

Backlinks won't get you *cited.*

Around 10,000 URLs tested across eight AI engines.
What actually predicts whether a machine names
your business.

Domain authority counts for nothing.

An AEO study measured around 10,000 URLs across eight AI engines to see what predicts a citation. Backlinks correlated at **effectively zero**. On every engine tested.

Nothing you built for Google carries over.

Backlinks.

Correlation with AI citations, across all eight engines: effectively nil.

AI Overview +0.06. ChatGPT 0.00. Perplexity 0.00. Gemini -0.02. Google AI Mode -0.04. Years of link building do not move this number.

What you built for Google does not carry over.

Freshness.

A visible last-updated date lifts your citation rate on almost every engine.

AI Overview goes from 30% cited to 38%. Perplexity 73% to 78%. Gemini 66% to 71%. One date field, eight points.

Recency puts you back in the citation pool.

Write headings *as questions.*

AI engines match a heading to a query. So frame your H2s and H3s the way a customer would actually ask, then answer directly underneath. Add an **FAQ section** for the questions you get on the phone every week.

Data.

Original numbers are the strongest thing you can publish.

Data nobody else has is the reason an engine picks you over a competitor. Your client results. Your own test. Your pricing. It cannot be scraped from anywhere else.

One small original number beats a page of good advice.

The NZ gap.

Almost nobody here is doing any of this.

Monthly AI sessions are now around 56% the size of search worldwide. Most NZ small business sites still have no last-updated date, no FAQ, and no original data of their own. That gap is yours to close.

Four fixes. Most of them take an afternoon.

Sources.

- Winning AI Visibility: An AEO Masterclass for Showing Up on ChatGPT, Gemini and Perplexity. June 2026 webinar.
- Backlink correlations and the last-updated comparison were measured across approximately 10,000 URLs, 10 companies and eight AI engines.
- Monthly AI session volume against search, same source.
- Full link in the comments.

— OVER TO YOU

Which one is *missing* from your site?

Most of the sites I look at are missing three of the four.

The BUILD Scorecard runs the same check across your whole marketing system. Link in the comments.

LET ME KNOW IN COMMENTS ↓