

STRATEGY + IMPLEMENTATION

SEO, AEO + GEO Field Manual

A practical operating system for owned pages, answer structure, outside evidence and honest measurement.

BUILT TO BE USED

Decision frameworks

Working registers

Implementation worksheets

2026 FIELD EDITION / 12 PAGES

READ / MARK UP / ASSIGN / REVISIT

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

A working document, not a one-page checklist.

Use the explanation on each page to make a decision, then complete the adjacent register or worksheet. Assign owners and dates. Revisit the same pages after a launch, campaign or platform-policy change so the record becomes useful over time.

01

Assign SEO, AEO and GEO to the right job.

ORIENTATION

02

Translate demand into answerable buyer prompts.

BUYER QUESTION MAP

03

Make the source reachable before optimizing the answer.

OWNED PAGE READINESS

04

Build a page a reader can understand and an engine can extract.

ANSWER SHAPE

05

Map the evidence around the brand, not just the website.

SOURCE GAP

06

Turn the gap into a source-ready editorial brief.

CONTENT BRIEF

07

Sequence technical, editorial and earned work.

90-DAY PLAN

08

Use one dashboard without collapsing unlike outcomes.

MEASUREMENT

09

Turn the report into the next decision.

MONTHLY REVIEW

10

Keep the claim attached to its source and its limit.

SOURCE NOTES + LIMITS

ORIENTATION

Assign SEO, AEO and GEO to the right job.

Use the labels as operating lenses. SEO covers access, indexing and owned-page competitiveness. AEO improves how clearly a page resolves a question. GEO studies how the brand appears across the external evidence an AI system may retrieve.

DECISION PRINCIPLES

- AEO and GEO sit on top of a crawlable, useful owned site.
- A clear answer still needs accountable facts and evidence.
- Third-party visibility is an editorial outcome, not an owned-site setting.
- Measure access, answer inclusion, mentions and citations separately.

ACTION CHECK

- ☐ Name the buyer question.
- ☐ Identify the owned page.
- ☐ Check access and index state.
- ☐ Assess the answer shape.
- ☐ List supporting outside sources.

WORKING REGISTER

Capture the evidence, owner and next decision. Use one row per page, prompt, source or issue.

QUESTION	LENS	OWNER

DECISION / NOTES / NEXT REVIEW

Treat the completed page as a dated observation, not a permanent truth.

BUYER QUESTION MAP

Translate demand into answerable buyer prompts.

Build prompt groups around decisions rather than keyword variants alone: discovery, comparison, proof, risk, price, location and next step. Keep several natural phrasings under the same intent so one volatile answer does not become the strategy.

DECISION PRINCIPLES

- One intent should contain multiple natural phrasings.
- High-intent comparisons deserve separate analysis.
- Use the vocabulary customers actually use.
- Preserve a stable baseline and a separate exploratory set.

ACTION CHECK

- ☐ Interview sales or support.
- ☐ Collect search queries.
- ☐ Write five intent groups.
- ☐ Add three variants per group.
- ☐ Label funnel stage and value.

WORKING REGISTER

Capture the evidence, owner and next decision. Use one row per page, prompt, source or issue.

INTENT	PROMPT	STAGE

DECISION / NOTES / NEXT REVIEW

Treat the completed page as a dated observation, not a permanent truth.

OWNED PAGE READINESS

Make the source reachable before optimizing the answer.

Check response status, robots access, index directives, canonical consistency, internal links, rendered HTML and mobile usability on every priority page. Technical eligibility cannot force selection, but technical failure can remove the page from consideration.

DECISION PRINCIPLES

- Test production, not only source code.
- A robots rule can be undermined by a firewall or CDN.
- Canonical and noindex directives should not conflict.
- Important facts should exist in visible, stable HTML.

ACTION CHECK

- ☐ Fetch the final URL.
- ☐ Check status and redirect chain.
- ☐ Review robots and noindex.
- ☐ Inspect canonical URL.
- ☐ Confirm internal discovery.

WORKING REGISTER

Capture the evidence, owner and next decision. Use one row per page, prompt, source or issue.

URL	ISSUE	OWNER

DECISION / NOTES / NEXT REVIEW

Treat the completed page as a dated observation, not a permanent truth.

ANSWER SHAPE

Build a page a reader can understand and an engine can extract.

Lead with a direct answer, then provide definitions, criteria, evidence, examples, tradeoffs and a next step. Structure should improve human comprehension; it should not turn the page into choppy fragments written for a parser.

DECISION PRINCIPLES

- Answer the main question near the relevant heading.
- State comparison criteria before declaring a winner.
- Use tables only when the dimensions are genuinely comparable.
- Expose assumptions, exceptions and limitations.

ACTION CHECK

- ☐ Write the one-sentence answer.
- ☐ Define ambiguous terms.
- ☐ Add decision criteria.
- ☐ Attach evidence and dates.
- ☐ Add a useful example.

WORKING REGISTER

Capture the evidence, owner and next decision. Use one row per page, prompt, source or issue.

SECTION	ANSWER	EVIDENCE

DECISION / NOTES / NEXT REVIEW

Treat the completed page as a dated observation, not a permanent truth.

SOURCE GAP

Map the evidence around the brand, not just the website.

For each important prompt, save the pages attached to the answer and the outside pages that consistently rank or get cited. Classify gaps as owned fixes, earned-placement opportunities or observations that need more evidence.

DECISION PRINCIPLES

- Start with the page before researching the contact.
- Relevance and editorial quality matter more than raw volume.
- A mention, backlink and AI citation are separate observations.
- Do not pursue inclusion where the brand does not genuinely fit.

ACTION CHECK

- ☐ Save cited URLs.
- ☐ Record competitors present.
- ☐ Score source relevance.
- ☐ Classify owned vs. earned.
- ☐ Name the next action.

WORKING REGISTER

Capture the evidence, owner and next decision. Use one row per page, prompt, source or issue.

SOURCE	GAP	ACTION

DECISION / NOTES / NEXT REVIEW

Treat the completed page as a dated observation, not a permanent truth.

CONTENT BRIEF

Turn the gap into a source-ready editorial brief.

A useful brief states the reader, decision, direct answer, criteria, original evidence, required examples, visible author and update plan. It also identifies which claim would be useful to an outside writer and how that claim can be verified.

DECISION PRINCIPLES

- One page should own one primary decision.
- Original evidence must be reproducible or clearly scoped.
- Every commercial claim needs an accountable source.
- The update trigger belongs in the brief, not in memory.

ACTION CHECK

- ☐ Name reader and decision.
- ☐ Write the answer thesis.
- ☐ List proof requirements.
- ☐ Add author and reviewer.
- ☐ Set update trigger.

WORKING REGISTER

Capture the evidence, owner and next decision. Use one row per page, prompt, source or issue.

ELEMENT	OWNER	STATUS

DECISION / NOTES / NEXT REVIEW

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90-DAY PLAN

Sequence technical, editorial and earned work.

Prioritize by usefulness, control, effort and dependency. Fix technical blockers first, improve the answer and evidence second, then pursue relevant outside inclusion. Assign dates and expected evidence rather than vague visibility goals.

DECISION PRINCIPLES

- An owned fix can be scheduled; publisher acceptance cannot.
- Do prerequisite work before outreach.
- Keep baseline prompts stable through the test window.
- Record what changed and when.

ACTION CHECK

- ☐ Rank the top five gaps.
- ☐ Assign an owner.
- ☐ Name the deliverable.
- ☐ Set the review date.
- ☐ Define the success evidence.

WORKING REGISTER

Capture the evidence, owner and next decision. Use one row per page, prompt, source or issue.

WINDOW	DELIVERABLE	MEASURE

DECISION / NOTES / NEXT REVIEW

Treat the completed page as a dated observation, not a permanent truth.

MEASUREMENT

Use one dashboard without collapsing unlike outcomes.

Track index status, rankings, organic visits, answer inclusion, brand mentions, cited pages and referral traffic in separate columns. A combined summary score may help triage, but it should never erase the underlying observations.

DECISION PRINCIPLES

- Eligibility is not visibility.
- A citation is not always a brand mention.
- A placement can be published before an AI answer changes.
- Keep platform and prompt context with every observation.

ACTION CHECK

- ☐ Define each metric.
- ☐ Record the baseline date.
- ☐ Keep prompt context.
- ☐ Annotate releases.
- ☐ Review monthly.

WORKING REGISTER

Capture the evidence, owner and next decision. Use one row per page, prompt, source or issue.

METRIC	BASELINE	TARGET

DECISION / NOTES / NEXT REVIEW

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MONTHLY REVIEW

Turn the report into the next decision.

Review what moved, what stayed flat, what new evidence appeared and which assumptions failed. End with explicit keep, fix, pursue or watch decisions, each with an owner and next review date.

DECISION PRINCIPLES

- Explain variance before claiming causation.
- Preserve screenshots and source URLs as dated evidence.
- Close tasks that no longer fit the strategy.
- Use the same core questions next month.

ACTION CHECK

- ☐ Compare to baseline.
- ☐ Inspect changed citations.
- ☐ Review source updates.
- ☐ Choose next action.
- ☐ Record owner and date.

WORKING REGISTER

Capture the evidence, owner and next decision. Use one row per page, prompt, source or issue.

FINDING	DECISION	DATE

DECISION / NOTES / NEXT REVIEW

Treat the completed page as a dated observation, not a permanent truth.

SOURCE NOTES + LIMITS

Keep the claim attached to its source and its limit.

A field manual should make the work repeatable without turning research into certainty. Record the original source, publication date, exact claim, population or platform studied, and the boundary between a documented finding and your team's interpretation.

DECISION PRINCIPLES

- Link to original documentation or research whenever it is available.
- Separate a platform requirement from a community convention or agency recommendation.
- Do not convert correlation, a case example or an illustrative score into a guarantee.
- Recheck crawler, schema and search guidance before implementation because platforms change.

ACTION CHECK

- ☐ Record the source URL and access date.
- ☐ Copy the exact claim in your own words.
- ☐ Note the methodology or platform scope.
- ☐ Write the practical implication separately.
- ☐ Set a date to revalidate the guidance.

EVIDENCE LEDGER

Use one row per claim. The evidence column should name the original document, not a secondary summary.

CLAIM	SOURCE	LIMIT

DECISION / NOTES / NEXT REVIEW

Treat the completed page as a dated observation, not a permanent truth.