

The AI Search and Answers Playbook

Is AI Sending Your
Customers to a **Competitor**?



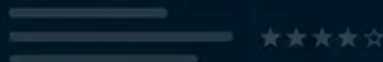
THE YELLOW PAGES ERA

Find it in
the book.



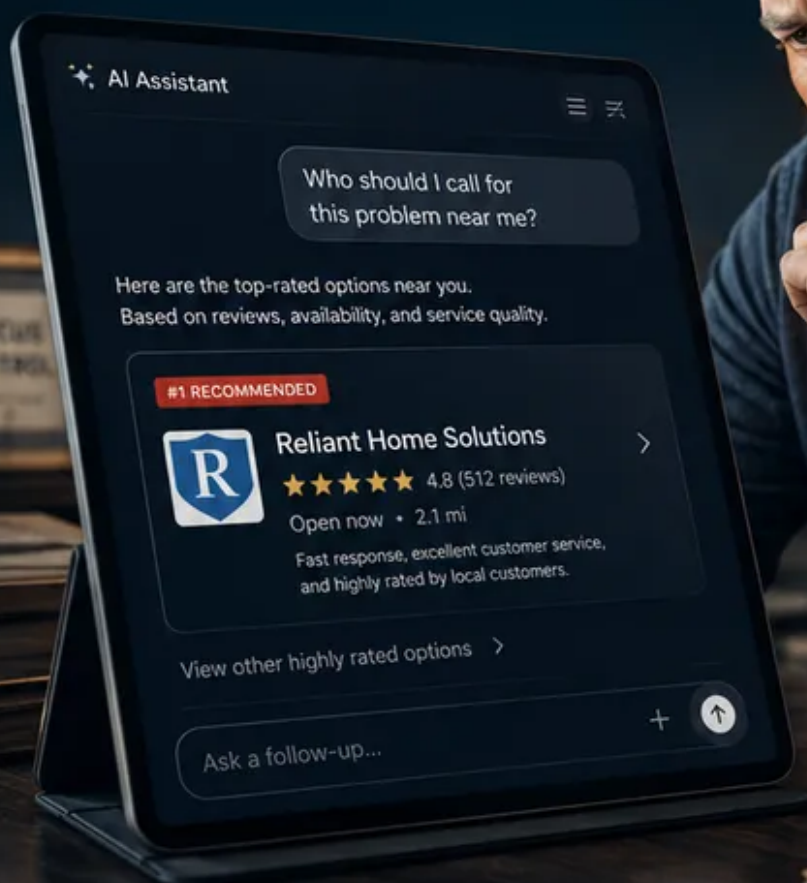
THE SEARCH ERA

best service near me



THE AI ANSWERS ERA

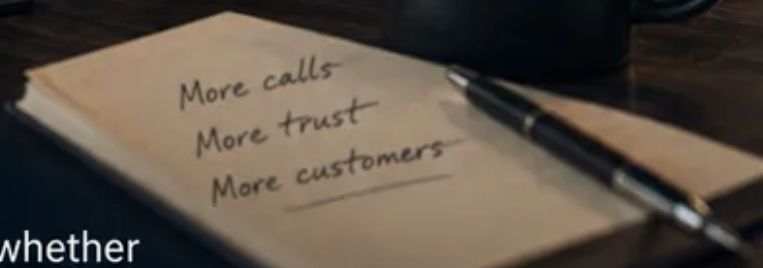
Who should I call for
this problem near me?



7 practical checks to see whether
AI can find, trust, and name your
business before someone else
becomes the answer.



Skip ahead: scan for
your free AI Visibility
Snapshot
aitruescore.com · about
a minute · no card



Read this before your competitor becomes the answer

Customers used to grab the Yellow Pages. Then they Googled. **Now they ask AI** — and it hands them a name or two, not a list. Most websites were built for humans and search engines. That still matters. But AI visibility depends on something deeper: whether AI can **find** your business, **understand** what you do, **trust** your evidence, and actually **name** you when a buyer asks a real question.

A good-looking website can still be invisible to AI. AI isn't admiring your hero image — it's reading your evidence. Strong services, real reviews, years of experience: none of it counts if those signals are vague, scattered, or hard for a machine to use.

FAST TAKEAWAY

If you do nothing else after reading this guide, run your free **AI Visibility Snapshot** at aitruescore.com. In about a minute — no card, no account — it reads your site the way AI does and gives you a real taste of who AI names in your market. The **\$79 AI True Score Report** then goes all the way: every answer, word for word, across ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, Claude, and Grok.

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Prefer to do none of the homework? The free AI Visibility Snapshot runs the checks on your actual site *for you* — aitruescore.com.

THE SHIFT

The way customers find you just changed. For the third time in fifty years.

First it was the Yellow Pages and paper maps. Then the internet — Google, Facebook, ten blue links. The businesses that jumped on SEO early are **still winning off that head start**. Now the map is changing again: buyers are asking AI who to call, who to trust, and who's worth hiring — and AI answers with a name or two, not a list. **You're at the beginning of this one.** That's the whole point of this playbook.

1970s–90s

Yellow Pages

Biggest ad on the page got the call. Subtle times.

2000s–2020s

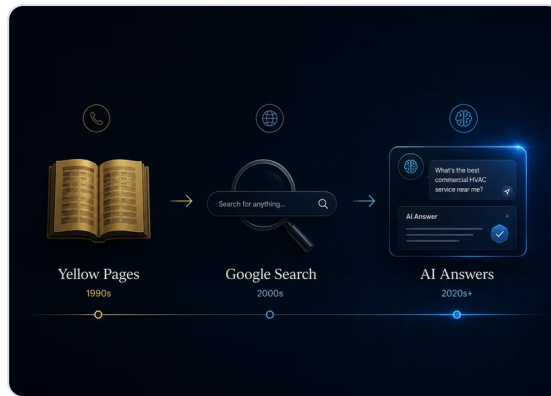
Google

Ten blue links. Page one or bust.

NOW

AI answers

One answer. No page two. No participation trophies.



45%

of consumers have now asked AI for local business recommendations

BrightLocal, Local Consumer Review Survey 2026 (1,002 US consumers)

6% → 45%

in a single year. That's not a trend line — that's a cliff.

THE REAL BUSINESS QUESTION

When someone asks AI **"who should I call for this near me?"** — does it name you, name a competitor, or skip you entirely? That's the question this playbook helps you answer. Everything in here works toward it.

*While you read that paragraph, somebody in your market asked AI who to call. **It answered.***

THE 7 CHECKS

Run these before a competitor becomes the default answer

Each one takes minutes, not weekends. Tick any warning sign that sounds like you, then make the call: **pass or fail**. Be honest — nobody's grading you. *AI already is, though.*

1 Can AI tell exactly what you do?

PASS ☐ • FAIL ☐

If your homepage or service pages are vague, overloaded, or built around slogans, AI may not clearly understand your business. A human can sometimes interpret clever marketing copy. AI needs clear evidence.

If your homepage says 'Excellence in Motion Since 1998' and never mentions plumbing... as far as AI knows, you're a dance studio.

WARNING SIGNS — TICK ANY THAT SOUND FAMILIAR

- ☐ Your homepage talks in broad brand language instead of clearly stating services.
- ☐ Your top service pages are thin, generic, or missing.
- ☐ Your site uses slogans instead of direct explanations.
- ☐ A stranger would struggle to explain your business in one sentence after reading your site.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

A strong page quickly answers: what you do, who you do it for, where you do it, and why someone should trust you.

Fix first: Add a clear one-paragraph answer near the top of your homepage and top service pages.

2 Can AI tell where you work?

PASS ☐ • FAIL ☐

Local intent is one of the biggest openings for owner-led businesses. But AI cannot recommend you locally if your site and profiles do not make your geography obvious.

"Proudly serving the greater area." Which area? Greater than what? AI would like a county, at minimum.

WARNING SIGNS — TICK ANY THAT SOUND FAMILIAR

- ☐ Your city, region, or service area is barely mentioned.
- ☐ Your site says "serving the area" without naming the area.
- ☐ Your website, Google Business Profile, and contact page use different location signals.
- ☐ Location-specific examples, proof, or service pages are weak or missing.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Your service area is obvious on the homepage, your service pages name where each service is offered, and AI can tell whether you serve nearby areas.

Fix first: Add clear service-area language to your homepage, footer, service pages, contact page, and relevant structured data. Do not make AI guess where you work.

3 Do your business facts match everywhere?

PASS ☐ • FAIL ☐

AI does not only read your website. It may compare your business across maps, profiles, directories, reviews, social pages, and structured data. If your facts conflict, AI has more reason to hesitate.

Three different phone numbers across the internet doesn't make you mysterious. It makes you skippable.

WARNING SIGNS — TICK ANY THAT SOUND FAMILIAR

- ☐ Business name, phone, URL, address, category, hours, or services differ across listings.
- ☐ Your Google Business Profile, Apple Business Connect, and Bing Places disagree.
- ☐ Your structured data (schema) does not match what is on the page.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

One source of truth for your core facts — name, phone, URL, address or service area, category, hours, main services — aligned everywhere.

Fix first: Choose one source of truth for your business facts. Then align your website, profiles, directory listings, and structured data to that truth.

4 Do your pages answer real buyer questions?

PASS ☐ • FAIL ☐

AI answer systems favor content that can be extracted, summarized, and trusted. If your pages are only sales copy, you make AI work harder.

Sales copy asks AI to trust the vibes. AI does not have vibes. It has evidence requirements.

WARNING SIGNS — TICK ANY THAT SOUND FAMILIAR

- ☐ Pages answer no specific buyer questions — only pitch.
- ☐ No pricing context, no "do you serve my area," no "how fast can you help."
- ☐ No clear statement of what makes you different, or your qualifications.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Each important page includes direct question-and-answer blocks, clear headings, concise paragraphs, and proof close to the claim.

Fix first: Add direct answer sections to your homepage and top service pages. Use the customer question as the heading, answer it plainly, then support it with proof.

5 Do you show proof AI can trust?

PASS ☐ · FAIL ☐

AI is more likely to use businesses that show evidence, not just claims. A claim says what you want people to believe. Proof gives AI and customers a reason to trust it.

"#1 in the region" — according to whom? You? AI checked. It wants receipts.

WARNING SIGNS — TICK ANY THAT SOUND FAMILIAR

- ☐ Strong claims with no proof nearby.
- ☐ Thin About page; no visible team credibility.
- ☐ No review proof on service pages; no real examples of work or outcomes.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Reviews, testimonials, before-and-after photos, awards, certifications, case studies, years in business, and local project examples — placed near the claims they support.

Fix first: Add proof blocks near the claims they support. Do not bury reviews, credentials, and project examples where AI and customers have to hunt for them.

6 Can AI access your content?

PASS ☐ · FAIL ☐

Even strong content can fail if crawlers, search engines, or AI systems cannot access or interpret it well. This is where the foundation starts to matter.

A beautiful site AI can't read is a billboard in a basement.

WARNING SIGNS — TICK ANY THAT SOUND FAMILIAR

- ☐ Broken internal links, thin or missing text, important content trapped in images with no alt text.
- ☐ Heavy JavaScript that hides the message; a robots.txt file that turns bots away; weak crawl structure.
- ☐ Technical errors; missing or weak structured data.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Important content is visible as text, important pages are easy to reach, service pages are clearly linked, and machines get clean facts instead of guessing.

Fix first: Make important content easy to reach, easy to read, and easy to interpret. A clean-looking site that hides meaning from machines can still lose in AI answers.

7 Are competitors easier for AI to recommend?

PASS ☐ · FAIL ☐

This is the question most business owners never ask. You may not be losing because you are invisible everywhere. You may be losing because a competitor is easier for AI to understand, trust, summarize, and recommend.

You're not losing to the robots. You're losing to the company down the road whose website answers questions.

WARNING SIGNS — TICK ANY THAT SOUND FAMILIAR

- ☐ A competitor has clearer service pages and better review momentum.
- ☐ A competitor shows stronger proof and better local specificity.
- ☐ A competitor has more complete profiles and better answer-style content.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

You can ask AI "who is best for this service near me?" and know whether you were named, skipped, or replaced — and why.

Fix first: Stop treating AI visibility as a mystery. Start treating it as a measurable business problem: who did AI name, who appeared instead, and what signal gap may explain it?

*Every check that fails is a question **somebody else is answering** right now.*

Named, skipped, or replaced

You: Who's the best choice for this service near me?

AI: Based on local reviews and response times, I'd go with **Summit Ridge Co.** — well established in your area and highly rated for this kind of work. **✗ NOT YOU**

...and Summit Ridge didn't even have the best reviews. They were just the easiest to recommend. Remember that name.

Every time a buyer asks, your business is either **named, skipped, or replaced**. The 7 checks exist to move you into the first column.

CLASSIC SEO ASKS

Can your site compete in search results? Do you rank? Do you have backlinks? Is your page fast? **It still matters** — but ranking is no longer the whole picture.

AI ANSWER VISIBILITY ASKS

Can AI understand your business? Can it trust your evidence? **Does it actually name you** — and who gets named instead?

Classic SEO gets you **on the list**. AI answer visibility decides whether you **are the answer**. Different game, different scoreboard.

MEET AIFSO

The system behind the checks

AIFSO — is our own method for evaluating whether AI can find, understand, trust, and name your business. The 7 checks you just ran are the plain-English version of its three layers:

- ✓ **Foundation — can AI read you?** Can AI systems access, read, and understand your site, or is your meaning locked away from machines?
- ✓ **Authority — can AI trust you?** Do you carry the trust signals, consistency, and credibility AI looks for before it puts a name in an answer?
- ✓ **The Naming Test — does AI name you?** When real buyer questions get asked, does AI name your business, miss it, or recommend someone else?

WHERE THE SCORE COMES FROM

AIFSO is the product of **two-plus years of testing** how AI engines pick who to recommend. The paid report checks **59 distinct signals** across those three layers, then runs **The Naming Test** — 10 real buyer questions asked across ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, Claude, and Grok, with every answer recorded word for word. The exact weights are our secret sauce; everything the report tells you about *your* business is shown with its evidence. And one thing we'll never do: **guarantee AI rankings**. Anyone who promises that is guessing. We measure instead. Longer version: aitruescore.com/how-it-works

YOUR SCORECARD

Score yourself. Honestly.

Carry your pass/fail calls from the 7 checks down here. One point per "yes."

QUESTION	YES	NO
My homepage clearly says what we do.	☐	☐
My site clearly explains where we serve.	☐	☐
Our business facts match across key profiles.	☐	☐
Our pages answer buyer questions directly.	☐	☐
We show trust proof near important claims.	☐	☐
Our content is easy for AI to access and interpret.	☐	☐
We know whether competitors are being named instead.	☐	☐

0–2 yeses • Wide open — in both directions.

Right now AI has very little to work with, which means whoever hands it evidence first wins your market's answers. That could be you. It's probably about to be somebody. Every gap on this card is an answer going to someone else while it stays unfixed.

3–5 yeses • Real groundwork. Real gaps.

You've built more than most — but gaps this size are exactly where competitors slip past. The good news: you now know which checks are the weak ones. Half-built houses don't win "best house." Finish the checks that matter.

6–7 yeses • Strong. But strong isn't proof.

You'd probably survive an audit. The question is whether you survive *the question* — when a real buyer asks, does AI actually say your name? There's exactly one way to know. It takes about a minute and costs nothing.

A business can pass all seven and still not get named. That's why proof beats guessing — however you scored, the free AI Visibility Snapshot turns this gut-check into a real reading in about a minute:

aitruescore.com

TRY IT YOURSELF

10 questions to ask AI about your business

Open ChatGPT, Gemini, or Perplexity and try a few of these about your own business. Answers shift with location, phrasing, and timing — treat it as a flashlight, not a verdict. For each answer, write down: were you named? Was a competitor named instead? Was the answer even accurate?

1. Who is the best provider for this service near me?
2. Who should I call for this urgent problem in my area?
3. Top-rated businesses for this service near me.
4. Who offers this service in my area?
5. What company is trusted for this service in my area?
6. Who has the best reviews for this service near me?
7. What should I know before hiring a provider like this?
8. Who handles emergency help for this problem?
9. What is the typical cost of this service, and who offers it nearby?
10. If I needed help with this today, who would you recommend?

Your thumbs will survive all 30 prompts — but if that's not your idea of a fun Tuesday, the **\$79 AI True Score Report** asks 10 real buyer questions about your business across ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, Claude, and Grok, and shows you every

answer word for word.

THE HONEST COMPARISON

What's free, what's \$79, and what each one actually does

No trick tiers, no subscription. Three steps, and two of them cost nothing.

FREE • YOU'RE READING IT

This playbook

Teaches you the signals. You do the checking.

- ✓ The 7 checks, run by hand
- ✓ Your gut-feel scorecard (0–7)
- ✓ 10 questions to test AI yourself

FREE • ABOUT A MINUTE

AI Visibility Snapshot

Reads your actual site the way AI does.

- ✓ Your AI Readiness Score (1–5)
- ✓ Your visible signals, scored for real
- ✓ The #1 name AI favors in your market

\$79 • ONE REPORT, NO SUBSCRIPTION

AI True Score Report — the proof layer

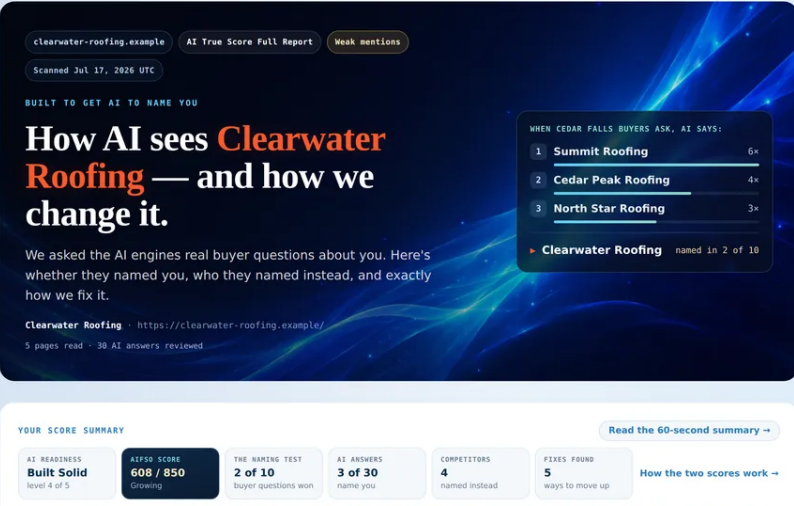
Tests whether AI actually names you.

- ✓ AI True Score, 300–850
- ✓ 59 signals + 10 questions × 5 engines
- ✓ Every AI answer, word for word
- ✓ All competitors named, unlocked
- ✓ Fix-first plan + 90 days of monthly watching

YOUR NEXT MOVE

You've got the checklist. Want the actual answers?

Reading is step one. Knowing where **you** stand is step two. The free AI Visibility Snapshot reads your site the way AI does — in about a minute, no card, no account. When you want proof instead of hunches, the **\$79 AI True Score Report** goes all the way. You walk away knowing three things: **does AI name you, who's taking your spot, and the first fixes most likely to change it** — plus one number on it all: your **AI True Score, 300–850**. Think credit score, but for AI answers.



Still deciding?

Scan to open the sample report and judge the \$79 for yourself.

A page from the actual report (sample data). This is exactly what your competitors *could* be reading about your market.

Somebody's going to be the answer. Make it you.

Keep the playbook. Run the checks this week. And when you're ready to swap hunches for real answers, **the first look is free** — no card, no account, about a minute.



Run your free AI Visibility Snapshot
aitruescore.com — free, results right away



Skip straight to the \$79 AI True Score Report
One flat \$79 — one report, no subscription

Most owners have never checked. That's not a problem — **that's your head start.**

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