TILL IT CLICKS

REPORT · NOVEMBER 2026

# Organic traffic is falling in the age of AI search. How should brands respond?

A report and guide for CMOs on understanding and managing the changing nature of search.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# The whole report, in four points.

## 01

### Search has stopped sending people to websites.

AI answers in Google and in chat tools now settle most questions on the page itself. Reddit's traffic from Google fell, and its stock dropped about 30% in a single day.

## 02

### Yet, your own website is now your strongest lever.

When AI cites a brand's own page, it names the brand about 90% of the time on Google. When it relies only on other sites, the brand is named 5 to 28% of the time.

## 03

### Traffic is the wrong scoreboard.

Buyers read the AI answer and decide without visiting. AI mentions are worth watching, but no tool can track them reliably yet. The surest measure is real demand: enquiries, calls, emails and form fills.

## 04

### Build depth, not noise.

The winners will have hundreds of deep, original pages, each answering one narrow buyer question, many on a separate content-only website. AI slop will not do this job.

THE SHIFT IN ONE PICTURE

| OLD GOAL | NEW GOAL | REAL MEASURE |
|---|---|---|
| ~~Get the click~~ | **Get named in the answer** | **Get the enquiry** |

**Short on time? Go straight to the six-month plan.** Page 9 →

01 · THE SHIFT

# Google still reads your website. It just stops sending people to it.

For twenty years, search worked as a trade. Websites let Google read their pages, and Google sent visitors back. That trade is breaking. Google's AI Overviews and AI Mode now answer the question at the top of the page. The reader gets what they need and moves on.

**BEFORE**

Search → Click → Your site

The buyer visits. You see them.

**NOW**

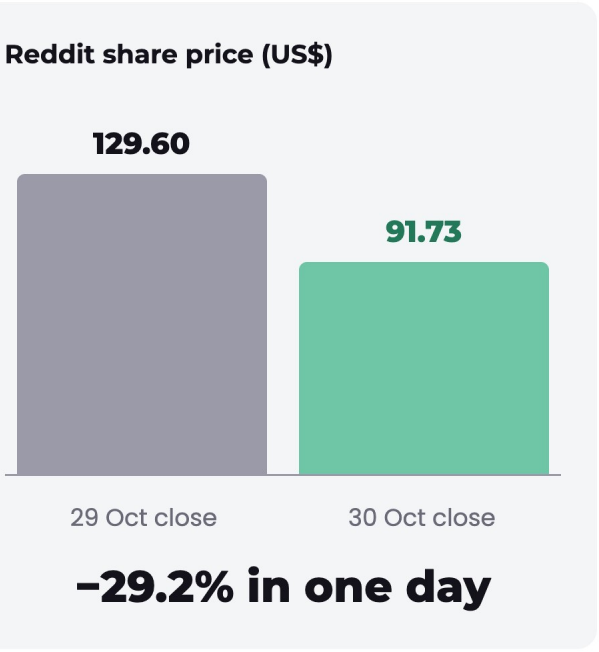
Search → AI answer → Decision

The buyer decides. You never see them.

CASE IN POINT · REDDIT, OCTOBER 2026

On 30 October 2026, Reddit's shares fell about 30% after it reported a sharp drop in traffic from search. CEO Steve Huffman said people still want Reddit, but Google no longer sends them there the way it used to. Google, he added, is crawling the site as hard as ever.

> **"AI Mode does not drive traffic. Not for us, and not to anybody."**
>
> Steve Huffman, CEO, Reddit, on the company's earnings call




Google is feeling it too: Alphabet lost close to $500 billion in market value after its search advertising slowed. Reddit has stopped waiting for the traffic to return and plans to make every user sign in.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR BRAND

### If Reddit, one of the most visited websites in the world, is losing its Google traffic, most brands already are, or soon will be.

Expect organic traffic to keep falling, even if your rankings hold steady. Fewer buyers will visit your website. More will decide from the AI answer alone. The question is no longer how to win the click back, but how to make sure your brand is in that answer.

Source: Hamza Shaban, "Reddit (and everyone else) faces a bleak internet without Google traffic," Yahoo Finance, 31 October 2026. Share prices as shown on that page.

02 · WHY YOUR OWN SITE WINS

# Being cited is not the same as being named.

**Cited**

The AI links a page as its source. Most readers never open it.

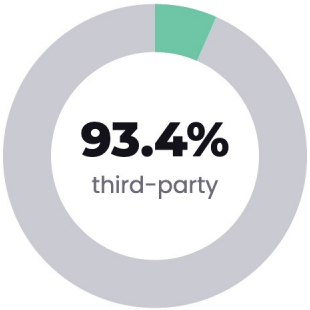
**Named**

The AI says your brand in the answer itself. This is what the buyer reads and remembers.

**How often AI names the brand, by the source it cites**




Source: Grow and Convert, third-party citation research, 2026. Grey bar shows the range across AI platforms.




## The catch: most citations still go to other websites.

One study of 2,169 AI citations found 93.4% came from third-party sites and only 6.6% from brands' own sites. So most brands chase mentions in magazines, "top 10" lists and review sites. That has some value. But even when those pages mention you, the AI often leaves your name out of the answer.

Third-party sites  Brand's own site (6.6%)

**Third-party sites get cited more. Your own site is what gets you named.**

Source for the 93.4% figure: AI+Automation, brand citation study across ChatGPT, Perplexity and Google AI Mode, 2026.

03 · DEPTH, NOT SLOP

# More pages. But only pages worth reading.

If your own site is what gets you named, it needs an answer for every serious question a buyer asks. A catalogue and one blog post a month will not cover it. But AI tools make it cheap to publish thousands of pages, and most of that output is slop: generic, repeated, and saying nothing a buyer cannot find elsewhere. Slop does not get cited, and it costs you the buyer's trust.

**SLOP LOOKS LIKE**

- "Top 10 benefits of..." written for anyone
- The same page with the city name swapped
- Claims with no numbers behind them

**DEPTH LOOKS LIKE**

- One clear question per page, answered in full
- Input from your engineers, sales and service teams
- Original data: tests, costs, timelines, results

## Stop chasing big keywords. Win hundreds of small ones.

The old rule was high search volume, low competition. The new rule: **10 to 100 searches a month, with zero competition.** One deep page for each.




Illustration of the idea, not measured data.

1. Search is not going away. Ranking still pays.
2. Each small page is easy to win. Nobody else wrote it.
3. Hundreds of small wins add up to more than one big keyword.
4. Narrow questions are what people ask AI. The same pages feed AI answers.

**AI can help write it. It cannot be the source.**

Use AI to draft and scale. The substance must come from your people and your data, and a person must check every page before it goes live.

IN PRACTICE · SEVEN INDUSTRIES

# What buyers actually ask. Each one deserves its own page.

These questions may get only a few searches a month. But each comes from a buyer close to a decision, and almost no brand has answered them properly.

**INDUSTRIAL BOILERS**

**"Biomass boiler for a 5-tonne textile dyeing unit: what will it cost to run each month?"**

**COATED STEEL FOR BUILDINGS**

**"Which colour-coated roofing sheet lasts longest for a factory near the sea?"**

**COMMERCIAL LIGHTING**

**"How much light does a 20,000 sq ft cold storage warehouse need, and which fittings survive the cold?"**

**DECORATIVE PAINTS**

**"Best paint for a damp north-facing wall that peels every monsoon"**

**BATHROOM AND KITCHEN FITTINGS**

**"Wall-hung or floor-mounted WC for a 4 × 6 ft bathroom: which saves more space?"**

**PVC PIPES**

**"CPVC or uPVC for hot water lines in a 12-storey residential building?"**

**TRAVEL (CONSUMER)**

**"Safe women-only group tour to Japan for first-time travellers over 50"**

**Every category has hundreds of these.**

The brand that answers them first, and best, is the brand AI names.

Questions are illustrative, written the way buyers in each category typically ask.

## Two rules for picking the questions

### Pick buying intent

A plant head asking about a biomass boiler for a dyeing unit is worth far more than a student asking "what is a boiler."

### Do not trust keyword tools alone

At 10 to 50 searches, tools are unreliable. Many real buyer questions show zero. Find topics in sales calls, enquiries and customer FAQs.

**The future winners will be the brands with hundreds of deep, original pages on their own websites.**

04 · THE METRIC PROBLEM

# Traffic is the wrong number.

Traffic used to stand in for interest. That link is broken. A buyer can read an AI answer that recommends you, call you, and never show up in your traffic report. Another brand can see traffic rise on pages that never produce an enquiry. Traffic now lags, and it misleads.

JUDGE ON THIS
**Enquiries · Calls · Emails · Forms**

WATCH AS AN EARLY SIGNAL
**AI appearances · Named mentions**

DEMOTED · GLANCE ONLY
**Traffic · Rankings · Sessions**

**Free fix:** ask every new enquiry "How did you find us?" Today, "ChatGPT told me" is a real answer. Record it.

05 · THE TRACKING GAP

## No tool can yet tell you, reliably, when AI names you.

| WHAT YOU CAN SEE | APPEARANCES | CLICKS | QUESTIONS ASKED | NAMED? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Google Search Console AI report** | **Yes** | No | No | No |
| **ChatGPT and other AI tools** | No | **Visits only** | No | No |
| **AI visibility trackers** | **Samples** | No | **Their own** | **Samples** |

Trackers run sample questions through AI tools, but answers change almost every time: in a SparkToro study of 2,961 runs, the same brand list rarely appeared twice. Treat these numbers as direction, not fact. If you buy a tracker, look for coverage of Google AI Mode, ChatGPT and Gemini, many runs per question, and whether you were named, not only linked.

**Until the tools mature, your enquiry data is the one number you can fully trust.**

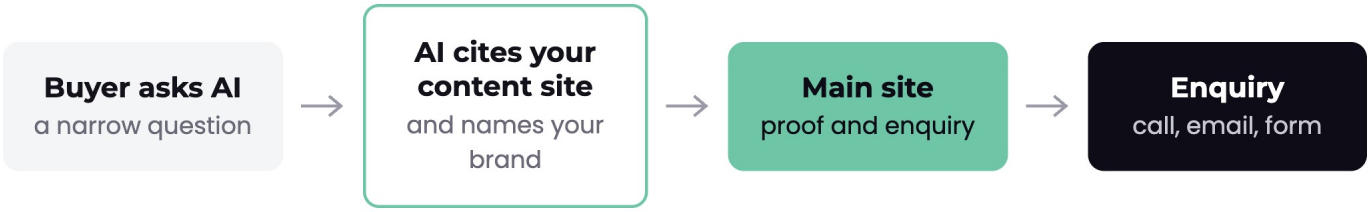
Sources: Google Search Central, 3 June 2026; SparkToro AI consistency study, January 2026.

06 · THE TWO-SITE MODEL

# One site to convert. One site to teach.

Most brand websites try to do two jobs and do neither well. A sales site must be short and focused. An education site must be long and deep. Put hundreds of guides on the main site and they bury the path to enquire. Keep the main site lean and there is no room for depth. **TIC strongly recommends a separate, content-only website alongside the main one.**

HOW THE BUYER MOVES




CONTENT SITE · CARRIES YOUR BRAND

## Teaches the category

- Hundreds of deep pages, one niche question each
- Guides, comparisons, costs, how-tos
- Original data from your own teams
- Points readers to the main site when ready

Measured on: AI appearances, named mentions, enquiries it sends

MAIN BRAND SITE

## Converts the buyer

- Products and solutions
- Proof: projects, clients, certifications
- Enquiry forms, call and WhatsApp buttons
- Short, fast, focused

Measured on: enquiries, calls, emails, form fills

**One rule: make it obviously yours.**

The point is to get your brand named. A content site that looks neutral may be treated like any third-party site, and your name left out. Put your brand name in the web address, or show it clearly on every page.

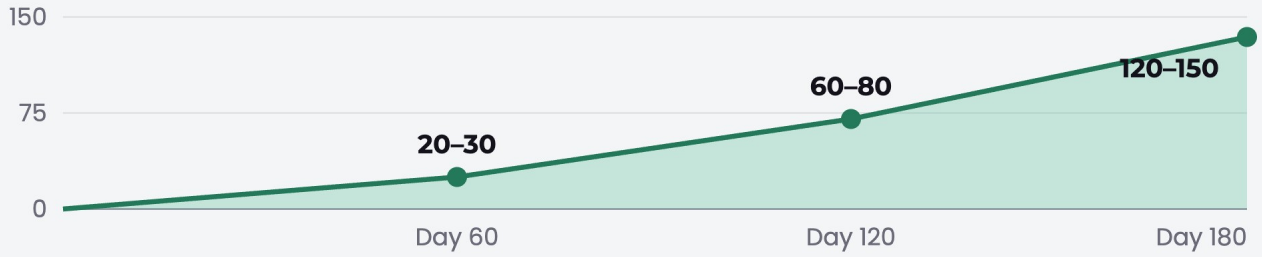
To be clear: there is no firm data yet on how AI treats a brand's second website. Until there is, make the ownership impossible to miss.

07 · NEXT STEPS

# What to do over the next six months.

None of this pays off in a few weeks. Pages take time to be found, read and cited. The plan below spreads the work across three stages of about two months each.

**Suggested pace: deep pages published**




A suggested pace, not a forecast. Adjust to the size of your category and team.

## Days 1–60

**Set up and start**

- Track every enquiry, call, email and form by source.
- Add "How did you find us?" to forms and sales calls.
- Turn on the AI report in Google Search Console.
- Pick 20 key buyer questions. Note whether ChatGPT, Gemini and Google AI Mode name you today.
- Collect 100+ real buyer questions from sales and FAQs.
- Decide on the content site. Publish the first 20 to 30 pages.

## Days 61–120

**Build depth**

- Take the content site live.
- Reach 60 to 80 deep pages, one question each.
- Put expert input and original data into every page.
- Rewrite or remove thin pages on the main site.
- Start a monthly review of enquiries by source.

## Days 121–180

**Review and expand**

- Reach 120 to 150 pages at a steady weekly pace.
- Re-run the 20-question check. Compare with day one.
- Judge on enquiries by source, not traffic.
- Put more effort into the topics that brought real enquiries.

**Six months builds the base. Expect the clearer results to show over the year that follows.**

08 · WHERE TIC FITS

# The winners will be the brands with depth. We build it.

Deep, original pages on your own website are now one of the most important investments a brand can make in marketing. TIC helps in two ways.

### 01 SEO pages at scale

Hundreds of deep pages a year on your main website, each answering one niche buyer question.

- Questions mined from your sales calls and enquiries
- Built with AI, checked by people
- Grounded in your experts and your data

### 02 Industry content websites

A separate, content-only website that teaches your category, clearly branded as yours.

- Planned, built and run by TIC
- Guides, comparisons, costs and how-tos
- Sends ready buyers to your main site

With both services, we track calls, emails and form fills, and report on real enquiries every month.

## Is your organic traffic falling? Let us talk about what to do next.

We will look at how your category shows up in AI search today, whether your brand is being named, and where deeper content would make the biggest difference.

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SOURCES

1. Hamza Shaban, "Reddit (and everyone else) faces a bleak internet without Google traffic," Yahoo Finance, 31 Oct 2026.
2. Grow and Convert, third-party citation research, 2026.
3. AI+Automation, "93% of AI brand citations are third-party," 2026.
4. Google Search Central, Search Generative AI performance reports, 3 June 2026.
5. SparkToro, AI recommendation consistency study, January 2026.