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THE GEO PLAYBOOK · CANVAS MARKETING SOLUTIONS

How to earn visibility in AI answers

A grounded guide to query research, evidence, content, distribution and measurement.

Generative Engine Optimisation
For teams that want to be understood and cited without fake traffic, manufactured consensus or force-indexing promises.

https://www.canvasmarketingsolutions.com/geo-playbook

START HERE

A useful layer on top of good SEO

Generative engine optimisation (GEO), also called answer-engine optimisation (AEO) or AI visibility, is the practice of making a useful, clearly described brand easier for search engines and AI assistants to understand, retrieve and cite. There is no single published GEO ranking formula and no tactic guarantees a mention. The durable work is familiar SEO: crawlable pages, useful answers, clear entities, strong evidence and an excellent customer experience. This playbook adds a practical layer for researching the sub-queries an assistant may use, building legitimate third-party proof, distributing helpful content and measuring what changes.

Fastest responsible start

Map a prompt panel, audit your entity and fix the highest-value information gaps.

Best long-term asset

Helpful owned content supported by real customer experience and independently checkable proof.

Cheapest durable win

Deliver a great service, then invite a representative range of customers to leave honest feedback.

What is never guaranteed

Indexing, ranking, a Knowledge Panel, an AI citation, referral traffic or a sales outcome.

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PART 1

01 Foundation

Everything else depends on a clean understanding of the audience, the entity and the evidence available to support your claims. Start here before buying distribution or publishing at volume.

TACTIC 01

Understand query fan-out

An assistant may decompose a prompt such as “best plumber in London” into related searches about services, location, reviews, alternatives, trust and price. The exact process varies by product and can be opaque, so treat a visible source list or related-query view as evidence to investigate—not a guaranteed transcript of the model’s internal process.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Run representative customer prompts in more than one assistant and record the answer, cited sources and any visible related searches or follow-up questions.
2. Search the resulting themes in Google, Bing and another relevant search engine. Note whether results come from news, video, community, directories, reviews, professional organisations or competitors.
3. Map each theme to a useful page or proof source you can genuinely create. Prioritise questions with clear buying intent and a realistic path to being useful.
4. Recheck the sample monthly and after material product, market or search changes. Record date, location, device and prompt so changes are not mistaken for a stable ranking.

> **RISK & EVIDENCE NOTE**
>
> Fan-out research is directional. Do not claim that a tool exposes an assistant’s complete hidden queries, or that reaching a top-20 result guarantees citation.

TACTIC 02

Build off-page proof: claim, frame, prove

Assistants need corroborating information to understand who a business is and whether a claim is credible. Independent, relevant evidence is more useful than repeating identical marketing copy everywhere. Think consistency and verifiability, not manufactured consensus.

HOW TO DO IT

1. List a small set of defensible claims: what you do, where you operate, who you serve, what you have actually achieved and what evidence supports each claim.
2. Create a source-of-truth page with dates, definitions, methodology and links to primary evidence. Keep material facts consistent across owned profiles.
3. Earn independent proof through real customer experiences, expert contributions, reputable trade coverage, awards with transparent criteria and partnerships that disclose relationships.
4. Audit for contradictions, outdated claims, undisclosed sponsorships and copied language. Correct the record rather than trying to bury an unfavourable or inaccurate source.

> **RISK & EVIDENCE NOTE**
> Do not buy invented reviews, coordinate fake consensus, impersonate independent voices or ask publishers to hide commercial relationships.

TACTIC 03

Get listed and reviewed where the fan-out looks

If real customers use a directory or review service, a complete and accurate profile can make the business easier to discover and assess. A listing is not a ranking shortcut, and platforms differ by country and category.

HOW TO DO IT

1. From the fan-out map, identify platforms that are genuinely relevant to your industry, location and customer journey. Remove sites with no audience or editorial value.
2. Claim the official profile, use the legal or trading name consistently, complete core facts and verify ownership through the platform’s process.
3. Publish useful, current details such as services, service area, accessibility, contact methods, credentials and availability. Link back only where the platform permits it.
4. Invite all appropriate customers to share honest feedback through a neutral request. Monitor and answer reviews professionally, escalating factual or safety issues through the platform.

> **RISK & EVIDENCE NOTE**
> Follow each platform’s solicitation and disclosure rules. Never gate reviews, incentivise only positive reviews, review yourself or pressure customers to use particular wording.

TACTIC 04

Define your entity and support legitimate knowledge features

A stable name, description, ownership trail and set of verifiable facts help systems disambiguate a brand. Structured data can clarify a page, but it does not create a Knowledge Panel or guarantee inclusion in one.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Choose a consistent public brand name, short description, logo and canonical website. Resolve old names, duplicate profiles and conflicting addresses where possible.
2. Make the organisation, people, locations and services clear on owned pages. Add appropriate structured data only when it matches visible content and follow the relevant search documentation.
3. Maintain legitimate profiles and references on relevant organisations, professional bodies, suppliers, publishers and review platforms. Keep ownership and relationships transparent.
4. Use official claim, correction or feedback channels when a knowledge feature is wrong. Keep a dated evidence log rather than trying to force a panel into existence.

RISK & EVIDENCE NOTE

Do not create duplicate entities, stuff unrelated profiles with brand mentions or describe an award, partnership or result that cannot be independently checked.

PART 2

02 Content plays

Create pages and assets that answer the real sub-questions in the fan-out. Use customer language, first-hand evidence and editorial judgement; do not publish thin pages simply to occupy more URLs.

TACTIC 05

Append review-site names to useful comparison queries

Queries such as “brand reviews” or “brand + platform” may signal that a buyer is checking reputation. A transparent page can help them assess the evidence, but it should not impersonate a review site or conceal the commercial relationship.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Use fan-out research and customer interviews to identify the platforms and modifiers that genuinely matter to your audience.
2. Publish an honest comparison or review explainer on your own site: show strengths, limitations, dates, representative feedback and links to the original platform pages.
3. Use a descriptive title and plain language naturally. Add author, update date, methodology and disclosure so readers understand who made the page.
4. Ask the platform to correct its own listing through its official process when facts are wrong; do not create a page that looks like the platform’s editorial content.

> **RISK & EVIDENCE NOTE**
>
> A self-authored page is not an independent review. Avoid cherry-picking, fabricated testimonials, review markup for self-serving content or claims that a page is endorsed by a platform.

TACTIC 06

Publish genuinely useful listicles and comparison pages

A business can publish “best in category”, alternative and pricing guides when it has a legitimate reason and adds original value. The page should help a reader make a decision, not merely disguise an advertisement.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Define the audience, decision criteria and inclusion rules before selecting brands. Include competitors when they meet the stated criteria.
2. Disclose ownership and commercial relationships prominently. Explain the date checked, sources used and what the comparison does not cover.
3. Include meaningful differences, trade-offs, pricing context, accessibility and suitability—not just superlatives. Link to primary sources and correct outdated details.
4. Invite factual corrections and review the page on a schedule. Remove claims that cannot be supported rather than adding more promotional language.

> **RISK & EVIDENCE NOTE**
> Do not pretend to be an independent publisher, use fake awards or make unsupported claims that your own brand is objectively number one.

TACTIC 07

Be cautious with exact-match domains and supplementary sites

A second domain or microsite can be appropriate for a genuinely separate audience, product or campaign. A near-duplicate site created only to occupy more search results is usually costly, confusing and vulnerable to being treated as doorway or scaled content.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Start with the user need and ownership disclosure. Prefer a clear section on the main domain unless a separate brand, audience, governance or regulatory need is real.
2. If a separate site is justified, give it original editorial purpose, distinct navigation, accessible ownership information and content that is not copied from the parent.
3. Canonicalise duplicates, avoid reciprocal link schemes and make the relationship between sites obvious to readers and platforms.
4. Consolidate or retire thin microsites when they no longer serve users. Redirect useful legacy URLs carefully and preserve evidence rather than multiplying near-identical pages.

> **RISK & EVIDENCE NOTE**
> Exact-match domains do not inherit authority automatically. Using multiple sites to manipulate results, pass links or create a false impression of independence is risky and contrary to search quality guidance.

TACTIC 08

Make owned social assets discoverable—without overclaiming indexing

Profiles and substantial posts on LinkedIn, YouTube, X, Reddit or another network can add context and reach people where they already spend time. Search visibility depends on each platform and is not guaranteed.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Complete the organisation’s official profiles, use consistent factual descriptions and link to the canonical website. Mark staff or partner relationships clearly.
2. Publish useful native material, case evidence and answers to real questions. Build an audience through conversation, not repetitive brand mentions or automated posting.
3. Use Search Console only for websites or properties you can verify and own. You cannot verify a third party’s social profile or submit someone else’s post there.
4. Where a page matters, use the platform’s own visibility, correction and analytics tools. For an owned website URL, URL Inspection can request a crawl when available, but it cannot force indexing or ranking.

> **RISK & EVIDENCE NOTE**
> Google Search Console does not let you verify arbitrary third-party social profiles. Do not promise that social posts will be indexed, cited or retained; platforms can delete, de-rank or restrict them.

TACTIC 09

Use connected editorial assets, not cross-domain link chains

A series of legitimate guest articles, partner resources or research pages can help readers follow a topic. Deliberately chaining sites so each repeats the same claims and funnels authority to one brand resembles a link scheme and adds little independent evidence.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Choose a publication or partner because its audience and editorial standards fit the subject, not because it will pass authority.
2. Offer original first-hand research, expertise or a useful contribution. Let each publisher edit and attribute it according to its own policy.
3. Link only when a reference genuinely helps the reader. Disclose commercial relationships, sponsorship and author identity.
4. Review the network as a reader: if removing the brand links leaves no useful story, redesign the content or stop the campaign.

> **RISK & EVIDENCE NOTE**
> Do not trade links, use private blog networks, rotate near-identical guest posts or coordinate links across domains to manufacture authority.

TACTIC 10

Use temporal updates responsibly (previously described as grey hat)

Showing what changed, when it changed and what evidence supports the change is clearer than making a timeless “best” claim. Reframing an established winner as displaced without evidence is persuasion, not proof.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Document the baseline with a date, a defined category, a source and a reproducible method. Avoid presenting one search result as the whole market.
2. Describe the new development precisely: a launch, certification, measured outcome, customer milestone or independently judged award.
3. Update the page with evidence, methodology and limitations. Preserve the change history so readers can distinguish a revision from an original claim.
4. Ask an appropriate independent reviewer to test material claims where safety, finance, health or professional advice is involved.

> **RISK & EVIDENCE NOTE**
>
> Do not manufacture a changing narrative, rewrite history to imply a takeover or use “now the leader” language without a defensible definition and evidence.

TACTIC 11

Target attainable brand-plus-modifier queries

Queries combining a brand with a service, location or platform may be easier to serve than a broad category term. Difficulty scores are estimates, not promises of a quick ranking or citation.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Mine support tickets, sales calls, on-site search, autocomplete and fan-out research for language customers actually use with the brand.
2. Prioritise a small set of high-intent, answerable queries. Check existing results for intent, quality and whether your page would add something useful.
3. Create or improve one authoritative page per intent, with clear facts, evidence, internal links and a helpful next step.
4. Measure qualified visits, enquiries and visibility over a meaningful period. Do not inflate the result by publishing many near-duplicates.

> **RISK & EVIDENCE NOTE**
>
> Keyword-tool difficulty around 10 is not a one-day guarantee. Avoid doorway pages and brand-plus-platform pages that imply endorsement.

TACTIC 12

Match the words buyers actually use

Clear language improves findability and comprehension. Using a customer’s words does not mean stuffing every modifier or making a promise the business cannot keep.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Collect exact phrases from interviews, call transcripts, support questions, reviews and search queries. Group synonyms by intent and audience.
2. Use the clearest terms in headings, body copy, metadata, image alternatives and structured data where accurate and natural.
3. Answer practical modifiers such as price, location, speed, eligibility, guarantees and limitations with specific, current information.
4. Test comprehension and conversion with real users. Keep language that helps people decide, even when it is not the highest-volume phrase.

TACTIC 13

Experiment with quality at a sustainable volume

No one can know which eligible page will be retrieved in every context, so testing is sensible. Publishing 50 thin pages is not a strategy; a smaller set of strong, maintained resources usually creates better evidence and a better user experience.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Form a hypothesis about an audience, question, evidence type or format. Define a success measure before publishing.
2. Ship a manageable pilot of genuinely distinct pages or assets, with expert review, sources, authorship and a clear maintenance owner.
3. Compare retrieval, engagement, qualified enquiries, conversions and user feedback against a baseline; record the dates and prompt set.
4. Expand formats or topics that create real value. Consolidate, improve or remove pages that overlap, mislead or attract no useful audience.

> **RISK & EVIDENCE NOTE**
> AI-assisted drafting still needs human fact checking and editing. Do not use automation to generate scaled, unoriginal or misleading pages.

PART 3

03 Amplification and distribution

Distribution can help a useful asset reach real people and earn legitimate attention. It cannot force a crawler, create independent evidence or turn a weak claim into a trusted one.

TACTIC 14

Use press releases for real news, not citation shortcuts

A release can make a genuine announcement available to journalists and stakeholders. Syndication may create many copies with little independent editorial value, and a news-domain placement does not guarantee a ranking, Top Stories appearance or AI citation.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Confirm the announcement is newsworthy: a real launch, research result, appointment, event, community contribution or material company update.
2. Write specific facts, dates, attribution and contact details. Link to primary evidence and disclose commercial interests.
3. Pitch relevant journalists, trade publications and local outlets directly. Use a reputable wire only when its distribution and disclosures serve the announcement.
4. Measure qualified referral traffic, journalist responses and coverage. Keep the release as a dated record; do not treat every syndicated copy as independent validation.

> **RISK & EVIDENCE NOTE**
>
> There is no reliable “force-index” button. URL Inspection is a request for an owned page and is subject to crawl and indexing systems; it is not a guarantee. Avoid buying links or fabricating news.

TACTIC 15

Earn attention from real audiences—never manufacture traffic

A newsletter, partner share or relevant paid campaign can introduce a useful page to people who may genuinely benefit. Fake clicks, pop-under traffic, bot activity and coordinated engagement can waste budget, mislead measurement and violate platform or advertising rules.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Build permission-based email and social audiences by delivering useful content consistently. Respect consent, unsubscribe requests and frequency expectations.
2. Ask relevant partners to share a resource only when it helps their audience. Use tracked links and label sponsorships or paid placements.
3. Use transparent ads with a defined audience, honest creative, frequency controls and a landing page that fulfils the promise.
4. Exclude invalid traffic, monitor analytics for anomalies and report material traffic-quality problems to vendors. Optimise for qualified actions, not a click target.

> **RISK & EVIDENCE NOTE**
> Do not buy click spikes, use pop-under networks, bots, click farms, misleading redirects or manufactured social proof. Ethical alternatives are permission-based distribution, transparent ads, useful partnerships and genuine community participation.

TACTIC 16

Repurpose evidence with editorial care

A useful case study can become a guide, video, podcast, image or accessible document so different audiences can learn from it. Repurposing is not a licence to blast duplicates across low-quality sites.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Start with one verified source asset and identify the distinct question each format will answer. Keep the author, date, methodology and limitations.
2. Create an original treatment for each channel: captions and transcript for video, a practical takeaway for a document, or a genuinely conversational podcast segment.
3. Publish on channels your audience uses and that have clear ownership, moderation and removal processes. Link to the canonical source where appropriate.
4. Review rights, privacy, consent and accessibility. Correct or withdraw a derivative promptly when the source changes.

> **RISK & EVIDENCE NOTE**
> Do not upload customer reviews, photos or recordings without permission, scrape content, or use mass submissions to create the appearance of independent coverage.

TACTIC 17

Use social media to help people, not to game retrieval

Consistent social participation can expand reach, surface expertise and give customers a way to ask questions. Social activity alone does not prove authority, and platform indexing is outside your control.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Choose channels based on audience and format. Publish original answers, demonstrations, customer education and transparent proof rather than a repeated claim.
2. Respond to questions, correct errors and moderate respectfully. Keep sensitive customer details private and obtain permission before sharing stories.
3. Use paid amplification only with labelled, honest creative and a defined objective. Measure meaningful engagement, assisted conversions and customer feedback.
4. Use platform analytics and owned-site analytics together. Treat a social post as a distribution asset, not a guaranteed search result.

> **RISK & EVIDENCE NOTE**
> Do not mass-post, buy followers, coordinate fake engagement, astroturf communities or ask people to repeat a scripted claim.

TACTIC 18

Collaborate with relevant, transparent partners

A co-produced case study, research project or event can create useful first-hand evidence and introduce a brand to a relevant audience. Independence is stronger when each party can describe its own experience honestly.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Choose a non-competing or complementary partner for a real customer or research need, and agree on scope, data ownership and consent.
2. Define methods, roles and success criteria before work begins. Record what each party contributed and any commercial relationship.
3. Let each organisation publish its own account with distinct insight, accurate attribution and links that help readers rather than manipulate ranking.
4. Share results with the participants and correct errors together. Do not pressure a partner to endorse a claim it cannot verify.

> **RISK & EVIDENCE NOTE**
> Do not use reciprocal testimonials, undisclosed paid endorsements or co-authored copy as a substitute for independent evidence.

TACTIC 19

Deliver great service, then invite honest reviews

A good experience is the ethical foundation for review visibility. Ask customers at an appropriate time and make the process easy, while preserving their freedom to be honest.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Fix the experience first: set expectations, deliver the service, resolve issues and document outcomes accurately.
2. Invite a representative range of customers through a neutral request with the platform's official link. Do not ask only people you expect to be positive.
3. Never offer incentives tied to sentiment, gate access to support, write the review for the customer or require specific keywords.
4. Respond to reviews without exposing private details. Report only reviews that breach the platform's policy, and use feedback to improve the service.

> **RISK & EVIDENCE NOTE**
>
> Review platforms and regulators prohibit different practices. Check the current policy before requesting reviews, especially around incentives, selective solicitation and endorsements.

PART 4

04 Measurement, monitoring and speculative plays

Treat GEO as an uncertain measurement problem. Capture prompts, sources and business outcomes over time, distinguish observation from causation and label ideas with limited evidence as experiments.

TACTIC 20

Choose tools that show the whole path

Dedicated AI-visibility products and conventional SEO tools can help sample prompts, citations, brand mentions, AI Overviews or referral behaviour. Vendor coverage varies, and a single dashboard is not ground truth.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Create a fixed prompt panel by audience, location, language, brand, category and competitor. Store date, model or search product, answer, source links and visibility context.
2. Use a combination of Search Console, analytics, rank tracking and, where appropriate, a dedicated visibility product. Track citations and source quality, not just position.
3. Connect visibility observations to qualified visits, enquiries, sales, assisted conversions and customer research. Record sampling and attribution limits.
4. Review trends with a baseline and confidence level. When a change matters, test a defined intervention rather than attributing every fluctuation to GEO.

> **RISK & EVIDENCE NOTE**
>
> AI answers are personalised, dynamic and sampled unevenly. Do not present a vendor’s share-of-voice metric as an industry-wide fact or imply causation from a short observation.

TACTIC 21

Make a deliberate choice about Common Crawl and CCBot

Common Crawl publishes web-crawl data and identifies its crawler as CCBot. Some teams allow it for potential research or model-data discoverability; others restrict it for privacy, copyright, infrastructure or commercial reasons. The payoff of allowing it is uncertain.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Identify what the organisation wants to make public, what it must protect and which legal, contractual, privacy and security constraints apply.
2. Review robots.txt, firewall, CDN and hosting rules with the owner of the site. Test that sensitive areas are authenticated or excluded; robots.txt is not an access-control mechanism.
3. Read current Common Crawl documentation and monitor crawl traffic. Do not assume that allowing or blocking one crawler controls every AI system.
4. Record the decision, date and rationale, then revisit it when policy, infrastructure, regulation or business priorities change.

> **RISK & EVIDENCE NOTE**
> There is no reliable evidence that allowing CCBot guarantees inclusion in future AI models. Treat claims of guaranteed model inclusion with caution.

TACTIC 22

Watch infrastructure shifts

Search partners, crawler behaviour, answer formats, privacy controls and platform policies change. Monitoring these shifts helps explain why a previously visible source or query behaves differently.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Keep a change log for major search and assistant releases, crawler policy changes, analytics migrations and material site changes.
2. Re-run the same prompt panel after a meaningful change and preserve the old result for comparison. Separate product-specific changes from seasonal demand.
3. Check server logs, Search Console, analytics and platform documentation for corroborating signals. Do not infer a crawler or ranking change from one answer.
4. Update technical controls, content and measurement definitions only after confirming the change and its business relevance.

> **RISK & EVIDENCE NOTE**
> Treat rumours, screenshots and vendor announcements as leads to verify. Avoid emergency changes to robots.txt, redirects or canonical tags without an owner and rollback plan.

TACTIC 23

For buyers: vet a GEO provider

A credible provider should be able to explain technical SEO, content quality, measurement limits and risk—not just promise inclusion in an AI answer. Ask for evidence that can be independently checked.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Review the provider’s own site, technical fundamentals, authorship, disclosures and relevant search presence. A polished sales page is not a case study.
2. Ask for dated examples showing the original prompt set, source citations, work performed, business outcome and what the provider cannot attribute.
3. Request a written method for reviews, links, outreach, AI-assisted content, data privacy and traffic quality. Reject any plan involving fake engagement or guaranteed indexing.
4. Use a short, measurable pilot with access, ownership and exit terms defined. Preserve the ability to inspect and remove content, links and tracking.

> **RISK & EVIDENCE NOTE**
>
> Be wary of guaranteed AI citations, “force indexing”, secret networks, mass low-quality publishing, undisclosed paid reviews or traffic packages. Get independent advice for large or regulated engagements.

KEEP CHECKING THE SOURCE

Official references

These links are starting points, not a complete rulebook. Search and platform documentation changes; check the current guidance before acting.

1. **Google Search Central: AI features and your website**
   https://developers.google.com/search/docs/appearance/ai-features
2. **Google Search Central: Search Essentials**
   https://developers.google.com/search/docs/essentials
3. **Google Search Central: spam policies**
   https://developers.google.com/search/docs/essentials/spam-policies
4. **Google Search Console: URL Inspection tool**
   https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/9012289
5. **Google Business Profile: prohibited and restricted content**
   https://support.google.com/contributionpolicy/answer/7400114
6. **Bing Webmaster Tools: URL submission**
   https://www.bing.com/webmasters/help/url-submission-api-62f2860b
7. **Common Crawl: CCBot**
   https://commoncrawl.org/ccbot

Final word

Understand the questions people ask, make the best evidence easy to find, distribute it honestly and measure what matters. Being useful is the strategy that survives platform changes.

https://www.canvasmarketingsolutions.com/geo-playbook