AEO/SEO Case Study 2023-2026

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OVERVIEW

Turning Seasonal Volatility Into Compounding Growth

In 2025, I led a full-funnel SEO and AEO initiative built around one core problem: organic performance peaked during high-interest periods, then reset during slower seasons. Rankings never compounded. Traffic never held. Growth had a ceiling.

The fix required a shift from campaign-based thinking to persistent topical authority, combined with content architecture that AI systems could actually extract and cite. The result was durable year-round growth across traditional search and every major LLM platform.

The Challenge

→ Seasonal peaks followed by steep declines in keyword rankings.

→ Fragmented content initiatives with no ecosystem cohesion.

→ Rankings that reset each slow season instead of compounding.

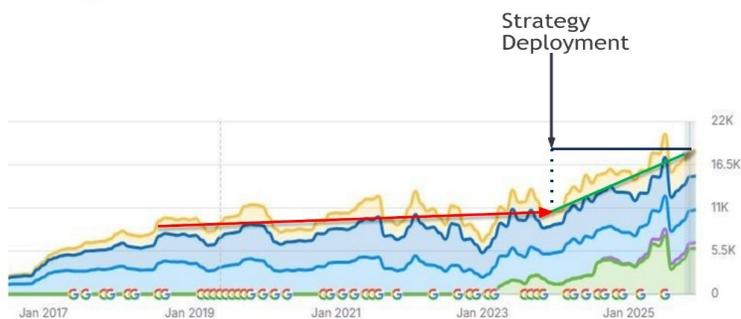→ No measurable AI or LLM visibility.

The Strategy

→ Topical Authority — Year-round topic clusters eliminating slow-season gaps.

→ AI + SERP Optimization — Entity clarity and extractability for Google AIO and LLMs.

→ Continuous Iteration — Ranking, feature, and sentiment data guiding investment.

→ Off-Site Presence — Forum engagement strengthening AI signal and entity recognition.

Keyword Stabilization: Before and After

Top 50 keyword growth ran at 3% over five years before strategy deployment. Post-deployment, that figure reached 55% in roughly two years. The chart below shows the inflection point clearly — and the sustained upward trajectory that replaced the old seasonal peaks and valleys.

SEMrush - Keyword Stabilization Pre/Post · Top 50 Growth: 3% (Dec 2018–Dec 2023) » 55% (Dec 2023–Dec 2025)

| +55%	+23%	+574%	+49%
Top 50 Keywords	Top 3 Rankings	AI Overviews	SERP Features

SEMRush Insights: 2024–2025

SEMRush data across 2024–2025 confirms the structural shift. Total Top 50 keywords grew by 2,295 terms. Top 3 positions increased 23%, Google AI Overview appearances grew 574%, and SERP feature acquisitions rose 49%. The priority keyword spread shows dense positioning in the top 10 results across core commercial terms.

SEMRush Insights (2024-2025)
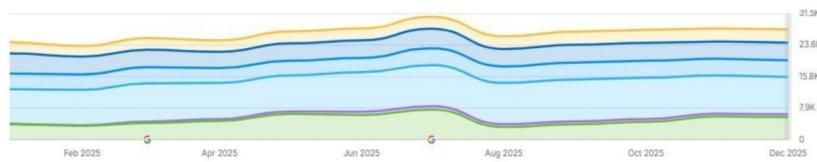
Top 50 Keywords: +2,295
- ✔ Top 3: +23%
- ✔ AIO: +574%
- ✔ Features: +49%

Priority Keywords Top 50 Spread
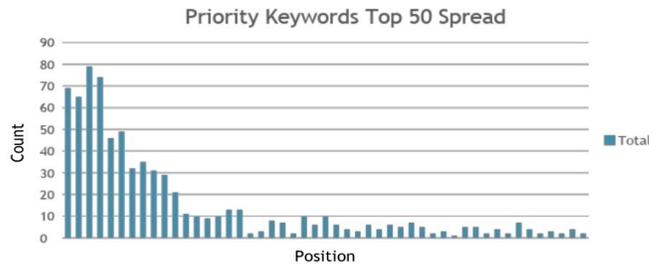
SEMRush · Organic Keyword Ranking Distribution · Feb 2025 – Dec 2025

AEO PERFORMANCE

AI Engine Optimization: LLM Visibility Results

The AEO initiative targeted AI discovery across ChatGPT, Google AI Overviews, Google AI Mode, Gemini, and Perplexity. Optimizing for entity clarity, structured extractability, and off-site forum presence produced measurable share of voice and sentiment leadership across every platform tracked.

#1	69%	4.5%	75%
ChatGPT Rank	ChatGPT Sentiment	Google AIO SOV	Google AIO Sentiment
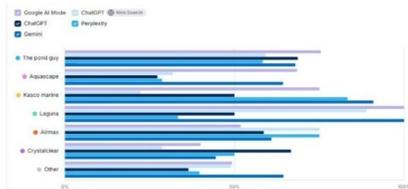
SEMrush - AEO Sentiment + Share of Voice across ChatGPT, Google AI Overview, AI Mode, Gemini, and Perplexity

How It Was Built

Topical Cluster Architecture

Built seasonally complete topic ecosystems covering every high-intent query regardless of time of year. This removed the content gaps that caused slow-season ranking drop-offs and gave the site a year-round reason to rank.

AI Extractability Optimization

Restructured priority pages for entity clarity, answer-forward formatting, and clean semantic structure. The goal was to become the most citable source in the niche across both Google's AI systems and external LLMs.

Off-Site Entity Signaling

Established consistent brand presence across relevant forums and communities. This strengthened entity recognition in training data pipelines and improved AI citation frequency on platforms like ChatGPT and Perplexity.

Signal-Driven Iteration

Used SEMRush ranking data, SERP feature acquisition, and AEO sentiment tracking to continuously reprioritize content investment. Nothing was set-and-forget.

The core insight behind all of this: seasonal volatility is a content architecture problem, not a traffic problem. Fix the architecture, and the traffic takes care of itself. AI visibility is the same story — LLMs cite what they can extract clearly. Give them clean, authoritative, entity-rich content and they will.