A Practitioner's Guide to GEO Measurement

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AI-led discovery is changing how people find, interpret and trust information. As such, practitioners need a simple guide to align metrics, supporting clear objectives and distinguishing between outputs, out-takes, outcomes and impact.

This guide should be read alongside the AMEC GEO Principles. The principles define what good GEO measurement should uphold; this guide explains how practitioners can apply them in practice.

There are Three Connected Areas of Evaluating GEO

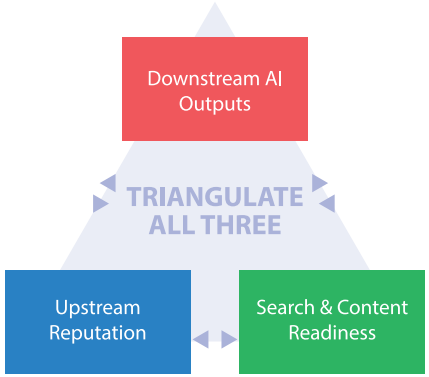
The framework is built around three interconnected measurement areas that should always be assessed together and triangulated — not treated as a fixed sequence.

DOWNSTREAM AI OUTPUTS

Observe what users see, how a brand appears, from where and in what context. Treat as directional evidence — results vary by platform, query and time.

The essentials of downstream outputs

- Presence: does the brand appear?
- Prominence: how visible is it?
- Framing: how is it described?
- Source mix: which sites are cited or linked?
- Message accuracy: are the core facts right?
- Risk flags: are there errors, outdated claims or misleading comparisons?



SEARCH & CONTENT READINESS

Is the content findable, structured and current: site-wide search visibility, crawlability of key pages, clear headings and question formats, freshness, authority and credible inbound links. Many AI discovery tools use web search or hybrid retrieval — strong search foundations still matter.

UPSTREAM REPUTATION

Measure the information environment that AI tools draw on: earned media, reviews, expert commentary, thought leadership, shared/social content, and PR-shaped owned content (newsrooms, FAQs, bios). If this record is strong and consistent, AI outputs are more likely to reflect that.

Downstream AI outputs are the most visible part of GEO measurement. They provide a directional sense check of whether upstream reputation and search readiness are influencing what people see. Because results vary by platform, query, user context, market and time, downstream monitoring should be treated as directional evidence. It can show patterns. It cannot, on its own, provide a definitive performance score.

Five things to keep in mind when evaluating downstream AI outputs:

Unbranded vs branded prompts are necessary: key metrics are based on a foundation of prompts/ queries that the LLMs are answering. To get a true read on where your brand or company is you need to be sure to include both branded and unbranded prompts

Retrieval and citation behaviour is not static: how AI models select, surface and cite sources is determined by the model companies themselves. This can shift without notice, meaning visibility patterns observed today may not reflect what is shown tomorrow. Treat source citation data as a snapshot rather than a stable signal.

Understand how your tool generates its results: current tools on the market take broadly one of two approaches: prompt simulation, which produces results indicative of what real users may see; or panel-based methods, which capture actual user interactions but typically represent a small fraction of the total daily prompts generated across any given platform. Neither is definitive. Knowing which approach underpins your data is essential to interpreting it correctly. This is particularly important where findings may be used in public, policy, regulated or institutional contexts.

GEO monitoring is a point in time, forward-looking exercise: unlike traditional media monitoring tools, there is no back-search capability or historical record to interrogate. Baseline data only exists from the point at which monitoring begins, and trend analysis can only be built prospectively. Programmes should be set up and running before they are needed, not after.

Audience-level claims require rigorous scrutiny: user-level data is not currently shared by model companies. To arrive at audience level data, you must identify as audience in prompts. Audience insights derived from GEO tools should be treated as directional and clearly caveated as such in reporting.

How to run a purposeful downstream audit

When running a downstream audit there are certain questions to address and key items to align on to ensure you are looking at the right things and retrieving the right data. These details will inform final configurations within platforms.

- What specifically the audit/work needs to answer
- What narratives we need to explore within the audit
- Brands vs products
- Sample prompts (both branded and unbranded)
- Key audiences (with definitions) to consider
- Markets / language
- Competitors
- LLMs to audit

How GEO maps to the AMEC framework

GEO adds new measurement points and another relevant data source, but the evaluation logic stays the same as the existing AMEC framework and should be used to build a holistic view of communications impact and audience outcomes.

Outputs: the communications activity and content the organisation creates or influences, including coverage, expert commentary and owned pages.

Out-takes: what people see and take away in AI environments, including mentions, citations, framing and message accuracy.

Outcomes: where links and referral traffic exist, web analytics platforms (such as Google Analytics) should be used to measure referral traffic from AI surfaces, including sessions, engaged sessions, conversions and assisted conversions

Impact: contribution to wider organisational goals, assessed through combined evidence rather than a single AI metric.

GEO Metrics Watchouts

- There is no single stable metric that captures total LLM visibility.
- No one tool can show complete AI visibility across the market.
- A change in an AI answer does not prove business impact on its own.
- Prompting alone does not reveal internal model knowledge or training influence.
- Making these limits explicit protects professional credibility and reduces the risk of overclaiming.

Related AMEC Resources

A Practitioner's Guide to GEO Measurement is a companion document to the AMEC GEO Principles. The Principles set out AMEC's recommended standards for measuring AI-led discovery, including the seven principles, evidence domains, minimum evidence standards and ethical guardrail.

About the authors

James Crawford

James Crawford is managing director of PR Agency One, an award-winning consultancy based in Manchester and London, and co-chair of AMEC's Agency Group. He has spent more than a decade championing stronger, more transparent approaches to PR measurement and evaluation. Through PR Agency One's Creative Effectiveness proposition and its proprietary OneEval framework, James focuses on helping organisations connect communications activity with brand visibility, reputation and commercial outcomes across earned, shared, owned and search environments. A Fellow of the PRCA, he regularly advises businesses in healthcare, technology, financial services, retail and the built environment, with a growing focus on AI-led discovery and search visibility.

Ben Levine

Ben Levine directs TRUE Global Intelligence at FleishmanHillard, where he leads research, analytics and measurement programmes for global brands. With more than 15 years' experience spanning FleishmanHillard and Ketchum, he has advised clients including Samsung, Bayer, Mastercard and Pfizer on audience insight, brand performance and communications effectiveness. A former AMEC board member, Ben helped shape the Barcelona Principles 3.0 and 4.0 and contributed to the development of AMEC's Measurement Maturity Mapper. He is a regular international speaker on communications measurement, analytics and audience intelligence.

Matt Oakley

Matt Oakley is SVP of Intelligence & AI at Hotwire Global, where he leads the agency's AI, analytics and insights consultancy across Hotwire and ROI·DNA. With more than 14 years' experience in agency-side data, analytics and AI, Matt specialises in applying measurement, intelligence and emerging technologies to communications and marketing challenges. He is a board director of AMEC and co-chair of its Agency Group, where he supports agencies adapting to the impact of AI-led discovery and changing audience behaviour. Matt is also a frequent speaker and contributor on AI, data and communications effectiveness.

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Mary Elizabeth Germaine is Chief Data & Strategy Officer at Ketchum, where she leads the agency's global research, measurement and analytics practice. Since joining Ketchum in 2001, she has played a central role in expanding the division into a global operation. Her expertise covers corporate reputation, strategic communications planning, audience insight and evaluation. In her time with Omnicom, Mary Elizabeth co-developed omniearnedID™, a precision communications platform designed to connect earned media and business impact and for the past 18 months she has been part of a cross-agency team developing Omnicom's GEO offering called AI Optix. She serves on the AMEC global board and is a regular speaker at leading communications and analytics conferences.

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Amber Daugherty, MCM, is Director, Value & Impact at Big Valley Marketing where she helps communicators connect their work to outcomes that matter. With a background in healthcare communications and a Master of Communications Management from McMaster + Syracuse focused on PR's contribution to organisational goals, she's spent her career asking – and answering – the question: does any of this actually make a difference? She also serves on the AMEC Board of Directors and the IPR Measurement Commission.

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Rob Key is the founder and CEO of Converseon, a leading AI-driven consumer intelligence and social data technology firm established in 2008. A pioneer in transforming social listening into "predictive decision intelligence," Key specialises in using machine learning to map unstructured data to business outcomes.