT, Claude, etc) prioritize trust signals over promotion.

- Paid media is largely ignored by LLMs.
- Trusted inputs include Wikipedia, authoritative earned media, and well-structured owned content.
- PR content plays a central role because it bridges credibility, clarity, and public availability.

The implication for communicators is clear:

If your content is not structured for extraction, supported by authority, and reinforced over time, it will not survive AI synthesis, regardless of how well it ranks in traditional search.

Good news: If you are reading this playbook, you are not too late.

There is still a critical window to become an early adopter and shape your brand narrative while the advantage remains. The next sections show what AI systems reward, and how PR teams can earn that trust.

Once you understand how AEO differs from SEO, the next step is updating how you measure PR impact. In a zero-click world, performance is increasingly defined by whether AI systems trust your content enough to reuse it.

The New PR Scoreboard and the AI Trust Hierarchy

Traditional PR metrics like placements, page views, and traffic are no longer capturing the full story of your work's performance. As clicks decline, success is increasingly defined by whether content is trusted enough to be synthesized, cited, and reused by AI systems.²

This creates a clear trust hierarchy:

- **The Encyclopedia:** At the top is Wikipedia. It's highly trusted by LLMs and notoriously difficult for brands to influence directly.
- **Earned Media:** Next is earned media placements on authoritative third-party journalistic sites.
- **Owned Media:** Third is your brand's owned content like company websites, blogs, newsletters, social media profiles, white papers, etc.

PR operates at the center of this hierarchy, bridging earned and owned channels in ways AI models depend on for factual grounding. Because large language models map relationships between entities, rather than simply scanning keywords, corporate communications teams are uniquely positioned to lead in AEO.

The good news is that this trust hierarchy isn't random; it's responsive to how information is written, structured, and distributed. **That means PR teams can [take direct steps](#) to increase the likelihood that AI engines extract and cite their story.**

Measuring AI Visibility

AI visibility is no longer a guessing game. Notified's analysis of 8,000 GlobeNewswire releases shows how quickly and consistently press releases are being cited by AI systems:

- 99.3% of analyzed releases were cited by ChatGPT or Claude.
- 8 hours was the average time to first AI citation.
- 16 hours was the median time to first AI citation.
- Releases cited in the first 24 hours averaged 15x more citations over 30 days than releases with no Day 1 citations.
- Content optimized for Structure generated 2.6x more citations on average.

The takeaway: press releases are no longer just announcements. They are source assets for AI-generated answers. The more structured, timely, authoritative, and easy to extract your content is, the more likely AI systems are to cite and reuse it.

[Read the full research.](#)

Your AEO Action Plan

You know AI is reshaping search, discovery, and trust. The real question is what to do next? How do you turn credibility into visibility inside the answers people actually see?

This is where action comes in. To move from theory to execution, you need to rethink PR content itself. Instead, you need **LLM-native content**, built for how AI systems read, extract, and reuse information.

Take the press release, for example. It's no longer enough to write for journalists and audiences alone. You also have to write for the algorithmic middleman deciding what gets surfaced, summarized, and cited.

In practice, that shift starts with a few core changes:

- **The Inverted Pyramid 2.0:** Start strong by answering the “Who, What, When, Where, and Why” right away. LLMs prioritize context upfront and often extract key details from the first few lines, so your opening paragraph matters more than ever.
- **Logical hierarchy:** Make your content easy to scan and easy to parse. Breaking your release into clearly labeled sections with HTML headings, bullets, graphs, or FAQs where appropriate helps both human readers and AI systems understand what's most important.
- **Strategic distribution:** In 2026, your owned newsroom should act as your AI anchor. Publish your release there first, using a canonical URL. Then amplify it through commercial newswires. Because large AI models are trained on massive public datasets like Common Crawl. Distributing your release across hundreds of sites increases the chances that AI systems recognize, absorb, and remember your brand during training.

This section turns the AI search landscape into a clear, actionable playbook for modern PR teams. Rather than isolated tactics, the steps outlined here roll up into a single operating framework you can apply across every release and campaign. That is the **SOAR Content Framework™**.



AI-ready press releases, automatically.

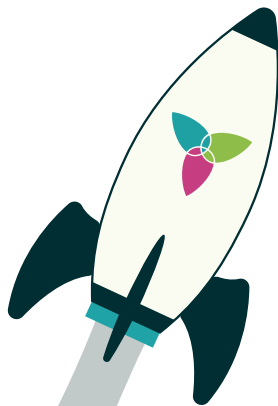
Notified's distribution platform, GlobeNewswire, formats, structures, and publishes your news in ways that help AI understand and cite it.

[Explore the full offering](#)

The SOAR Content Framework™

“The practical question is no longer, ‘How do I get people to read my content?’ It’s now, ‘How do I get AI search to surface my content to shape its answer?’. That’s exactly what the **SOAR Content Framework™** was built to solve.”

Erik Carlson
CEO, Notified



Structure

Crawler-Friendly

Visible and Invisible. Built for humans, readable by AI. Schema-rich, consistently sectioned content that places entities, dates, numbers, and sources where engines expect them.

JSON-LD

Clear Headlines

Bullets

Key Facts

Originality

Unique

Direct-from-the-source content: unique data, quotes, assets not duplicated anywhere else.

Named Customers

Dates

Statistics

Attributed Quotes

Authority

Trusted

Verified publisher, author, and domain signals that show AI: this is the official, safest version to cite.

Official Domain

Media Contacts

Verified Data

Trusted Publisher

Recency

Current

Current and clearly versioned. Mark time stamps and as of dates for safe citation.

Publish Date

As of Date

Frequent Updates

Revision History



The SOAR Content Framework™

After analyzing citation patterns and running extensive regression research, Notified identified a clear formula for winning in AI search. We call it the [SOAR Content Framework™](#), which stands for **Structure, Originality, Authority, and Recency**.

Think of SOAR as your checklist for Answer Engine Optimization (AEO). When your content delivers on all four pillars, it's far more likely to be picked up, understood, and cited by AI engines.

For a deeper look at how SOAR was developed and how to apply it, you can explore the full story [here](#).

1. Structure

Good structure starts with PR fundamentals you already know. That includes factual content, strong headlines, and clear subheads. To truly improve AI visibility, however, you also need to account for machine readability.

- **Semantic formatting:** AI systems favor content that is easy to break apart and reassemble. Press releases with clean, sequential heading hierarchies such as well-ordered H2 and H3 tags are significantly more likely to be cited because the information is easier for machines to process.
- **Metadata and JSON-LD:** What happens behind the scenes matters just as much as what appears on the page. Schema markup helps AI quickly understand the entities involved, including companies, executives, products, and relationships. This makes your content easier for knowledge-graph-driven models to interpret.
- **Parsable quotes:** Shorter executive quotes are not just more readable. They are also easier for AI systems to extract and reuse as standalone insights.

Want SOAR-based guidance while you draft your content?

Notified's **AI Press Release Optimizer** (inside Content OS™) provides recommendations grounded in the SOAR Content Framework™ to strengthen structure, clarity, authority, and quotability *before distribution*.

[Learn More.](#)



2. Originality

AI engines prioritize content that adds something new to the web. They are far less interested in content that only repeats existing facts.

This is where data- and evidence-led writing becomes critical. Proprietary research, first-party benchmarks, and original analysis give AI systems something specific and defensible to cite. When your data is clear and well-packaged, your brand is more likely to become the source AI relies on for that insight.

What originality looks like in AI-optimized PR content:

- **Net-new insights:** Share information that adds something new to the conversation, such as original data, unique perspectives, or timely analysis that isn't widely available elsewhere.
- **Evidence-backed claims:** Support announcements with concrete proof points, including measurable results, first-party observations, or clearly explained trends that AI systems can confidently reference.
- **Clear, quotable takeaways:** Package insights in a way that's easy to extract, summarize, and reuse, using plain language and specific conclusions rather than vague statements.

Simply put, if you want to be referenced, you need to say something worth referencing.

3. Authority

“Large language models are looking for authority signals... we're in the game of getting those bots to pay attention to us.”

Michael Lamp,
Chief Digital & Social Officer, HUNTER
[How to Master Your PR Content Mix for AI Search?](#)
(00:05:33.772)

Authority is about earning your brand's right to speak on a topic and about where your content appears.

- **Credible third-party validation:** Secure coverage, mentions, or citations from trusted media outlets, analysts, and industry publications that AI systems recognize as reliable sources.
- **Consistent topical presence:** Ensure your brand appears repeatedly in context with the topics you want to own, rather than as a one-off mention. AI engines look for patterns over time, not isolated hits.
- **Clear entity association:** Make it easy for AI to connect your brand to its expertise by using consistent naming, titles, and descriptions across owned and earned content.

When your brand shows up in credible third-party publications, it sends a strong trust signal to AI systems. These engines look for patterns such as co-citations, where your brand is mentioned alongside your expertise across respected outlets. The more consistently this happens, the more reliable your content appears.

How To Get More Earned Media

Notified's [Syndicated Articles](#) lets teams pair a journalist-style, evergreen article with a press release for potential pickup across thousands of trusted U.S. outlets (including major publishers and local sites), helping extend reach and strengthen authority/recency signals that influence AI visibility.

4. Recency

Recency matters in AI, but it works differently than it does in traditional PR.

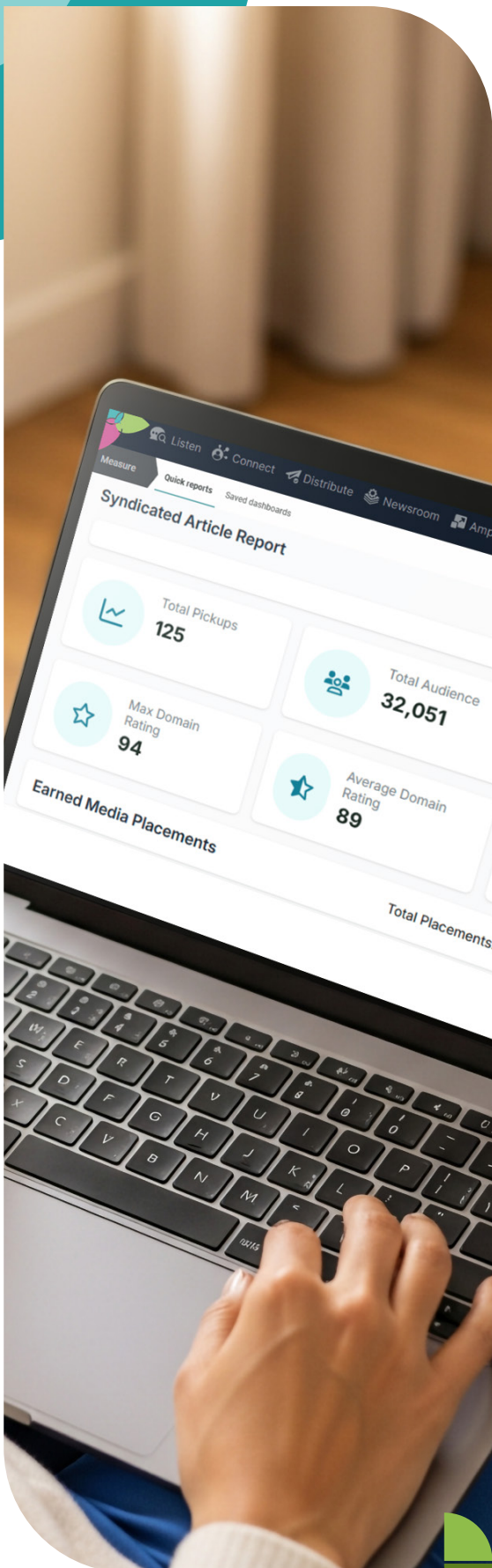
AI visibility tends to peak a few weeks after publication and then fades unless it is reinforced. Most pages cited by AI engines are relatively fresh and were published or updated within the last year

In the past, success may have been judged by traffic in the first 24 to 48 hours. In the AI era, that approach falls short. Large language models operate as consensus engines. They reward repetition and consistency rather than one-time moments.

To maintain visibility, you need to continually reinforce your narrative. That means regularly distributing content across both earned and owned channels so AI systems continue to recognize your brand as a current, credible answer over time.

What recency looks like in AI-optimized PR content:

- **Consistent publishing cadence:** Reinforce your narrative over time with regular updates, announcements, and perspectives, rather than relying on one-off moments of visibility.
- **Ongoing amplification across channels:** Distribute content repeatedly across owned and earned channels so AI systems continue to encounter, validate, and refresh your brand associations.
- **Timely updates and refreshes:** Revisit and update key content to reflect new data, developments, or context, signaling to AI engines that your information is current and still relevant.





Get Your AEO on Track in 90 Days

Answer Engine Optimization doesn't require a full reset of your PR strategy. It requires focus, consistency, and the right sequencing. The key is to treat AEO as an ongoing shift, not a one-time project.

This 30-60-90 day plan shows how you can start building AI visibility quickly, then reinforce it over time.

Days 1–30: Build the Foundation

The first month is about setting your baseline and aligning around how AI systems already see your brand.

- **Audit your existing PR content:** Review recent press releases, newsroom pages, and major announcements through an AEO lens. Are key facts easy to extract? Are entities clearly defined? Is structure consistent? (See page 12 for some audit prompt inspiration).
- **Align on SOAR internally:** Socialize the SOAR framework across PR, content, and SEO teams so everyone is working from the same playbook.
- **Update release structure:** Begin applying LLM-native best practices to new content, including clearer leads, tighter quotes, logical section headers, and consistent naming conventions.
- **Establish your AI anchor:** Ensure your owned newsroom is structured, crawlable, and set up with canonical URLs so it becomes the primary source AI systems reference.

Outcome: Your content is structurally sound and ready to be understood by AI systems.

Days 31–60: Start Reinforcing Authority and Originality

With the foundation in place, the next phase is about giving AI engines reasons to trust and reuse your content.

- **Introduce net-new insights:** Incorporate original data points, first-party observations, or clear expert perspectives into announcements and thought leadership.
- **Strengthen distribution strategy:** Pair owned publishing with consistent newswire and earned media amplification to reinforce brand signals across the open web.
- **Standardize entity signals:** Ensure company names, executive titles, product descriptions, and areas of expertise are used consistently across owned and earned content.
- **Track early AI visibility:** Begin monitoring where and how your content appears in AI-generated answers to identify patterns and opportunities.

Outcome: Your brand starts showing up more consistently in AI answers tied to your expertise.



Days 61–90: Scale and Sustain Visibility

“The biggest misconception is that AI visibility is a volume game... AI looks for consistency. So if you are not consistent across all the channels, it gets confused and it just doesn’t surface you at all.”

Gini Dietrich, Founder & CEO, Spin Sucks
[How to Build an AI-Optimized Content Strategy \(Without the Overwhelm!\)](#) (~00:09:00.632)

The final phase focuses on turning early traction into sustained AI visibility.

- **Establish a repeatable cadence:** Move from one-off announcements to a steady rhythm of updates, perspectives, and reinforcements.
- **Refresh high-value content:** Update key newsroom pages or cornerstone content with new context, data, or developments to maintain relevance.
- **Expand authority signals:** Pursue additional third-party coverage and expert commentary that reinforces co-citation patterns around your core topics.
- **Operationalize AEO:** Make AI optimization a default part of the PR workflow, not a special initiative.

Outcome: Your brand is recognized by AI systems as a current, credible, and authoritative source.

The Bigger Picture

AEO is not about chasing every new AI feature. It’s about consistently reinforcing who you are, what you know, and why you’re trusted. Teams that commit to this 90-day approach build momentum early and put themselves in a position to compound visibility over time.





Run an AI Brand Narrative Audit

Before you optimize what you publish, you need to understand what AI systems already believe about your brand.

Large language models act as consensus engines. They synthesize information from earned media, owned content, third-party sources, and historical mentions to form a working “truth” about who you are, what you do, and whether you are trustworthy. Your first step in AEO is to audit that perception.

This exercise helps you establish a baseline for:

- How AI describes your brand today
- Which narratives are clear, outdated, or missing
- Where competitors may be better positioned in AI answers

You can run this audit using tools like ChatGPT, Gemini, or Claude. The key is to ask consistent, structured questions and look for patterns across responses.

Prompts to Assess Your AI Brand Narrative

Use the prompts below as a starting point. Run them as-is, then adapt based on your industry, audience, and priorities.

Brand positioning and identity

- “What does [Brand Name] do?”
- “How would you describe [Brand Name] in one paragraph?”
- “What is [Brand Name] best known for?”
- “What industries or categories is [Brand Name] associated with?”
- “Who are [Brand Name]’s primary customers or audiences?”

Expertise and credibility

- “What topics is [Brand Name] considered an expert in?”
- “What problems does [Brand Name] help solve?”
- “Is [Brand Name] viewed as a leader in its space? Why or why not?”
- “What evidence supports [Brand Name]’s credibility?”
- “Which sources are most often associated with information about [Brand Name]?”

Competitive context

- “How does [Brand Name] compare to [Competitor A] and [Competitor B]?”
- “What alternatives to [Brand Name] are commonly mentioned?”
- “Where does [Brand Name] rank among peers in its category?”
- “Which competitors have stronger visibility or authority, and why?”

Narrative gaps and risks

- “What important information about [Brand Name] is missing or unclear?”
- “Are there outdated descriptions or legacy narratives about [Brand Name]?”
- “What misconceptions exist about [Brand Name]?”
- “What recent developments about [Brand Name] are reflected, if any?”

Media and trust signals

- “What media outlets or third-party sources are most associated with [Brand Name]?”
- “How often is [Brand Name] cited compared to competitors?”
- “Does [Brand Name] appear in expert or analyst-style explanations?”

Decision and recommendation framing

- “When would someone choose [Brand Name] over alternatives?”
- “Who should consider using or working with [Brand Name]?”
- “What use cases is [Brand Name] most frequently associated with?”

Forward-looking perception

- “What trends or future developments is [Brand Name] connected to?”
- “Is [Brand Name] positioned as innovative or established?”
- “What long-term role does [Brand Name] play in its category?”

How to Interpret the Results

Don't treat any single answer as fact. Instead, look for **patterns**:

- Repeated phrases or descriptors
- Consistent omissions
- Differences between how you want to be positioned and how AI currently frames you

These patterns reveal where your PR and content strategy needs reinforcement through Structure, Originality, Authority, and Recency.

How Often to Run an AI Narrative Audit

AI perceptions are not static. They evolve as new content enters the ecosystem.

- **Baseline audit:** Run a full audit at the start of your AEO program
- **Quarterly check-ins:** Re-run core prompts every 90 days to measure shift
- **Event-based audits:** Run targeted audits after major launches, mergers, crises, or rebrands

These patterns reveal where your PR and content strategy needs reinforcement through Structure, Originality, Authority, and Recency.



Final Thought: PR's Moment to Lead

AI-driven search is already reshaping how brands are discovered, understood, and trusted. In that environment, PR plays a more strategic role than ever. The stories you tell, the proof points you provide, and the authority you build now influence how AI systems interpret and present your brand.

That is the opportunity at the center of this playbook. When you apply Structure, Originality, Authority, and Recency, you are not just improving visibility. You are building a clearer, stronger narrative that AI can recognize, trust, and reuse.

You do not need to reinvent your strategy overnight. You need to create content that is useful, consistent, and credible over time. The teams that move early and stay disciplined will not just adapt to AI-shaped search. They will help define how their brands are understood in the first place.

Footnotes

¹Nifong, Casey. "37% of consumers start searches with AI instead of Google (study)." Search Engine Land. January 7, 2026; Bain & Company. "Consumer reliance on AI search results signals new era of marketing." Bain & Company. February 19, 2025.

²Beckham, Jeff. "Why Earned Media, Not SEO, Drives AI Visibility." Treble Public Relations. September 22, 2025; Anderson-Mutch, Kimberly. "The New Rules of AI Search: How PR and GEO Shape Visibility, Revenue, and Competitive Advantage." Go Fish Digital. October 6, 2025.

It's Time To Get Started

Start by assessing how AI currently understands your brand, then use those insights to strengthen the signals that matter most. If a deeper expert perspective would be helpful, contact us to discuss where your narrative stands today and what to prioritize next.