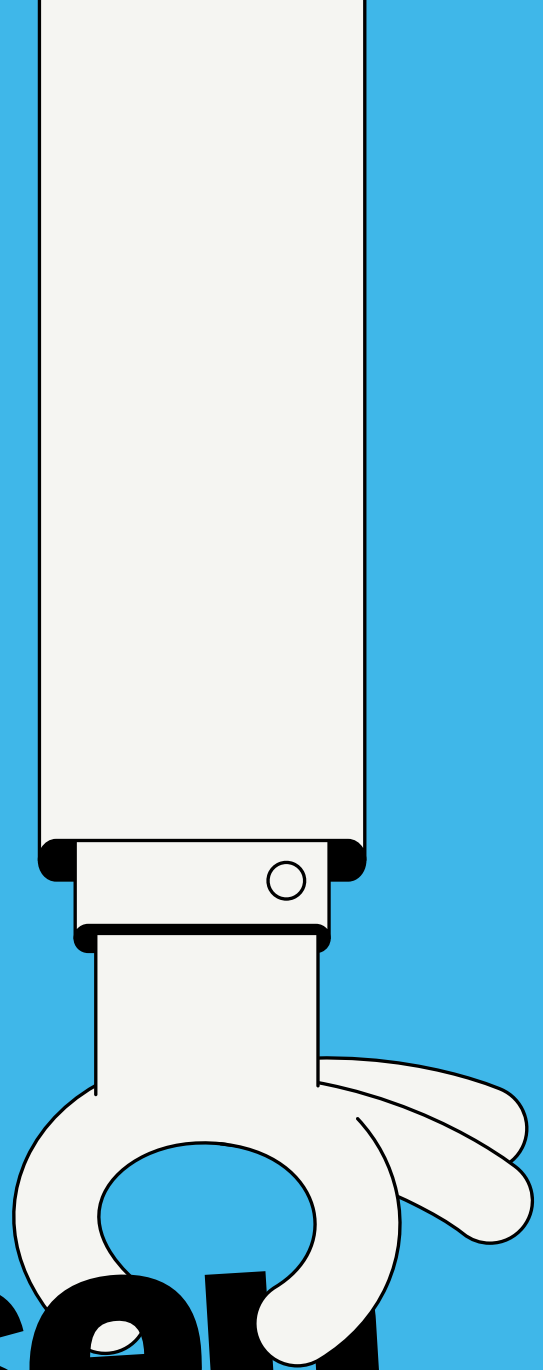




STUDIOHAWK

The eCommerce SEO guide to visibility in 2026



Chosen, Not Clicked.



About StudioHawk



StudioHawk is an independent SEO and AI Search agency, founded in Melbourne in 2015. Today, we're one of the largest specialist SEO agencies in the world, with 120+ specialists across Melbourne, Sydney, London, and Atlanta.

We work only in search. That focus is how we partner with brands like Officeworks, The Good Guys, PetStock, Kogan, New Balance, Bondi Sands - and many more amazing brands across the eCommerce landscape.

Everything in this white paper comes from that work. The 100-brand, 21-month GA4 dataset. The case studies. The patterns we've spotted across AI search, agentic commerce, and entity SEO. None of it is theoretical - it's what we see playing out... every day, in the brands we partner with.

If you're navigating the same questions, we'd love to talk. Say hello at studiohawk.com.au.



Search has changed.



Brand Authority

And most eCommerce SEO strategies haven't caught up yet. Ranking #1 is no longer the end goal - in many cases it doesn't even guarantee a click. Because the goal was never the click. It was always being chosen.

AI-driven Search

In this new era, search engines don't just return results, they generate answers. Google's AI Overviews, product grids and zero-click experiences mean shoppers are discovering products without ever visiting a website. At the same time, platforms like ChatGPT and Perplexity are shaping how people research, compare and decide what to buy.

This shift changes everything.

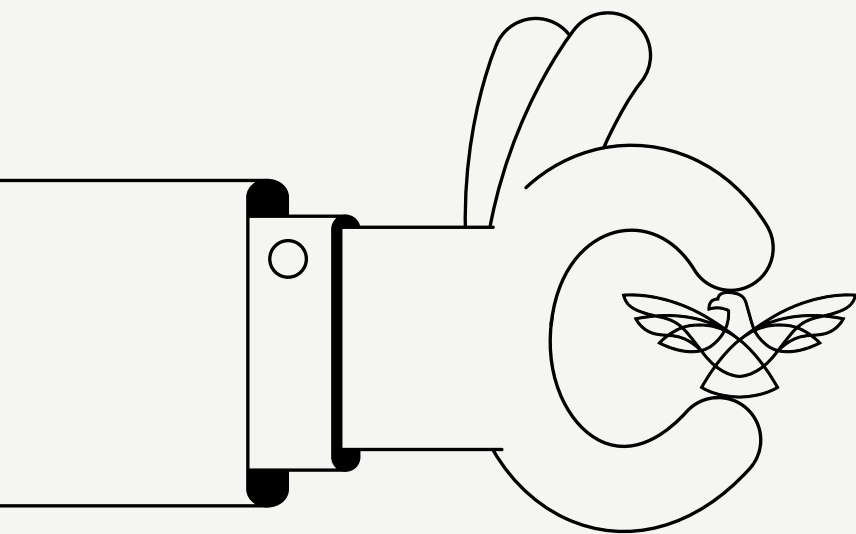
Visibility is no longer about where you rank. It's about whether your brand is chosen — selected, cited and surfaced across AI-driven search experiences.

Tactics that once worked, keyword stuffing, thin product descriptions and backlink volume, are rapidly losing their impact. In their place, search engines now reward brands that demonstrate authority, deliver exceptional user experiences and structure their content in ways consumers (and machines!) can understand.

And this is where modern eCommerce SEO is won or lost.



Technical SEO



You'll learn how to:

In this whitepaper, we break down what's actually driving performance in this new era of search, from AI search and Answer Engine Optimisation, to category page dominance, technical SEO and content strategies that convert across the full customer journey.

You'll also hear from StudioHawk specialists across the agency and from Nathan Bush, host of the Add To Cart podcast, on why the brands being chosen aren't the ones gaming the system — they're the ones worth choosing.

- Build sustainable organic growth without relying on paid channels.
- Increase visibility across Google, AI search tools and zero-click results
- Turn category and product pages into high-performing revenue drivers
- Structure your site and content to be understood and surfaced by AI

Because in today's search landscape, being found isn't enough. This is how you get chosen.

Organic Growth



Key takeaways:



Clicks are declining, but visibility is expanding

AI Overviews, product grids, and zero-click results mean users are discovering products without visiting websites. Winning brands optimise for visibility, not just traffic.



Technical SEO directly impacts revenue

Core Web Vitals, structured data, and clean architecture aren't just technical hygiene, they influence rankings, visibility, and conversions.



Ranking is no longer the goal, selection is

Being #1 doesn't guarantee attention. Search engines and AI tools now choose which brands to surface, summarise, and recommend.



Content must work across the entire funnel

Top-performing brands don't just target product keywords, they guide users from discovery through to purchase and beyond.



E-E-A-T isn't optional, it's now the baseline

Experience, expertise, authority, and trust are now fundamental ranking signals across all industries, not just YMYL.



Structured, machine-readable content wins in AI search

To appear in AI-driven results, content must be clear, well-structured, and easy for machines to interpret and summarise



Category pages are the new growth engine

They capture higher-intent, broader queries and increasingly outperform product pages in both rankings and revenue.



Brand authority is now a ranking advantage

Search engines favour recognised, trusted brands. SEO is no longer just about pages, it's about building brand presence across the web.

Contents.

01	The Evolution of Search 7	09	Optimising for AI Search & LLMs – The Next Frontier of eCommerce Visibility 47
02	Industry Perspective: We've Passed the Napster Era of SEO 12	10	Agentic Commerce: When AI Shops on Behalf of Your Customers 51
03	Trends Shaping eCommerce SEO in the New Search Era 18	11	Entity SEO – Your brand as a recognisable “thing” 56
04	Your Home Page: The SEO Launchpad 23	12	Winning with SEO – How Leading eCommerce Brands Are Winning with SEO 60
05	Technical SEO: The Foundation for Long-term growth 26	13	Implementation Roadmap – From Nesting to Soaring with SEO 65
06	Seasonal SEO: Reusable Pages That Drive Recurring Wins 33	14	SEO Predictions: Insights from StudioHawk Specialists 68
07	UX, Core Web Vitals & Mobile SEO – The Experience-Led Ranking Era 39	15	Future Outlook 72
08	Google Merchant Center: The Engine Behind Ecommerce Visibility 44		



Category Pages

01 The evolution of search

eCommerce SEO

AI Overviews



Search hasn't just evolved, it's been completely redefined.

Not long ago, SEO was about ranking pages. You optimised for keywords, built backlinks, and aimed for a spot in the top 10 blue links.

Today that model no longer reflects how search works.

Google, Bing, Perplexity, etc., are less focused on matching keywords. They now want to provide complete answers to keep users on their platforms. For online retailers, that means visibility isn't just about being on page one; it's about being the result AI chooses to show.

Why eCommerce SEO has Changed

There are several changes that are reshaping how people find products:

- AI Overviews and direct answers reduce clicks to websites.
- Zero-click searches are on the rise, especially for product queries.
- Core Web Vitals, mobile-first indexing, and E-E-A-T now impact rankings.
- Google's shopping features compete directly with SERP listings.

What Shoppers Expect

Today's shoppers want fast, trustworthy, user-friendly experiences with as little friction. They expect:

- Instant answers.
- Content written with real experience.
- Mobile-friendly layouts and visual search features.

To remain competitive, eCommerce sites must meet these demands; otherwise quickly fall behind.



SEO: then vs now

→ **The
takeaway
is simple:**

SEO is no longer about getting users to your website. It's about showing up wherever decisions are being made.

SEO - then	SEO - now
Keyword stuffing	Entity-based, intent-driven optimisation
Top 10 blue links	AI Overviews, product grids, rich results
Link volume	Brand authority and trust signals
Desktop-first	Mobile-first, omnichannel discovery
Meta tags and H1s	Schema, UX, and Core Web Vitals
Content for Google	Content for users and AI summaries



What the data shows:

100 brands, 21 months trends

To cut through the AI search hype, StudioHawk pulled 21 months of real GA4 data, July 2024 to March 2026, across 100 Australian eCommerce brands.

The headline finding:

- **91 out of 100 brands are already receiving ChatGPT referral traffic, whether they know it or not.**
- **And that traffic grew 19x year-on-year, from 8 sessions in July 2024 to roughly 38,000 per month by early 2026.**

Seven brands captured ~70% of all AI search revenue across the dataset. The brands being chosen have one thing in common: how well their SEO foundations are built.



"The AI search wins were downstream results of retail done properly."

— Nathan Bush, Host of Add To Cart

The brands showing up in AI search are the ones doing SEO properly.

Structured product data, strong content, clean technical foundations, and genuine brand authority are the same signals that drive both Google and AI visibility. SEO is the access layer — and the trends below show exactly where that access is being won or lost.

AI search accounts for roughly 4% of Google organic session volume and 3% of its revenue across our dataset.

The 19x year-on-year traffic growth is matched by a 14x lift in revenue

— and the curve hasn't flattened. No other channel has gone from zero to material revenue with zero ad spend in 21 months.

And what we can attribute today is the floor, not the ceiling. AI Overviews still surface in GA4 as plain “google / organic”, and a meaningful share of AI-influenced traffic lands in (direct) / (none) when the referrer drops. Real AI-influenced revenue is likely 2—3x what we can directly attribute today.

The sharpest signal is what happened over the Christmas shopping period.

December 2024: a barely-detectable revenue signal across the dataset.

December 2025: a 50–65x lift in a single year — in one of the only retail windows that genuinely matters.

December 2024 was also the first month ChatGPT's revenue per session (\$4.23) overtook Google organic's (\$3.32). AI-referred holiday buyers spend more per visit because the AI has already done the comparison shopping.

For context, AI search at 4% of Google organic sessions today is roughly where mobile sat against desktop in 2013. The brands that ignored mobile then spent the next five years catching up. The same pattern is forming. December 2026 will be the first holiday season where AI search is an unavoidable revenue channel during peak retail, and the brands already visible in AI recommendations will capture a disproportionate share.

The channel also converts harder than people assume. One major Australian retailer shared their verified AI search data with us: a 4% conversion rate over twelve months — higher than their Google organic conversion rate. When the channel is tracked properly and the landing page matches what the AI recommended, AI search converts harder than the channels brands are already paying for.



02

Industry perspec- tive

Mobile First

Organic Traffic

AI Search



We've passed the Napster era of SEO.



Nathan Bush - Host, Add To Cart Podcast | Co-founder, eSuite. Named in the Top 50 People in eCommerce for four consecutive years.

Let's be honest, the core of this white paper taps into something fundamental beyond technical SEO — it taps into something human. We all want to be chosen. We want to be desired. We want to find the perfect match, the one thing that truly fits our needs. No, I haven't turned SEO into a dating analogy but I am excited about how it is matching customers to brands who deliver value, not just game the system.

For too long in the world of ecommerce SEO, the goal was transactional and hollow: just get the click. Any click would do, regardless of the fit. The good news is, that era is finally over. What StudioHawk has proven with this new data is that AI is finally rewarding the brands that deserve the click. These are the ones who have built something worth being chosen.

The tastemakers rule the schoolyard



Bear with me for a second, because I want to take you back to one of the most exciting times to be alive as a poor, music-obsessed teenager.

Before streaming, before downloads, the coolest kids were the ones with the best taste in music. They found music first. They knew which band was worth caring about before anyone else did. They had the CDs and Walkmans that didn't skip on speed bumps. They shaped what all your friends listened to. They had credibility because they had genuine knowledge and genuine love for the best new music.

Then, LimeWire, Napster and Kazaa arrived. And overnight, the cool kids weren't the ones with taste. They were the ones who knew how downloading worked. Those who had unlimited dial-up access without their parents booting them off could line up the right torrents before school, manage memory so nothing got cut off, and avoid dodgy bootlegs or getting Rickrolled. They could burn a CD and hand it around by lunch. If you could master that technical maze, you would become the most valuable person in the yard. Not because you had better taste. Because you had better technical access and could beat the system.

Most of us spent those years downloading the wrong files, getting corrupted audio, burning CDs that skipped. We were chasing the system instead of the music.

Then iTunes and Spotify came along. And the tastemakers came back. Because the infrastructure finally got smart enough to surface the good stuff. The artists with real credibility, genuine audiences, and consistent output started getting found by the people who were actually looking for them. The system caught up with the audience. No technical gatekeepers needed.

I think about that a lot when I look at what's happening in ecommerce search right now.

We've all burned bad SEO

Let's be honest about what a lot of ecommerce SEO looked like for a long time. Cheap backlinks from sites nobody has visited. Extended footers stuffed with every keyword we were hoping to rank for. Filler blog content that existed for crawlers, not customers. Thin product descriptions copied and pasted from manufacturer specs that told nobody anything useful about whether this was actually the right product for them.

None of it was for the customer. We knew that at the time. We told ourselves that Google loved it (and often they did). But we were optimising for the machine instead of the person. But now, all those old school tricks and black hat practices are crumbling. The game is turning back towards the tastemakers.



Three brands who were always playing the long game



I don't think this white paper differentiates between brands that have successfully adapted to AI and brands that haven't. I don't think anyone could say they have it all figured out. It's impossible to know when it is changing so quickly.

But it does show the difference between brands that have always been customer-first and those that have chased shortcuts.

I've had the privilege of talking to many operators on Add To Cart, and the constant theme when it comes to SEO in the AI era is that the best operators didn't set out to "win at AI search". They just ran their businesses well, and the machines started finding them for it.



Heather Earle at Nutrition Warehouse - is the clearest example. She noticed that the majority of searches driving conversions on her site ended with "near me."

Not because customers were searching for a store, but because they were in the middle of a journey. They wanted a product but they wanted it within the context of their life. So Heather reworked her collection pages so customers could filter by store for Click and Collect far earlier in the journey, rather than hitting that wall at checkout. She fed those insights back into how she structured information for search. The result was over 300% growth in ChatGPT and AI search traffic. Not from gaming anything. From actually solving the problem her customers had.



Abel Butler at Health Post - runs a similar playbook, though he'd probably describe it differently.

Abel treats supplier product data as a compliance gateway. If a supplier can't provide transparent, detailed information about where a product comes from, how it's made, and what it contains, it doesn't make the range. That's always come as an ethical standard, not an SEO strategy. But what he built as a byproduct was a catalogue rich with exactly the kind of contextual, values-based information that LLMs need to make confident recommendations. Sourcing, ingredients, production standards — it's always been part of his product data. Now, these are the things customers type into ChatGPT because they'd never bother typing them into a traditional search bar. Surprise, surprise, we're now serving up what customers are interested in.



Stacey Head at she wear, - whose approach to product descriptions is something I come back to often.

She didn't describe her products by size and colour, and leave it there. She included the situational reality of wearing them: "airport friendly," "orthotic friendly," "non-slip." Those are the exact phrases a customer types into an LLM when they're trying to solve a specific problem. "I need shoes I can wear through airport security that won't aggravate my orthotics." Traditional search engines rarely surfaced those nuanced, situational queries. LLMs handle them constantly. Stacey was writing for people, not for crawlers, and it turns out the new generation of crawlers is a lot more like people.



What connects all three of these stories is the same thing. None of them was doing anything exotic. They were listening to their customers and structuring their business around what they found. The AI search wins were downstream results of retail done properly.



“Good AI SEO is good SEO.”



Justin Babet at Chief Nutrition

Justin Babet at Chief Nutrition said it as plainly as anyone when we spoke about this: “Good AI SEO is good SEO.” He’s not treating AI search as a separate discipline requiring a full strategic rebuild. He’s staying close to what has always worked: high-quality organic discovery, genuine authority, strong conversion fundamentals. The landscape is fragmented, the platforms are multiplying, but the foundation doesn’t change.

Know your SEO lane

None of this means the technical work doesn’t matter. It absolutely does, and this white paper makes that case far better than I could. Site architecture, structured data, clean product feeds, Core Web Vitals, this is the infrastructure that makes it possible for the right customer to find you. Without it, the best content in the world sits in the dark.

But here’s the distinction I’d ask you to hold onto: that work should be invisible to your customer. They shouldn’t feel the technical SEO. They should feel a fast, helpful, frictionless experience that gets them to the right product efficiently. The nerd work happens behind the curtain. The brand work happens out front.

What this white paper gets right is exactly that distinction. It’s not a manual for tricking the system. It’s a manual for working with the system. Making your content machine-readable, your data complete, and your authority genuine.

That is very different from the extended footers and backlink farms of the Napster era. The brands that win understand the difference. They know what they’re good at: understanding their customer deeply, running a strong operation, and building credibility in their category over time. And they let the right specialists handle what sits behind the curtain.

The SEO game caught up with quality players

StudioHawk’s data is unambiguous: seven brands captured approximately 70% of all AI search revenue across the 100 brands in the study. Every single one of those top performers was already a strong Google organic performer. AI amplifies existing authority rather than creating new winners.

Which means the question for your business isn’t “how do I optimise for AI search?” The question remains: am I the best answer for my customer’s problem? Am I building a brand they can trust, with product information that actually helps them decide, in an experience that doesn’t waste their time?

Because if you are, the machines are getting better every day at figuring that out and surfacing you to the people who are looking.

The tastemakers are back. Build something worth finding.



eCommerce SEO

03

Trends shaping eCommerce SEO

in the new search era

AI Overviews

E-E-A-T Principles

Search engines are changing fast, and so are the rules for visibility.

From AI-driven results to changing user behaviour, these are the trends eCommerce stores need to understand to stay competitive.

01

Brand authority is now a ranking advantage

Google is placing less weight on isolated signals like keywords and backlinks. Instead, they're focusing more on "credibility". This is a signal based on factors like E-E-A-T, content quality, and user trust.

Why this matters:

- Strong brands are more likely to appear in AI Overviews and rich results.
- E-E-A-T is mandatory for all, not just for Your Money Your Life (YMYL) content like health or finance.
- Users and search engines favour trusted, established brands over thin or generic content.

02

Category pages are outperforming product pages

Search results increasingly resemble shopping experiences — with product grids, visuals, and comparison features dominating SERPs.

As a result, category pages are outperforming product pages for non-branded and high-intent queries. Our review of the top 30 global eCommerce sites found that category pages drive 413% more traffic and rank for 19% more keywords than product pages.

Why this matters:

- Category pages match broader, higher traffic and intent searches like "Best kids sneakers".
- They deliver a browser experience by matching the user's browsing intent, aligning with the E-E-A-T principles.
- These pages consolidate internal linking, content, and relevance signals.

**03**

AI and zero-click search are reshaping product discovery

AI Overviews and tools like ChatGPT and Perplexity are increasingly answering queries directly, often removing the need to click through to a website. This results in zero-click searches for both product and informational-based search queries.

As a result, a brand's content needs to align with Answer Engine Optimisation (AEO). This ensures that the content is machine-readable using structured data and is helpful so it can appear in these types of results.

Why this matters:

- Visibility is now as important as clicks.
- Content must be structured for summarisation and extraction on AI and zero-click results.
- If an online brand's content isn't AI or zero-click ready, they risk being left out.

04

UX and core web vitals can make or break your rankings

User experience is no longer just a CRO lever, it's a ranking factor. Search engines now evaluate how users interact with your site, rewarding fast, stable, and intuitive experiences. Pages that score well on Core Web Vitals LCP, INP, and CLS tend to rank higher.

What to focus on:

- Fast mobile load times.
- Simple and user-friendly navigation.
- Clean site architecture, especially on Shopify, BigCommerce, and Magento.
- Clear visual hierarchy for easy browsing.



“Rewriting what already exists isn't enough. Content has to bring something new to the table.”

Lawrence Hitches – Chief of Staff, StudioHawk

**05**

Product pages require depth to stay competitive

As Google starts to prioritise category pages and AI-generated summaries, individual product pages are seeing less visibility by default. However, well-optimised product pages can still perform, if they offer depth, clarity, and strong supporting signals.

What to focus on:

- Unique, value-driven product descriptions.
- Customer reviews and user generated content (UGC).
- Video and rich schema markup.
- FAQs to support intent and visibility.

06

Google merchant center is no longer optional

Google is increasingly surfacing product data directly in search through Shopping features and product grids.

If your products aren't integrated into Merchant Center, you're missing a major layer of visibility.

It's also key to appearing in the "Popular Products" grid, which is dominating mobile search results in Australia.

07

Search is now conversational, visual, and voice-driven

Queries are going to be more natural due to the popularity of voice-driven searches. These searches will appear more naturally.

- "What's a good gift for mum under \$50?"
- "Show me eco-friendly lunch boxes".
- "Where can I buy these boots near me?" (via image search).

What to focus on:

- Long-tail, question-style queries.
- Voice search (with schema and FAQs).
- Visual search using quality, well-structured images.

eCommerce SEO is no longer about optimising individual pages. It's about building a brand and a site that can be understood, trusted, and surfaced across an entire search ecosystem.





On-page SEO:

Structuring pages for visibility, relevance and conversion

On-page SEO is no longer just about optimising for keywords. Search engines now evaluate pages based on clarity, structure, usability and how easily content can be understood and surfaced in AI-driven results.

This shift reflects a focus on user experience and clarity. Sites that are easier to navigate, faster to load, and clearer in structure are more likely to rank and convert.

Key focus areas include making your site machine-readable (via schema), easy to navigate, and contextually clear through internal linking and entity signals.

Product and category pages, however, have two very different approaches to on-page optimisation. Let's break them down.



"AI is finally rewarding the brands that deserve the click."

— Nathan Bush, Host of Add To Cart



04

Your home page:

The SEO Launchpad

Page Optimisation

Internal Linking



While category and product pages drive performance,

the homepage plays a critical role in strengthening your overall SEO ecosystem.

Internal linking to priority categories

Think of your homepage as the distribution centre for link equity. Use it to funnel authority to your most valuable and strategic category pages. This means:

- Featuring clear, crawlable links to your primary categories and seasonal collections.
- Using keyword-optimised anchor text (not just “Shop now”).
- Regularly updating links to reflect priority pages and current promotions.

Reinforce brand authority through copy

Your homepage should clearly communicate what you sell, who you serve, and why you're trustworthy. Use concise, keyword-aligned copy that reinforces your positioning and builds credibility.

- Highlight USPs (e.g. Australian-made, free returns, eco-conscious)
- Include keyword signals around your core product types and brand niche
- Avoid vague headlines like ‘Welcome to our store’ — be direct and benefit-led.

Foundational schema markup

Help Google better understand your business from day one with key schema types on the homepage:

- **Organization:** Business name, logo, social profiles
- **WebSite:** Supports Sitelinks Search Box and brand knowledge panel
- **Breadcrumb (if used sitewide):** Clarifies page hierarchy

This structured data contributes to enhanced search features and improved brand visibility in the SERP.

Performance-optimised hero section

Your homepage hero banner should be visual, but never at the cost of performance. Make sure:

- Images are compressed and in modern formats (like WebP)
- Avoid background videos unless very light and lazy-loaded
- Limit use of text within images (especially mobile)
- Include a clear, benefit-driven headline and CTA

Product Page Optimisation

Product pages must be clear, useful, and technically sound. Uniqueness is essential, as generic content is unlikely to be surfaced or cited in AI-driven search experiences.

Remember: Product page optimisation is still important even though category pages are ranking more on the SERPs.

Category Page Optimisation

Category pages are now a primary driver of organic growth. They help you rank for very broad, high-volume keywords, including phrases like “men’s shoes”, “pink dresses for women”, etc. They align with how users browse, compare, and evaluate products within modern search experiences.



Hawk Tip:
Don't rely on exact-match keywords alone. Expand into semantic variations to strengthen topical relevance.

Example: “winter boots” → cold weather shoes, insulated boots, waterproof footwear

Tools for On-Page SEO

Tool	Use Case	Best For
Ahrefs / Semrush	Identify keyword gaps, monitor SERP features, analyse content	Competitor analysis & keyword strategy
Google Search Console	Track impressions, CTR, and indexing status	Monitoring site performance in Google
SEO Gets	Visualise and break down GSC data for easier reporting	Simplified SEO reporting
SEOTesting.com	Test changes to titles, metadata, and content	Running controlled SEO experiments
Screaming Frog	Audit titles, H1s, metas, internal links, and schema	Technical SEO audits

Crawl Depth



05

Technical SEO:

**The foundation for long-term
growth**

On-page SEO

Site Performance



On-page SEO is important, but it means nothing if search engines can't crawl, index, and properly understand your site.

Without a solid technical foundation, all other optimisation efforts are limited or lost. Technical SEO also plays a critical role in how content is interpreted and surfaced in AI-driven search experiences.

Regardless of platform, Shopify, WooCommerce, Magento, or BigCommerce, the same technical SEO principles apply. Your site must be fast, use structured data, and have a clean architecture.

Why technical SEO matters more now

Technical SEO now directly influences both visibility and revenue.

Search engines now evaluate:

- Site performance (Core Web Vitals)
- Crawl depth and indexation quality
- Structured data accuracy
- Mobile usability and dynamic rendering
- Duplicate content and canonical signals

A single JavaScript or theme issue can significantly impact visibility, particularly on platforms like Shopify and Magento.



Core web vitals

Core Web Vitals can be measured using Google's PageSpeed Insights, evaluating page experience across three key metrics:

Core Web Vital	What It Measures	Recommended Threshold
LCP (Largest Contentful Paint)	Loading performance	Under 2.5 seconds
INP (Interaction to Next Paint)	Responsiveness to user interactions	Under 200 milliseconds
CLS (Cumulative Layout Shift)	Visual stability during page load	Under 0.1

Mobile-first & JavaScript SEO

Today's websites increasingly rely on JavaScript, but without proper implementation, this can limit crawlability and visibility. However, if not correctly set up, it can negatively impact rankings. This makes optimising both mobile performance and JavaScript rendering essential

Key areas to focus on include:

- Match mobile and desktop content
- Use clear navigation and touch-friendly buttons
- Pre-render JS content (React, Vue, etc.)
- Test with Google's Mobile-Friendly Test

Platform overview:

- **Shopify** = Fast growth with minimal development overhead
- **WooCommerce** = Maximum flexibility and control for SEO-led businesses
- **Magento** = Enterprise-level SEO control for complex environments
- **BigCommerce** = Strong technical SEO performance out of the box
- **Squarespace / Wix** = Lightweight platforms for speed and simplicity
- **Salesforce Commerce Cloud** = Enterprise platform for global scale and customisation



Schema markup: help search engines understand your pages

Schema Markup, also known as structured data, is a type of microdata you can add to the HTML code of your website. It provides a standardised format that helps search engines interpret page content more accurately.

Structured data also increases the likelihood of content being surfaced in rich results and AI-generated search experiences.

Popular Schema Types

Schema Type	Purpose	Key Benefits
Product	Marks up product details like name, image, SKU, brand, description, price, availability, and reviews	Enhances product listings with rich data in SERPs
Review & AggregateRating	Highlights customer ratings and review scores	Displays star ratings directly in search results
BreadcrumbList	Defines the page's position in site hierarchy	Adds clarity and structure to snippets
FAQPage	Marks up common questions and answers	Increases visibility with FAQ-rich results
Organization & LocalBusiness	Represents your brand or physical store	Boosts presence in branded and local search



Technical SEO Tools you should be using

The following tools are commonly used to monitor, audit, and optimise technical SEO performance:

Schema Type	Purpose	Key Benefits
Google Search Console	Check indexation, crawl coverage, page rendering, and performance	Monitors how Google crawls and indexes your site
Screaming Frog	Audit crawl depth, duplicates, redirects, and metadata	Identifies SEO issues and technical gaps
Ahrefs / Semrush	Run crawl reports, check Core Web Vitals, and find orphan pages	Combines site audits with backlink and keyword insights
PageSpeed Insights	Measure INP, CLS, and LCP performance	Evaluates page speed and Core Web Vitals
Shopify Speed Report	Assess theme load and app impact on site speed	Helps optimise Shopify performance and app usage
Schema.org Validator	Verify that structured data is correctly implemented	Ensures schema is valid and ready for rich results

Common technical SEO pitfalls

Technical SEO for eCommerce can quickly become complex, but a number of common issues appear consistently across sites:

- Uncontrolled URL parameters from filters or tracking tags
- Duplicate meta titles and descriptions across similar products
- Missing canonical tags on paginated or filtered pages
- Blocking key assets like JavaScript or CSS in robots.txt

While these issues may seem minor, they can significantly impact visibility if left unresolved. Regular technical audits are essential to identify and fix them early.



Content strategy:

Fuel SEO across the tunnel

SEO content needs to support every part of a customer journey, from awareness all the way to post-purchase. Content must also be structured for AI-driven search, clear, well-organised, and easy to summarise.

Top-performing stores don't just rank for product-based keywords, they capture demand at every stage of the journey.



"Am I the best answer for my customer's problem?"

— Nathan Bush, Host of Add To Cart



Content across the full funnel

Buying Guides

Funnel Stage	Goal	Content Types	Real Example
Awareness	Attract new visitors, build trust	Blog posts, buying guides, how-to articles	Seed & Sprout's "Lunch Box Guide" drove seasonal traffic
Consideration	Compare options, educate	Comparison pages, FAQs, collection content	Koala Living used subcategories to capture mid-funnel queries
Decision	Convert visitors into customers	Product pages, reviews, schema markup	Clarks' long-tail "Men's White Sneakers" page converted well
Post-Purchase	Retain customers, upsell, inform	Care guides, tutorials, loyalty content	B2C Furniture's blog explained sizing, keeping traffic active

Content Strategy

Crawl Depth



06

Seasonal SEO:

**Reusable pages that drive
recurring wins**

Organic Traffic

Seasonal Campaigns



Seasonal campaigns like Black Friday, EOFY, or Mother's Day present huge organic traffic opportunities, but sometimes you'll need to play the long game.

Reuse seasonal URLs

Instead of spinning up new pages every year, build and maintain URLs like:

- [/black-friday/](#)
- [/boxing-day-sale/](#)
- [/mothers-day-gifts/](#)

Why? Reusing URLs lets you:

- Preserve page authority and backlinks
- Build topical relevance over time
- Avoid duplicate content or index bloat

Build Authority Over Time

A long-lived URL can accumulate backlinks, mentions, and internal links making it more powerful every year.

- Pitch the same page for links across multiple years
- Use PR hooks like “Early Deals”, “Biggest Sales Yet” or “Final Hours” to land coverage

Internal linking from blog + nav

Support seasonal pages with internal links from:

- Blog posts (e.g. “Top Black Friday Picks for 2026” → [/black-friday/](#))
- Homepage or main nav (especially in the lead-up window)
- Footer links for evergreen visibility

Enhance with structured data

- Add schema to support search enhancements:
- Product schema for featured items
- Event schema for sale timing
- Offer schema for pricing and discounts
- FAQ schema for shipping or return deadlines

Content formats that work

When it comes to content formats, the formats that consistently perform include:

Format	Description	Why It Works
Long-form guides	In-depth articles that thoroughly cover a topic, often 1,500+ words	Capture featured snippets and demonstrate depth on a topic
Visual explainers	Graphics, charts, or videos that simplify complex concepts	Keep users engaged, especially on mobile
FAQ blocks + schema	Structured Q&A sections with schema markup for enhanced SERP visibility	Match voice queries and appear in People Also Ask boxes
Comparison content	Pages that compare features, specs, or pricing across similar products/services	Help users evaluate options ideal for mid-funnel conversions
Evergreen content	Timeless content that stays relevant over time, like care guides or tutorials	Drives consistent traffic and supports strong internal linking strategies

Tools to map and manage funnel content

Tool	Use Case	Best For
AlsoAsked / AnswerThePublic	Discover voice-friendly, question-based queries	Finding long-tail and conversational search opportunities
Google Search Console	Identify pages with impressions but low or no clicks	Spotting underperforming pages to optimise for CTR
Ahrefs Content Explorer / SurferSEO	Analyse top-ranking pages to see what content performs best	Creating content that mirrors proven formats and topics
Frase.io	Build content outlines based on SERP data and topic clusters	Planning awareness and consideration content efficiently
ContentCal / Notion	Organise and schedule content by funnel stage	Managing editorial workflows and aligning content with strategy

Link building & digital PR – authority in a brand-first world

Backlinks used to be a numbers game. Today, quality matters far more than quantity. A handful of high-quality, relevant backlinks can outperform thousands of low-quality or purchased links.

This shift is driven by brand authority and entity recognition. The most valuable backlinks now come from reputable publishers, real brand mentions, and contextually relevant coverage.

Because of this, eCommerce brands aren't just "building backlinks". They're building visibility, credibility, and talkability.



"AI amplifies existing authority rather than creating new winners."

— Nathan Bush, Host of Add To Cart

What Google looks for in backlinks

Signal	Why It Matters
Relevance	Backlinks are more valuable when they come from websites related to your industry or niche.
Authority	Links from high-authority domains (like those with high DR/DA) carry more weight especially when they're also relevant.
Diversity	A varied backlink profile including media sites, niche blogs, .edu, .org, and retail partners signals credibility and reduces risk.
Contextual Placement	Links placed naturally within content (like in-article citations) perform much better than those in footers or sidebars.
Brand Mentions	Even without a link, brand mentions help build trust and reinforce your site as a recognised entity.
Natural Link Velocity	Link growth should be consistent. Sudden spikes can look suspicious and trigger penalties, while steady growth builds trust over time.

Real-World Link Strategies for eCommerce

There are hundreds of link-building tactics, but only a handful consistently drive results.

1. Digital PR with a Product-Led Angle

Product-led digital PR turns your product into the centre of the story. Instead of generic campaigns, it focuses on what makes your product newsworthy, a new feature, cultural relevance, or unique value proposition.

2. Trend-Led Campaigns with Topical Data

Trend-led digital PR campaigns leverage cultural moments, social trends, and seasonal behaviour to generate coverage. By combining both topical data and trends, these campaigns can tap into what people are already talking about and gain traction.

Other Link Tactics That Work

The above link-building tactics work best. However, while these unfold, there are other link methods you can use to complement your link-building journey.

1. Marketplace & Retailer Links

Brands can leverage their product distribution for natural, high-authority backlinks from those selling their products.

2. Link Reclamation

This is where you reclaim missed opportunities. Usually, this is when a publisher mentions your brand and then doesn't link to your website. You can then go in and ask for a link.

3. Founder & Brand Features

You can even position your team as thought leaders in the industry to earn additional editorial links. This will help boost backlinks as well as build credibility within the team.

The New Benchmark: Links that Build Brands

Brands that are winning with SEO and securing backlinks are:

- Part of the conversation in media and niche verticals
- Cited by trusted sources with real editorial value
- Associated with original ideas, trends, and commentary
- Leveraging PR and product storytelling not just outreach emails

Link Building & Digital PR Tools

Tool	Use Case	Best For
Ahrefs / Semrush	Track backlinks, identify link gaps	Competitive analysis and backlink auditing
Respona / BuzzStream	Manage outreach campaigns at scale with personalisation	Building and managing link outreach workflows
Google Alerts	Monitor brand mentions in real time	Quick, free way to spot unlinked brand mentions
HARO / SourceBottle	Respond to journalist queries with expert input	Gaining authoritative links through expert features
BuzzSumo	Discover trending content and find media contacts	Building PR lists and identifying high-performing topics



07

UX, core web vitals & mobile SEO.

The experience-led ranking era

Mobile Responsiveness

Bounce Rates



Not long ago, user experience was seen as a CRO lever. Today, it's a core ranking signal.



Search engines now evaluate how users interact with your site to assess overall experience. This includes load speed, visual stability, and mobile usability.

If a site is slow, unstable, or difficult to use — particularly on mobile — search engines will recognise the poor experience and reduce visibility.



Why UX Affects SEO

Poor UX impacts both rankings and conversions. Search engines assess this through key user experience signals, including:

User Signal	SEO Impact
Bounce rate / pogo-sticking	Indicates content mismatch or slow load times, leading to lower rankings
Core Web Vitals	Official ranking factor since 2021, affecting page experience scores
Mobile responsiveness	Essential due to Google's mobile-first indexing
Trust signals	Reinforce E-E-A-T and improve brand credibility in search
Engagement / dwell time	Helps boost visibility in AI-driven results and Google's Search Generative Experience (SGE)

Core Web Vitals: What to Aim For

Core Web Vitals is how Google quickly “ranks” a web page’s speed based on three different factors:

Metric	Target	Why It Matters
LCP	Under 2.5 seconds	Shows how fast your main content loads
INP	Under 200ms	Measures how quickly your site responds to input
CLS	Under 0.1	Tracks layout shifts — stability keeps users focused



Mobile SEO Essentials

Google moved to a mobile-first index because more users search on mobile than desktop. In fact, 70% of all eCommerce traffic now comes from a mobile device.

Because of this, brands need to ensure that their websites are mobile-friendly. This is even more important than desktop, though both should be optimised.

Best Practices:

- Use a responsive design that works across screen sizes
- Avoid popups or interstitials that block content
- Make buttons at least 44px for easy tapping
- Design for thumb-friendly navigation zones
- Prioritise fast load times above the fold
- Limit features that depend on heavy JavaScript



Trust Signals That Drive UX & Rankings

Trust has started playing a big role in driving quality user experience and rankings. Key trust elements include:

- SSL encryption (HTTPS)
- Visible return/refund policy
- Reviews on product pages
- Accessible contact information (with matching schema)
- Secure, branded checkout experience
- Mobile checkout optimised for autofill + wallets (Apple Pay, Google Pay)

Each of the above elements solidifies trust on a website. And simply, those that trust your site bounce less, buy more, and spend longer browsing, feeding positive SEO signals.

On-Site Search: A UX Element Influencing SEO

On-site search enhances user experience and can directly influence SEO performance.

- **Clean search result pages:** Prevent internal search result pages from being indexed to avoid duplication. Use noindex or canonical tags where appropriate.
- **Monitor internal search queries:** Use search data to identify content gaps and inform content strategy.
- **Optimise mobile search UX:** Ensure search functionality is prominent, fast, and easy to use on mobile devices.



Case Study:

Aje – UX restructure to support organic growth

StudioHawk helped Aje improve UX and mobile usability by simplifying collection pages, adding internal linking widgets, and enhancing navigation.

Results:

31%

increase in
organic traffic

206%

increase in non-
branded traffic

128%

increase in Top 3
keywords for collections

Tracking UX & Performance SEO Impact

Optimising UX requires clear measurement. The following tools help track performance and identify issues:

Metric	Tool	What It Tells You
Core Web Vitals	PageSpeed Insights / Search Console	Speed, stability, interactivity
Mobile usability	Google Mobile-Friendly Test	Touch zones, viewport issues
Conversion rate by device	GA4	Mobile vs desktop UX performance
Scroll depth / dwell time	Hotjar / Microsoft Clarity	Engagement & frustration detection
Cart abandonment (mobile)	GA4 / Shopify	UX friction during mobile checkout



Google Search

08

Google merchant center:

**The engine behind ecommerce
visibility**

Performance Analytics

Structured Data



Google Merchant Center (GMC) is a core platform for eCommerce brands.

Looking to reach high-intent shoppers across Google's ecosystem, including Search, Shopping, YouTube, Maps, and more.

It houses your product data and powers everything from Shopping ads to organic product listings.

With the rollout of Merchant Center Next, the platform is now more streamlined, intuitive, and AI-enhanced than ever.

Benefits of google merchant center

1. Visibility Across Google Products

- Appear in Google Shopping results, image carousels, and SERP product grids.
- Appear in both free listings and paid ads, increasing reach across Google's ecosystem.

2. Better Product Presentation

- High-quality listings with structured data lead to higher click-through rates.
- Google shows images, reviews, and pricing boosting engagement before the click.

3. Performance Analytics

- Track clicks, impressions, conversions, and price competitiveness.
- See how your products compare with competitors and adjust accordingly.



4. Automation and Integrations

- Connect directly with Shopify, WooCommerce, BigCommerce, or use Content API.
- Automate price and stock updates through direct integrations.

5. AI Content Creation (via Product Studio)

- Save time creating assets and improve consistency across your listings.

Ranking organically alone is no longer sufficient - You need to own your product data, be in the grids, and offer the best listings.

Brands such as B2C Furniture and Clarks have achieved 300%+ ROI by combining strong organic visibility with optimised Shopping performance, driven by well-structured product feeds and effective GMC integration.



Why you need google merchant center in your eCommerce stack

Google Merchant Center is not just an ad tool, it's your digital storefront on Google. When used well, it can drive more impressions, better clicks, and higher conversions from both free and paid channels.

Don't just upload products, optimise them.





09

Optimising for AI search & LLMs

**The next frontier of eCommerce
visibility**

Recommendations

Large Language Models



Search is evolving through AI-driven interfaces like ChatGPT, Perplexity, Google's Search generative experience, and voice assistants such as Siri.

Based on StudioHawk's data, AI search has gone from effectively zero to a high six-figure revenue channel across our dataset in 21 months — and the growth curve is still climbing. That's the kind of trajectory no paid channel can match. This isn't a channel to watch. It's a channel to build for now, before the window to get ahead closes.

What is AI search?



ChatGPT Search

AI search uses large language models (LLMs) to generate dynamic, synthesised answers to queries. These responses draw from multiple sources, combining structured and unstructured data while prioritising clarity, credibility, and completeness.

AI search uses large language models (LLMs) to generate dynamic, synthesised answers to queries. These responses draw from multiple sources, combining structured and unstructured data while prioritising clarity, credibility, and completeness.

What's becoming clear is that AI search doesn't just send traffic, it sends buyers. StudioHawk's data shows ChatGPT's average order value (\$220) already edges out Google organic (\$215), with outliers in furniture, appliances, and jewellery hitting between \$1,500 and \$2,500. Bing organic tells a similar story, converting at roughly three times Google's revenue per session. The volume isn't there yet, but the intent quality is.

Google Search



"Good AI SEO is good SEO."

— Justin Babet, Chief Nutrition, via Nathan Bush on Add To Cart

Where eCommerce fits into AI search

Shoppers are increasingly using AI for commercial queries and receiving product and brand recommendations.

These searches include:

- "What are the best eco-friendly lunch boxes in Australia?"
- "What's a good queen-sized bed for small apartments under \$500?"
- "Which fashion brands offer sustainable winter coats for women?"

Instead of returning a list of blue links, AI surfaces summarised recommendations, often combining multiple sources into a single response.

How AI tools choose what to include

AI systems evaluate content in a similar way to search engines. They prioritise content with:

- Well-structured data (schema, JSON-LD)
- Brand trust signals (E-E-A-T)
- Clear topical relevance
- Unique, descriptive copy
- Consistent entity information across your site and the web

Brands that provide machine-readable, semantically rich content are significantly more likely to be cited.

AI agent



10 Agentic com- merce:

When AI shops on behalf of your customers

Agentic Commerce

Model Context Protocol



Your next customer might not be a human browsing your site.

It might be an AI agent, researching options, comparing products, and completing a purchase autonomously on behalf of a shopper who never visits your store at all.

This isn't a future scenario. It's already happening. Unlike basic product recommendations or chatbots, agentic commerce involves goal-oriented AI systems that handle the entire shopping journey — from discovery through to checkout and post-purchase actions like returns and refund requests. Research suggests 45% of online shoppers are already using AI agents in some capacity during their purchase journey. Morgan Stanley predicts that by 2030, AI shopping agents will account for approximately 25% of online spending.

For eCommerce brands, this changes the game entirely.

What's Happening Right Now

Several major developments have landed in early 2026 that are actively shaping how agentic commerce works, and what it means for how your products get discovered and selected.

Google's Universal Commerce Protocol (UCP)

UCP creates a common language that allows AI agents to discover products, initiate checkout, and manage orders across any merchant regardless of platform.

It's already powering native checkout within Google's AI Mode in Search and the Gemini app, meaning shoppers can complete purchases directly inside AI-driven search experiences without ever visiting a retailer's website. Gap became the first major fashion brand to enable this, signalling where the broader retail industry is headed.

Shopify's Agentic Commerce Platform

Shopify has positioned itself as the infrastructure layer for agentic commerce. Through MCP (Model Context Protocol) tools that are UCP-compliant, Shopify merchants can now be discovered and transacted with by any AI agent. For Shopify merchants, this means your store can effectively sell inside AI conversations, not just through your own storefront.

ChatGPT as a Shopping Platform

OpenAI has partnered with major retailers to enable shopping directly within ChatGPT. After initial

experiments with instant checkout, OpenAI shifted to a model where retailers build dedicated apps within ChatGPT that route users back to their own checkout experience — giving brands more control over the transaction while still meeting shoppers inside the AI interface.

Perplexity's "Buy with Pro"

Perplexity has launched its own agentic commerce feature that turns the assistant into a personal shopper for Pro subscribers. It pulls products from participating merchants and presents curated options in response to natural-language prompts.

Why this matters for eCommerce SEO

Agentic commerce fundamentally changes how products are discovered and selected. The table below shows what that shift looks like in practice:

Traditional Search	Agentic Commerce
Humans type keywords	AI agents call APIs and parse feeds
Users click links and browse	Agents extract structured data programmatically
Rankings determine visibility	Data completeness determines inclusion
Product descriptions persuade humans	Schema attributes inform agent decisions
Traffic flows to your website	Transactions happen inside AI platforms

How to prepare for agentic commerce

Brands that want to remain visible as AI agents become the new shoppers need to act now:

1. Treat Product Data as Critical Infrastructure

AI agents don't read product descriptions the way humans do. They parse structured attributes, price, availability, shipping speed, specifications, ratings, and return policies. Ensure your Google Merchant Center feed has near-complete attribute coverage across all SKUs. Missing fields mean missing recommendations.

2. Implement Comprehensive Schema Markup

Go beyond basic Product schema. The richer your structured data, the more confidently an AI agent can recommend your product.

3. Keep Product Feeds Real-Time

Agents prioritise accuracy. Out-of-date pricing, incorrect stock levels, or stale shipping estimates will get your products excluded. Automate feed syncing and ensure inventory updates flow through in near real-time.

4. Optimise for Natural Language Queries

Agentic commerce queries look different from traditional search. Your product data needs to answer multi-attribute queries, include detailed specifications, use cases, and contextual attributes in both your schema and product descriptions.

5. Explore UCP and MCP Integration

If you're on Shopify, investigate UCP-compliant MCP tools that allow AI agents to interact with your store directly. For other platforms, monitor UCP adoption and work with your development team to assess readiness.

6. Maintain Brand Consistency Across All Data Sources

AI agents pull information from multiple sources: your website, Merchant Center, marketplace listings, review platforms, and third-party databases. Inconsistencies in pricing, product names, or availability across these sources reduce agent confidence and lower your chances of being recommended.



What this means for your SEO strategy

Agentic commerce doesn't replace traditional SEO — it adds a new layer on top of it. The brands best positioned are those already investing in complete and accurate structured data, clean product feeds with rich attributes, strong brand signals and E-E-A-T, and machine-readable content across the site.

The difference now is that these elements aren't just helping you rank in Google. They're determining whether AI agents select your products when making autonomous purchase decisions on behalf of millions of shoppers.

Note: The rules around how AI agents interact with eCommerce platforms are still being written. Amazon recently secured a federal court injunction blocking Perplexity's AI shopping agent from placing orders on its platform, arguing the tool accessed customer accounts without authorisation. It's worth staying across how these boundaries evolve as the space matures.



Hawk Tip: Audit your Google Merchant Center feed completeness today. Products with fewer than 80% of available attributes filled are at risk of being invisible to AI shopping agents - regardless of how well they rank organically.



STUDIOHAWK



11

Entity SEO

**Your brand as a recognisable
“thing”**

Emerging Metrics

Entity Strength

SGE Visibility

Search engines and LLMs now build “knowledge” around brands the same way they do for people or places.

Brands need to ensure they are recognised as searchable, citable entities — not just domains.

How to Build Entity Strength

- Create a Google Knowledge Panel (via consistent About pages, schema, Wikidata, and press)
- Use consistent organisation schema across all pages
- List all product types using schema.org definitions
- Get mentioned in external sources with brand context (e.g. “According to Seed & Sprout...”)

How ChatGPT’s shopify integration impacts SEO (and what to do about it)

AI shopping integrations like ChatGPT’s new product carousels are shifting how people discover and evaluate products. This shift impacts SEO in two key ways:

- Reduced reliance on traditional rankings
- Increased reliance on structured, machine-readable content

What’s changing

- **Products are chosen by AI, not organic rankings**
ChatGPT pulls from structured data feeds (e.g. Shopify) and public product data, not your position in Google.
- **Users may bypass your website**
If your product isn’t included in accessible data feeds, it won’t appear — even if your SEO is strong.
- **AI models rewrite and reframe your content**
ChatGPT may simplify your product titles, assign labels (e.g., “Budget-friendly”), or generate summaries from reviews, which may not always reflect your intended messaging.



Optimising for AI & LLM discovery (AEO)

The emerging discipline here is Answer Engine Optimisation (AEO), making your content machine-readable and model-referenceable.

1. Structure Everything with Schema

Add JSON-LD for key schema types:

- *Product*
- *FAQPage*
- *HowTo*
- *Organisation*
- *Brand*
- *BreadcrumbList*
- *LocalBusiness*

StudioHawk clients like Clarks, Black Pepper, and Shoes & Sox saw improved SERP visibility after refining schema and internal links.

2. Write With Summarisation in Mind

- LLMs extract and compress information. Your content should be:
- Clear and conversational
- Skimmable with headings and bullet points
- Intent-rich (e.g., “pet-friendly”, “budget sofa”, “waterproof coat”)

Seed & Sprout’s structured briefs helped in-house writers create content that performed well in AI Overviews and snippets.

3. Create Reference-Worthy Content

Models favour content types they can cite:

- Evergreen guides with comparisons (e.g. “best pet-safe cleaners under \$30”)
- Simple definitional content (“What is an ergonomic chair?”)
- Authoritative, review-backed articles with expert input
- Pages with standout USPs and differentiators

4. Use Brand Anchors Consistently

Improve inclusion by combining brand, category, and intent signals:

- “Koala Living modern velvet sofas”
- “Seed & Sprout zero-waste kitchen range”
- “Reviewed by StudioHawk” or “#1 in ethical skincare”

5. Don’t Skip Open Graph & Twitter Cards

Many LLMs use these signals to generate preview summaries:

- Add detailed og:title, og:description, and og:image
- Use meaningful alt text on images
- Ensure social metadata is present on all major product pages

As AI platforms increasingly guide shopping decisions, brands must shift from ranking to structuring.

Visibility now depends on how effectively AI systems can understand, interpret, and represent your brand, not just how you rank in Google.



Tracking AI Search Performance
(Emerging Metrics)

Tracking AI search performance is still evolving, with no single source of truth. However, there are several tools and workarounds that can provide directional insight:

Metric	Tool (or Workaround)	Best For
Brand mentions in ChatGPT	Manual prompting + tools like ChatGPT Plugins	Evaluating brand presence in AI-generated conversations
SGE visibility (beta)	Google Search Console + SGE Labs (experimental)	Checking if your content appears in Google's AI-powered search experiences
Traffic from Bing/Perplexity	GA4 + referrer filtering	Measuring traffic from emerging AI-driven search engines
Answer box inclusion	Search Console > "Rich Results" reports	Monitoring featured snippet performance
Named entity recognition	NLP tools (e.g. IBM NLU, spaCy audits)	Assessing how well your brand is understood and recognised by AI and search engines

eCommerce



12 Winning with SEO

**How leading eCommerce brands
are winning with SEO**

Technical SEO

Content strategy



Effective SEO isn't guesswork - it's about applying the right strategies at the right time, aligned to clear business goals.

The following case studies are grouped by strategic theme, highlighting how leading eCommerce brands have achieved measurable growth across technical SEO, content, international optimisation, and digital PR.



Technical SEO & site architecture

These projects focused on foundational site improvements, structural enhancements, and scalable frameworks to strengthen rankings, user experience, and crawlability.



Koala Living

A complex React migration was supported with SEO mapping, subcategory expansion, and entity optimisation.

Results:

535%

growth in revenue

523%

increase in transactions

140%

growth in organic users



Officeworks

A planned migration was paused to resolve JavaScript rendering issues, followed by the implementation of SEO-friendly server-side rendering and internal training.

Results:

60%

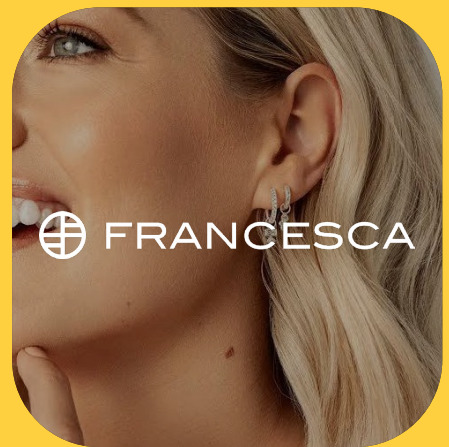
increase in organic traffic

32%

revenue uplift



Long-term internal
SEO adoption



Francesca

The mobile experience was rebuilt alongside post-migration redirect management, supported by a content and local SEO strategy.

Results:

245%

increase in online sales

167%

increase in in-store purchases

171%

growth in total organic traffic

Content strategy & on-page SEO

These projects leveraged intent-driven content, structured metadata, and internal linking to attract and convert high-quality traffic.



Black Pepper

Over 100 new collection pages were created, supported by above-the-fold descriptions and seasonal content hubs.

Results:

302%

increase in organic clicks

715%

increase in Top 3 keyword rankings

130%

130% growth in revenue



Bell & Bone

Page templates and naming conventions were developed based on keyword research, alongside improvements to information architecture and internal linking.

Results:

160%

increase in organic traffic



Key pages moved from Page 2 to Page 1



The Hairy Pill

Content was consolidated from a subdomain, supported by E-E-A-T improvements and expert-backed schema integration.

Results:

2766%

return on investment in SEO

113%

increase in organic users (YoY)



Top 3 keyword rankings increased from 7 to 111

International SEO & entity optimisation

These campaigns focused on structuring websites and content for global markets while strengthening brand signals across entities.



Bondi Sands

Global duplication issues were resolved, with improvements to site architecture, category naming, and entity-led internal linking.

Results:

94%

increase in AU keyword base

105%

increase in the UK,
54% in the US



Overtook marketplaces for high-intent terms



Aje

UX and navigation were restructured, supported by semantic information architecture, new collections, and targeted link building.

Results:

206%

increase in non-branded traffic

128%

increase in Top 3
keyword rankings

107%

increase in total ranking keywords

13

Link Equity



Implementation roadmap

From nesting to soaring with SEO

Solidify Rankings

SEO Systems



SEO is not one-size-fits-all. Every website requires a different approach depending on its stage of growth.

The following 4-stage SEO maturity framework, developed by StudioHawk, helps identify where a business sits today and what's required to scale visibility and performance.

Google Search

Stage 1: Nest – Laying the Foundation

Who this is for:

New or early-stage stores with minimal SEO structure and reliance on paid or branded traffic.

Main Focus:

Set up the essentials: get crawled, get indexed, and start building pages that search engines (and customers) can trust.

What to Do:

- Connect Google Search Console & submit clean XML sitemaps
- Implement basic metadata + H1s across key pages
- Add Product, Organization, and Breadcrumb schema
- Ensure mobile-friendliness and fix crawl errors
- Launch first 3–5 content pieces (e.g. FAQs, product comparisons)

Internal Linking



Stage 2: Grow – Building Momentum

Who this is for:

Brands ready to scale organic visibility and build momentum.

Main Focus:

Grow your keyword footprint and build topical authority.

What to Do:

- Optimise category/collection pages with intro content and internal links
- Publish a content cluster strategy around mid-funnel questions
- Launch seasonal or trend-driven Digital PR for link equity
- Fix site speed and pass Core Web Vitals
- Track performance by page type (collection, product, content)

Stage 3: Fly – Scaling with Authority

Who this is for:

eCommerce brands ready to lead in their category. SEO is no longer a support channel — it's a core driver of revenue.

Main Focus:

Solidify rankings, expand into new markets, and defend your territory with content, links, and UX excellence.

What to Do:

- Build keyword-informed site architecture and SEO content hubs
- Scale internal linking systems across products, blogs, and collections
- Layer in reviews, FAQs, and schema for deeper SERP coverage
- Implement structured link acquisition (product-led, thought leadership)
- Launch international subfolders or ccTLDs if expanding globally

Stage 4: Soar – Leading the Pack

Who this is for:

Category leaders ready to future-proof their brand visibility across Google, AI, and whatever comes next.

Main Focus:

Entity SEO, AI search optimisation, and brand-first digital authority.

What to Do:

- Optimise for inclusion in SGE, ChatGPT, and Perplexity AI results
- Audit and align your brand as a recognised entity in Google's Knowledge Graph
- Build data-led content that earns citations and feeds LLMs
- Run global SEO with localised relevance and schema
- Develop internal SEO systems (playbooks, workflows, QA)

Category Pages

Open AI



Open AI

14 SEO pre- dictions:

Insights from StudioHawk
specialists

Category Pages

Internal Linking

The team at StudioHawk brings deep expertise across the SEO landscape. We asked the team to share predictions and perspectives shaping the future of eCommerce search.



Information gain will overtake keyword matching

Lawrence Hitches – Chief of Staff

“Rewriting what already exists isn’t enough. Content has to bring something new to the table.”

Google’s Information Gain concept rewards content that introduces net-new value — whether through original insights, unique data, or first-hand perspectives. This reduces duplication in SERPs and favours more meaningful content.

Hawk Tip:

Invest in content that delivers clear, original value. Prioritise case studies, proprietary data, and first-hand insights.



Internal linking should flow vertically, not laterally

Charbel Raffoul – Head of SEO

“Weakened relevance often starts with flat, unrelated collection cross-linking.”

Rather than linking collection pages horizontally (e.g. “Boots” to “Sunglasses”), prioritise vertical linking between parent categories and subcategories. This reinforces site structure and strengthens contextual relevance.

Hawk Tip:

Anchor internal linking to intent, not convenience.

Insights from StudioHawk specialists



Product pages are getting squeezed - but can still win

James Griffin – Enterprise SEO Manager

“We’re seeing category pages dominate, but that doesn’t mean product pages are dead.”

This reflects broader visibility trends across large eCommerce sites. As SERPs evolve, thin product pages lose visibility, while enhanced pages with schema, reviews, FAQs, and strong internal linking continue to perform.

Hawk Tip:

Treat product pages as full content assets, not just transactional pages.



UX-first design beats SEO gimmicks

Sophie Brannon – Co-Founder, StudioHawk USA

“We’ve seen better results from focusing on UX and structure than using old-school eCommerce SEO tricks.”

Over-reliance on “above-the-fold” content and keyword-heavy metadata is becoming less effective. User-first design, clear hierarchy, and intuitive navigation drive stronger performance.

Hawk Tip:

Design pages that help users make decisions — not just rank.

Insights from StudioHawk specialists



Search behaviour may diverge by market

Alejandro Restrepo Imery - General Manager

"In the US, we're seeing single product pages dominate, while AU still favours collections, but that may change."

Search behaviour is not uniform across markets. As user expectations evolve, Google may align regional SERPs to reflect global trends.

Hawk Tip:

Strengthen product pages now to prepare for shifts in local SERPs.



Feeds, feeds, feeds. Don't forget your product data!

Joshua Poole - Head of Strategic Growth

"Product Feed optimisation is the future of agentic ecommerce. Invalid or missing feed data is affecting merchants of all shapes and sizes."

Shopping Feeds connect your products to key platforms online like TikTok Shopping, Google Shopping & OpenAI Shopping which allow merchants to easily surface all their products where users are searching

Hawk Tip:

Optimise your shopping feeds across as many platforms as possible. Minimal product data, low feed hygiene or feeds not connected properly could be costing merchants thousands every month.

15 Future outlook

Open AI



Category Pages

Internal Linking



The eCommerce brands being chosen in AI search aren't lucky – they built for this.

It's about aligning your business with how people actually search, discover, and buy. Technical performance, structured content, digital PR, and entity optimisation no longer operate in isolation — they work together as a unified search strategy.

That's not just a strategic principle. StudioHawk's data across 100 Australian brands makes it real: seven brands captured approximately 70% of all AI search revenue in the study. And every single one of those top performers was already a strong Google organic performer. AI search doesn't create new winners, it amplifies existing authority. The brands investing in SEO fundamentals today are the ones building the foundations that AI will reward tomorrow.

Across every stage of growth, the brands that succeed are those that build strong site architecture around real user intent, create content that earns visibility across Google, AI platforms, and emerging discovery channels. They operate like publishers rather than just product-led businesses, invest in their brand as a recognised entity rather than just a website, and measure success through meaningful outcomes — revenue, branded search, and market share.



Where the Search Landscape Is Heading

Search is becoming more dynamic, more visual, and increasingly driven by AI. Generated results are fast becoming a primary discovery layer, search experiences are growing more visual through product grids and embedded journeys, and voice and image-based search continue to expand. Structured data and entity SEO are no longer optional — they're the baseline for visibility. And real-time product data is increasingly what separates brands that get surfaced from those that don't.

Final Word: SEO is the Engine, Brand is the Advantage

The brands winning in organic search are not those chasing quick wins, they are building long-term systems. They treat SEO as infrastructure, not a campaign. They invest in clarity, structure, and original thinking. And they understand that visibility now depends on how well their brand can be interpreted — not just ranked.

That's the work. And it compounds. Every well-structured page, every authoritative piece of content, every technical fix, they don't just improve rankings today, they build the brand signals that AI will draw on tomorrow.

At StudioHawk, this is the only kind of SEO we do. No generalists, no shortcuts, just specialists who understand that sustainable growth is built, not bought. If you're ready to apply these principles to your eCommerce business, we're always here to help.



"The brands that rank today are the ones that will be understood, cited, and surfaced tomorrow!"



"The nerd work happens behind the curtain. The brand work happens out front."

— Nathan Bush, Host of Add To Cart

About the contributors



About Nathan Bush

Nathan Bush is an eCommerce strategist, coach, and the host of the Add To Cart podcast.

He is the Co-founder and Director of eCommerce talent agency eSuite, and previously held the role of Group Digital Manager at Super Retail Group. Nathan has been recognised in the Top 50 People in eCommerce for four consecutive years.

Through his work, he focuses on sharing practical insights from across the industry, drawing on conversations with founders, marketers, and operators to unpack the realities of building and scaling eCommerce businesses.



**ADD TO
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About the contributors



About StudioHawk

StudioHawk is an independent SEO and AI Search agency, founded in 2015 by Harry Sanders.

What began as a challenger to a fragmented SEO industry has grown into one of the largest specialist SEO agencies globally, with a team of 120+ across Melbourne, Sydney, London, and Atlanta.

StudioHawk works with a range of eCommerce brands, from high-growth startups to established retailers, supporting organic visibility across both traditional search and emerging AI-driven discovery platforms. This includes how brands are surfaced not only in search rankings, but within AI-generated answers, product comparisons, and zero-click experiences.

StudioHawk has invested heavily in understanding and adapting to shifts in AI-driven search, with a focus on helping brands navigate a landscape where visibility is increasingly determined by how and where they are surfaced, not just where they rank.



The agency is known for its specialist model, where clients work directly with senior SEO practitioners, and for its focus on long-term, revenue-aligned growth rather than short-term performance tactics.

Its client portfolio includes brands such as Officeworks, The Good Guys, PetStock, and YouFoodz.



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