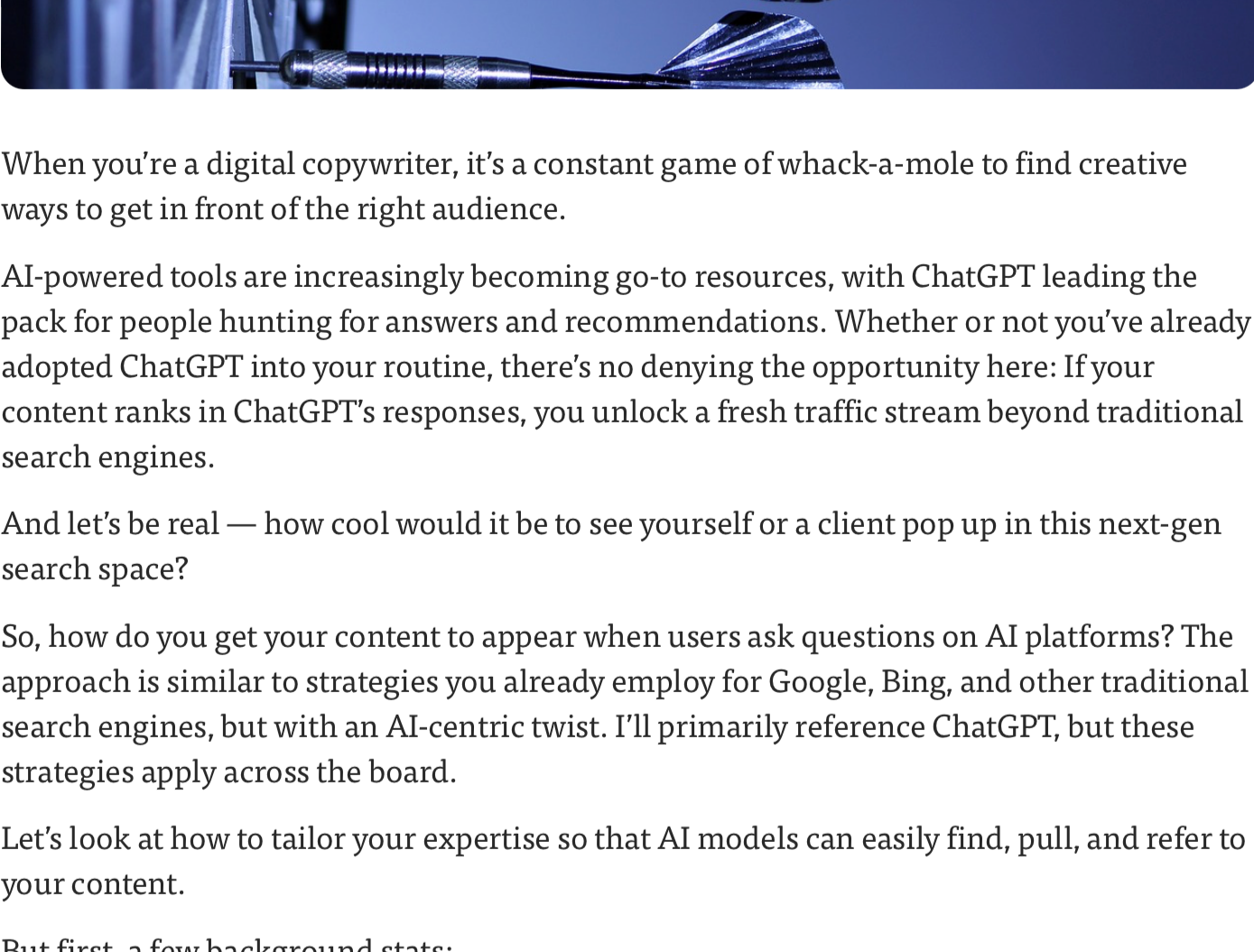


How to Rank in ChatGPT and AI-Driven Platforms

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9 minute read



When you're a digital copywriter, it's a constant game of whack-a-mole to find creative ways to get in front of the right audience.

AI-powered tools are increasingly becoming go-to resources, with ChatGPT leading the pack for people hunting for answers and recommendations. Whether or not you've already adopted ChatGPT into your routine, there's no denying the opportunity here: If your content ranks in ChatGPT's responses, you unlock a fresh traffic stream beyond traditional search engines.

And let's be real — how cool would it be to see yourself or a client pop up in this next-gen search space?

So, how do you get your content to appear when users ask questions on AI platforms? The approach is similar to strategies you already employ for Google, Bing, and other traditional search engines, but with an AI-centric twist. I'll primarily reference ChatGPT, but these strategies apply across the board.

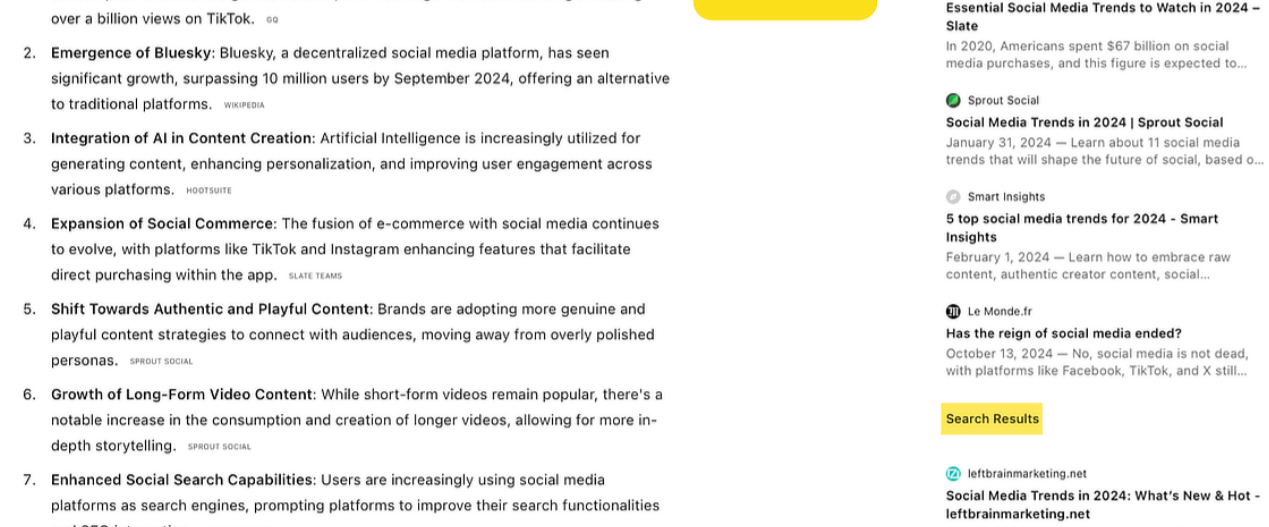
Let's look at how to tailor your expertise so that AI models can easily find, pull, and refer to your content.

But first, a few background stats:

Market Share: AI Platforms vs. Traditional Platforms

According to [Statista](#), in 2023 approximately 13 million U.S. adults reported using generative AI as their primary tool for online searches. The number of online users is projected to exceed 90 million by 2027. As a result, the online search market is likely to be one of the industries most affected by AI.

of adults in the US using AI first for online search in 2023 & 2027 (in millions)



As of August 2024, ChatGPT had reached over 200 million weekly active users, doubling its user base since 2023. Though still a fraction of Google's traffic (over 3.5 billion searches per day, translating to more than 24.5 billion searches weekly), ChatGPT's user engagement is substantial and growing, particularly among younger target audiences. That means ranking in AI-generated searches would be particularly useful if you have information valuable to that demographic.

chat.openai.com Website Traffic Demographics. Audience composition can reveal a site's current market share across various audiences. chat.openai.com's audience is 54.56% male and 45.44% female. The largest age group of visitors are 25 - 34 year olds.

How AI Search Performance Differs from Traditional Search Engines

AI searches differ in several ways, especially in how they engage with users, gather information, and structure responses. Here are the main distinctions:

— 1 —

Conversational Interaction vs. Search Queries

- ChatGPT: ChatGPT does what the name implies — it chats with you. Chat allows users to ask detailed, open-ended questions or have ongoing discussions... similar to the conversational tone of Alexa or Siri. Responses are tailored to sound natural and cohesive, mirroring human dialogue to the best of its ability. ChatGPT can answer follow-up questions based on previous interactions without the user having to repeat themselves, providing a more interactive experience.
Traditional Search Engines: These engines operate using more rigid, keyword-based queries and deliver a list of results in response. They interpret search terms quickly and provide links to content that might contain the desired information rather than offering direct, conversational responses.

— 2 —

Real-Time Information and Accuracy

- ChatGPT primarily pulls its responses from a training dataset that's current through April 2023 and doesn't automatically know about new events. It can access and perform live web searches if you specifically ask or if it detects that more recent information seems needed, but otherwise, it defaults to the dataset. So, fact-checking may be needed for time-sensitive info unless you request a live update.

Here's an example of a prompt that would trigger a real-time search for up-to-date information: "What are the current top social media trends for 2024?" This type of prompt explicitly asks for recent data, resulting in a live search to gather the most current information.

Here is how ChatGPT reacted to this prompt, including its response text, citations, and search results pulled for the question:

ChatGPT response to 'What are the current top social media trends for 2024?'. The response lists trends such as 'Rise of AI Influencing', 'Emergence of Blusky', 'Integration of AI in Content Creation', 'Expansion of Social Commerce', 'Shift Towards Authentic and Playful Content', 'Growth of Long-Form Video Content', 'Enhanced Social Search Capabilities', and 'Focus on Niche and Micro-Communities'. It also includes a 'Search Results' section with links to various articles.

- Traditional Search Engines: Pull live data from a constantly updated index of webpages, returning results based on relevancy and freshness. Users get links directly to sources for information verification and access to various perspectives.

Here is Google's response using the same question posed to ChatGPT above:

Google search results for 'What are the current top social media trends for 2024?'. The results include an AI Overview section with a summary of trends, sponsored links, and organic search results from various sources like LinkedIn, HubSpot, and Social Media Trends.

If I could have squeezed more results into this article, we'd likely see additional references to the same sources, like the Hootsuite article. This pattern suggests that certain sources are widely recognized as authoritative, so they appear frequently across search results.

— 3 —

User Experience: Intent and Specificity

- ChatGPT: Uses natural language processing (NLP) to understand the context and intent behind a question to generate responses. It can personalize responses more effectively, making it a powerful tool for tailored, topic-specific assistance. Users can complete tasks within the chat interface, making it ideal for summaries, explanations, or creative responses from many sources, saving them from having to sift through multiple sites for answers.
Traditional Search Engines: Don't understand context as deeply; they rank and display links based on interpreting keyword relevancy and SEO factors. They are built to conduct live web searches that drive traffic to the most relevant sources, allowing users to research and explore topics across various pages. They often require the user to refine queries manually to get more specific answers, especially for complex or multi-part questions.

The Takeaway: ChatGPT offers a conversational, task-oriented experience based on past data and requires specific prompts for live searches. Traditional search engines prioritize real-time, link-based information discovery.

How might traditional search engines adapt their AI capabilities in response? Google is ramping up AI capabilities to improve how users access and digest information and unveiled a score of new AI tools at Google I/O 2024.

It's a lot to explore. But for our purposes here, the main takeaway is that Google's AI tools are focusing on making search results more user-friendly and enhancing interaction without shifting their primary role as a bridge to external content.

For a more comprehensive look at popular AI search tools and their distinct capabilities, check out this [Top 10 AI Search Engines Guide](#).

Strategies for Ranking on AI Platforms

Visibility on AI platforms enhances your brand much like traditional search engines by building authority, increasing traffic, and broadening brand awareness. Both require that you understand and address the needs of your audience before creating content.

— 1 —

Create High-Quality, In-Depth Content

Quality content has always been the cornerstone of SEO success, and it's equally important for ranking on AI-driven platforms. AI tools prioritize thorough, well-researched, and authoritative content, bypassing shallow or "thin" articles.

- Go Deep: AI tools pull from broad datasets and are likelier to use content that researches a topic thoroughly. Provide comprehensive information with actionable tips and detailed explanations. For instance, if you're writing about "content marketing for beginners," include a step-by-step guide, common mistakes, or essential tools.
Publish and Update Consistently: Update existing content and create fresh content to signal AI that your site is active, current, and relevant. Old or inaccurate information, especially in your blog posts, guides, or resources, will work against you.
Build Authority: Authority remains a key factor for ranking across platforms. All models favor trusted sources like industry reports, government publications, and academic research. Including credible, vetted references increases your content's chance of being ranked.

— 2 —

Optimize for AI-Specific Queries

Users tend to ask AI tools more conversational and specific questions, so optimizing your content to complement long-tail queries can help you here.

- Write Like a Human: Since ChatGPT is designed to mimic natural conversation, avoid overly technical jargon or robotic language and embrace conversational keywords. How? Think of questions your audience might pose to an AI tool — instead of a short, broad term like "SEO tips," pinpoint the details like "What are the best SEO tips for nonprofit businesses?" Tools like AnswerThePublic or Google's "People Also Ask" can help you identify conversational keywords.
Answer FAQs Directly: Users often turn to ChatGPT for quick, specific answers. Adding an FAQ section with questions like "How can I use social media to build brand loyalty?" or "What are the best times to post?" makes it easy for AI tools to extract direct answers.
Provide Clear Summaries: AI tools love content with up-front answers. Starting articles with a concise summary or key takeaway helps readers and AI quickly grasp the main points.

— 3 —

Leverage Featured Snippet Optimization

Using strategies employed by featured snippets builds on the optimization tips in No. 2, and is ideal for AI platforms. Snippets provide concise answers that AI can easily find and showcase.

- Use Questions as Headers: Structure content with direct questions as headers, followed by straightforward answers. For example, include a header like "What are the top email marketing tips for small businesses?" and then follow with an informative, accessible response.
Use Scannable, Snippet-Friendly Formatting: Use formatting choices that AI tools favor, including numbered steps, headers, lists, tables, short paragraphs, and bullet points. Don't forget that FAQ section!

— 4 —

Use Structured Data and Semantic SEO

As discussed, AI models interpret content by recognizing patterns, extracting data, and understanding context. Structured data and semantic SEO make your content easily digestible for AI tools.

- Implement Schema Markup: Schema markup is code you add to your webpages that helps search engines and AI tools better understand your content's structure — which is another fancy way to say formatting matters! You can do much of this on your own by the way you structure your copy, or you can opt for plugins.
Leverage Semantic SEO: Semantic SEO is a strategy focused on creating content around a whole topic, not just specific keywords. It involves using related terms and phrases to give AI a deeper understanding of the subject. For example, if you're writing about "email marketing," include terms like "open rates," "CTR," "newsletter engagement," and "email segmentation" to provide context.

— 5 —

Include Evergreen Content

Evergreen content contains information that remains relevant and valuable over time, regardless of changing trends. Some fear that AI will negatively impact evergreen content, because it summarizes information from many sources and does not always link back to the original site — similar to the concerns marketers had with featured snippets.

Others argue that evergreen content is more valuable than ever as AI platforms feature content that provides consistent, reliable information and can be sourced from both current and older material. While the full impact remains uncertain, it's wise to continue producing high-quality content that will stay relevant for years. This often includes...

- How-To Guides: Step-by-step tutorials on common industry topics are consistently in demand. Topics like "How to Set Up Google Analytics" or "How to Start a Blog" are examples that readers will search for continually.
Best Practice Guides: Content that covers established best practices for a longer shelf life. For example, "Best Practices for Email Marketing" or "SEO Tips for Small Businesses" are resources that AI tools can reference consistently.
Glossaries and Definitions: Industry-specific terms often appear in AI queries. Providing definitions and explanations can help your content get referenced when users ask for definitions. A glossary section for complex topics is a great way to ensure your content remains useful.

— 6 —

Target Niche Topics with Depth

Broad topics like "digital marketing" or "content creation" can be crazy competitive. Focusing on niche areas increases your chances of being referenced in AI platforms because they are more specific and have less competition.

- Select Niche Subtopics: Rather than discussing "content marketing," consider a topic like "content marketing for sustainable brands" or "SEO strategies for fitness bloggers." Such content aligns well with AI-driven searches, especially when users ask precise questions.

— 7 —

Build and Expand Your Digital Footprint

A wide online presence boosts your chances of being recognized and referenced by AI models.

- Share Content Cross-Platform: Use social media, forums, and guest blogging to expand your reach and attract the attention of AI tools.
Share Content and Earn High-Quality Backlinks: Content with strong backlink profiles is more likely to be seen as trustworthy. Seek backlinks from reputable websites via guest blogging, collaborating on industry projects, or networking with other creators. I have succeeded by approaching professionals I admire and interviewing them for articles, which led to them sharing my work and giving me backlinks. Win-win!
Engage in Communities: Participate in relevant industry communities such as LinkedIn groups, forums, or content creation networks. By contributing your insights and expertise, you increase the reach and visibility of your content.
Engage Your Audience: Social media engagement rates such as comments, shares, or positive feedback indicate that your content is valuable. AI tools like ChatGPT may prioritize content with stronger engagement metrics because they signal trustworthiness and audience approval.

— 8 —

Monitor and Adjust Your Strategy

Track content performance and adjust your strategy based on these insights.

- Analyze Engagement Metrics: Monitor comments, shares, and feedback on each piece to gauge user engagement.
Experiment with Formats: Test different content styles and structures, like infographics or interactive elements to see what works best for AI platforms.
Conduct Searches in ChatGPT: Enter your questions into Chat and other platforms and see what comes up. How can you structure your content to compete with those who are ranking for the questions you posed, and do they feel relevant to you or your client?

As a fun little experiment, I asked Chat to create a visual summary of the 10 points I just discussed here — and I got this nifty little pie chart:

Not bad, but not quite the detail I was looking for. Then I got to work on my own as a parting gift you can refer to as you craft AI-friendly content. I believe this is a good example of how you need to interact with AI to get the results you want!

Summary: 10 Steps to Create AI-Friendly Content. 1. Produce High-Quality Content. 2. Optimize for AI-Specific Queries. 3. Answer FAQs. 4. Leverage Featured Snippets. 5. Use Clear Formatting Techniques. 6. Implement Structured Data and Semantic SEO. 7. Include Evergreen Content. 8. Target Niche Topics in Depth. 9. Build Your Digital Footprint. 10. Monitor and Adjust Your Strategy.

Parting Thoughts

Ranking in AI platforms is another avenue to reach audiences and position your content as a trusted resource. It's no longer only about Google or Bing; AI-friendly content interacts with your audience in a slightly different way from what you may be used to. By keeping these strategies in mind, you can position your brand, blog, or business in an AI-driven landscape.

Stay flexible as you learn and adapt to these tools... and be ready for rapid change! Think of this shift as a new opportunity, and you'll be prepared to grow your digital presence across emerging and growing AI platforms.