AEO vs SEO: what we measured on our own site in launch week

Rankings and AI citations for synapsereality.io, measured on 24 September 2026, the day after we moved the site to a new build.

Slides from the article at synapsereality.io/aeo-vs-seo/. Every number is from that article or its run data.

TWO READINGS

SEO counts positions. AEO counts the answers that cite you.

- SEO decides whether a page ranks in a list of results.
- AEO decides whether ChatGPT, Perplexity, Gemini or Claude cites the page in its answer, and what that answer says about you.
- Google says its usual SEO practices apply to AI Overviews and AI Mode, with no special structured data.

||| METHOD

Two measurements on one site, the same week

- Moved to a new build on 23 September 2026. Measured on 24 September.
- Rankings: 89 target terms in the US, the UK and Israel.
- Citations: 30 questions, 4 engines (OpenAI, Gemini, Perplexity, Claude), web search on, 3 runs per question. 360 answers.
- An answer cites us when one of its links, in the text or its sources, is on our domain or our GitHub account.

Question groups: 9 discovery, 8 comparison, 6 brand, 7 trust.

RANKINGS

None of 89 target terms had us in the top 10

Google was still showing the old WordPress pages. This is a starting point, not a verdict.

0 / 89

target terms with us in the top 10, across the US, the UK and Israel

CITATIONS

Found by name. Almost invisible otherwise.

105 / 156

answers that cited us, when the question named us

1 / 204

answers that cited us, when the question asked for a provider or advice

A site that ranked for nothing was cited in two thirds of the answers that named it.

CITATIONS BY ENGINE

Every engine found us by name, at different rates

QUESTION GROUP	OPENAI	GEMINI	PERPLEXITY	CLAUDE
Brand (6 questions)	10 of 18	15 of 18	15 of 18	12 of 18
Trust (7 questions)	8 of 21	16 of 21	17 of 21	12 of 21
Discovery (9 questions)	0 of 27	0 of 27	1 of 27	0 of 27
Comparison (8 questions)	0 of 24	0 of 24	0 of 24	0 of 24

THE ONE EXCEPTION

One citation in 204 answers that did not name us

It was an answer about MAP monitoring, a service we have since retired.

> **1 / 204**
>
> discovery and comparison answers that cited us

Nothing on answer engine optimization, AI engineering or SaaS growth was cited.

RERUN STABILITY

All 15 pairs landed within one citation

- Five of the questions were asked again the same day, three times on three engines.
- All 15 question and engine pairs landed within one citation of the first run.
- Without repeats, a change cannot be told apart from noise.

Old positioning, stated as current

- 41 of the 156 answers that named us mentioned NFT, metaverse or Web3 work from our old site.
- About 15 of them presented it as what we do today.
- One gave a founding year of 2015, the year a directory profile still lists. We were incorporated in 2018.

Sources cited most in the 204 answers that did not name us

SOURCE	ANSWERS CITING IT
A forum site	25
Google's developer documentation	20
LinkedIn	15
The most-cited agency	15
Two freelance marketplaces	15 and 9

No single agency owned these answers.

LIMITS

What this measurement does not show

- One site, measured the day after a move, while search indexes still held the old pages.
- Ranking and citation are separate readings. You can have one without the other.
- The Claude answers ran through a subscription, not the API. The 360 answers cost $1.39 in API fees.
- Perplexity returned three errors. Those questions were asked again, and the rates leave the errors out.

REPEAT IT

Run the same panel on your own site

- The article: synapsereality.io/aeo-vs-seo/
- The tool: answer-engine-benchmark, open source, synapsereality.io/open-source/answer-engine-benchmark/
- Write down ten questions your buyers ask. Ask each engine three times and log the sources it cites.