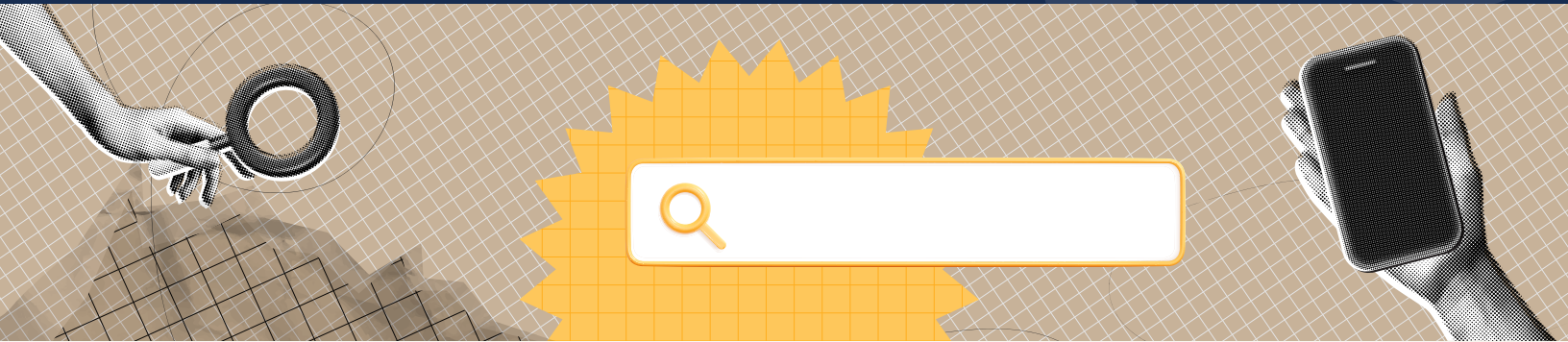


Beyond Search

The New Three-Layer Buyer Journey



The Shift in Buyer Behavior

The buyer journey no longer stops at search. Today it flows through three distinct layers:

SEARCH > ANSWER > SYNTHESIS

The implication: you don't control your narrative anymore unless you show up in all three.

B2B buyers no longer 'search and click.' They search, get answers from AI, and increasingly rely on generative tools to synthesize their decisions. If your firm is not present across all three layers (SEO, AEO, and GEO), you are invisible in parts of the decision journey. If competitors become the cited source in AI outputs, they effectively become the default recommendation. AI will compress vendor consideration sets - if you're not in the model, you're not in the deal.

The Three Layers of Modern Visibility

Each layer serves a specific function in the buyer's journey:

- 1**
SEO
(Search Engine Optimization)
Discovery Layer:
Helps buyers find you.
- 2**
AEO
(Answer Engine Optimization)
Decision Layer:
Answers key questions directly.
- 3**
GEO
(Generative Engine Optimization)
Authority Layer:
Gets you cited by AI.

In short: SEO gets you seen. AEO gets you considered. GEO gets you chosen (even when you're not clicked).

If you're ready to build a **coordinated SEO, AEO, and GEO strategy** that **positions your firm as the default recommendation** in all three layers, contact Matt Cummings at matt@jandlcomms.com

The Window Is Closing

Right now, AI models are still training on a broad set of sources. Only firms with citation-ready research and transparent POVs will appear in AI summaries. The window to build GEO content while attention is still fragmented is now.

Your competitors are likely asking themselves the same question: 'Are we showing up everywhere?' Some are already moving. The firms that act now will define the baseline recommendation for years to come.

This requires coordination across three content strategies - each with different formats, audiences, and success metrics. It's a change that most firms need help architecting and executing.

Management Consulting

The Risk

When a CFO searches for management consulting, they don't just want Google results—they want expert opinion. If your firm's frameworks and research aren't cited in AI summaries, competitors' POVs become the default recommendation.

SEO

Search Engine Optimization



Best management consulting firm New York

Search Results

- *Forbes 2026 America's Best Management Consulting [Forbes]*
- *Top Consulting Firms in New York 2026 Guide for Careers [CaseBasix]*
- *Cognitute – Top-rated consulting firms in NY [Cognitute]*

SEO = Getting your business's website to appear in search results

How it Works

- Publish high-intent pages; service + industry + geography Combinations

How to Rank Higher

- Focus on niche service + industry keywords; secure case studies from clients.

What to Measure

- Rankings
- Organic Traffic
- Conversions

Types of Pages Needed

- Core Service Pages
- Case Study Pages*

* Case study pages support SEO, AEO, and GEO

AEO

Answer Engine Optimization



Is it worth hiring a consulting firm for cost reduction or should we do it internally?

AI Overview

Hiring a consulting firm for cost reduction is worth it if you need specialized expertise, rapid results, or an unbiased perspective on complex inefficiencies, often yielding high ROI through deep market knowledge. Internal teams are better for ongoing, low-cost maintenance, but may lack specialized skills, objectivity, or dedicated capacity, which can hinder significant savings.

AEO = Building detailed FAQ clusters to proactively address buyer objections.

How it Works

- Provide detailed, direct answers for key questions.

How to Rank Higher

- Answer objections directly and provide data ranges.

What to Measure

- Featured snippets
- AI overview inclusion
- Zero-click impressions

Types of Pages Needed:

- FAQ Pages
- Objection Hub Pages
- Structured Answer Pages
- Comparison Pages

GEO

Generative Engine Optimization

ChatGPT 5.4

Best consulting firms for companies under \$500M revenue

Response

For companies under \$500M in revenue, the best consulting firms are typically mid-market specialists and boutique firms that offer more flexibility, industry focus, and cost-effective engagement than the largest global players; strong options include firms like Alvarez & Marsal, AlixPartners, and FTI Consulting for performance improvement and restructuring, West Monroe and Point B for digital and operational transformation, and Baker Tilly, Grant Thornton, and RSM for advisory plus accounting-driven consulting, all of which are known for serving middle-market clients; additionally, strategy boutiques such as LEK Consulting, OC&C Strategy Consultants, and Kearney often work with mid-sized companies needing high-level strategic guidance, while smaller specialized firms and niche consultancies can provide more tailored, hands-on support, which is often a key advantage for companies in this revenue range.

GEO = Becoming the definitive source of citable, reusable frameworks and points of view for AI analysis.

How it Works

- Publish 'citation-ready' primary research, proprietary frameworks, and verifiable proof points.

How to Rank Higher

- Develop industry-first research reports and proprietary methodologies that AI will cite
- Publish authoritative content such as LinkedIn posts, press releases, and trade publication media hits.

What to Measure

- AI outputs
- Branded query lift
- Content reuse signals

Types of Pages Needed

- Research Pages
- POV Pages
- Framework Pages