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The Intelligence Gap

State of Enterprise Agentic AEO 2027

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Executive Summary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The AEO agent isn't the advantage. The intelligence underneath it is.

Agentic AEO has moved from experiment to business imperative. **82%** of the 191 enterprise leaders we surveyed are deploying AI agents for AEO or plan to, and **99%** plan to increase their investment over the next 12 months.

But the unified intelligence needed to power those agents hasn't caught up. **Fragmented data is the #1 barrier** to advancing agentic AEO (**30%**), nearly double the next top barrier. A third of enterprises (**33%**) still manage AEO data across siloed tools and teams, and only **4%** have fully unified AEO data or an intelligence layer feeding their agents and systems directly.

Leaders and practitioners disagree on the best way to accelerate their agentic AEO progress. Investing in a **unified platform** connecting visibility, analytics, and technical data is the **#1 accelerator overall** (37%) and **the top choice for a majority of directors** (45%) and **managers** (34%).

Higher up the org chart, leaders reach for something else: **60% of C-suite respondents chose pre-built agents** as the top accelerator, compared to just 17% of directors and 29% of managers.

That gap matters. Pre-built agents can speed up the work, but they can't fix fragmented data on their own. Agents don't create the advantage. The intelligence they run on does.

Agentic AEO is also a shared mandate. The most common model is shared ownership between **Marketing and IT** (39%), rather than any single team.

So far, content workflows lead as the primary use case for agentic AEO. **86% of enterprises** deploy it within **at least one content workflow**, compared to **62% for AI visibility and intelligence** and **54% for reporting.**

The payoff is real. Among enterprises that have deployed AI agents for AEO, **89% report a moderate or significant impact on brand visibility in AI-generated answers**, and a majority report a positive impact on all five outcomes we measured.

This report gives digital leaders a deployment benchmark to compare against, and a clear look at what separates enterprises scaling agentic AEO from those stuck in pilot.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Top Takeaways

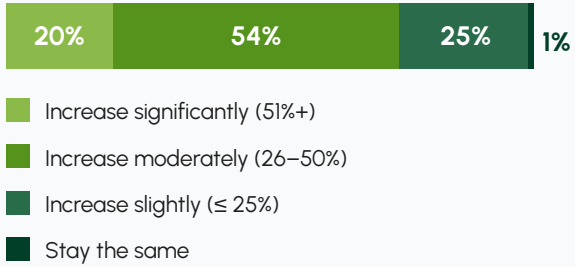
Enterprises are going all-in on AI agents, but fragmented data is holding them back. The way forward starts with unified intelligence.

The State of Agentic AEO Today

82%

of enterprises are **implementing agentic AEO** or plan to.

And the investment is following: **99%** of those pursuing agentic AEO **plan to increase investment** in the next 12 months.



The Intelligence Gap

#1 BARRIER

Fragmented data

is the top barrier to advancing agentic AEO.

It's no surprise once you look at the foundation underneath most AEO agents:

ONLY **4%** have unified AEO data or an intelligence layer feeding their agents and systems directly.

33% still manage AEO data in siloed tools.

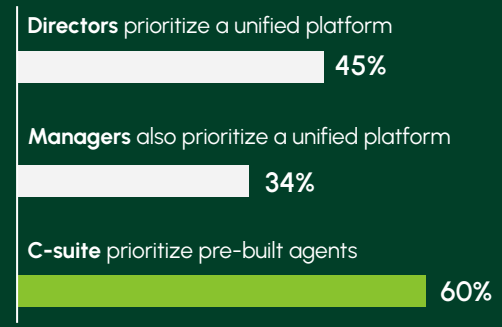
The Unlock

#1 ACCELERATOR

Unified intelligence

An AEO platform unifying visibility, analytics, and technical data is the top accelerator overall.

Practitioners see it most clearly. Executives prioritize a different fix:



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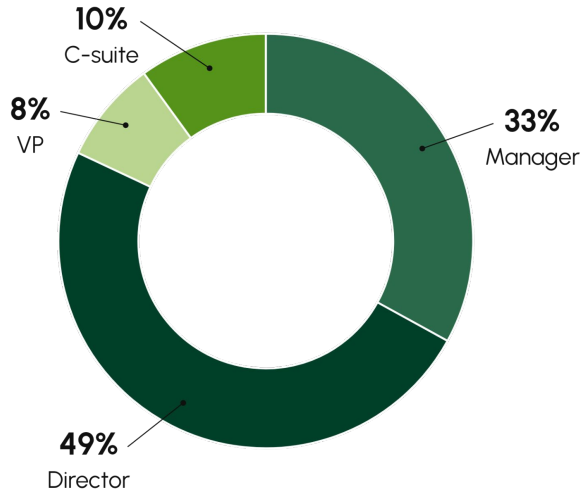
Methodology

METHODOLOGY

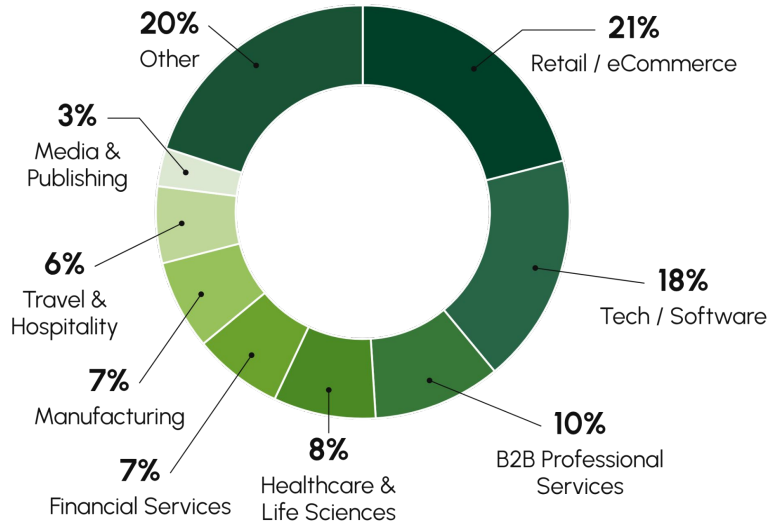
The State of Enterprise Agentic AEO Survey

The findings in this report come from **191 enterprise marketing and technology leaders**, Manager-level and above, at organizations with 500+ employees. Each oversees or directly manages AI search visibility/AEO (**40%**), content marketing (**31%**), SEO (**19%**) or marketing technology (**11%**).

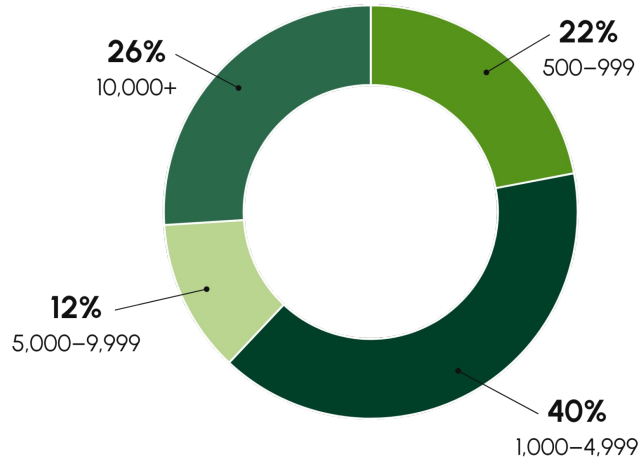
Seniority Level Breakdown



Industry Split



Business Size by Number of Employees

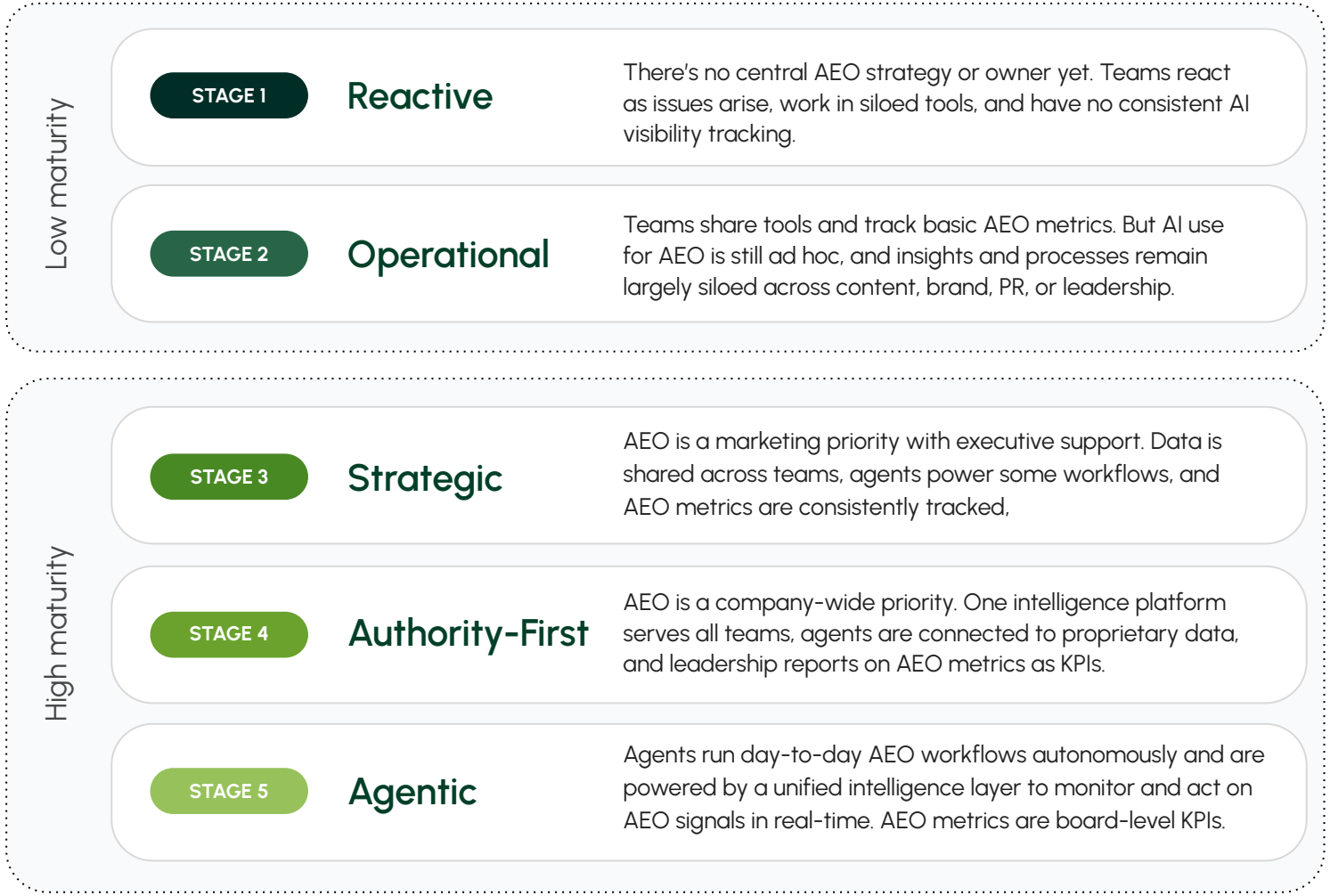


METHODOLOGY

How We Measured Agentic AEO Maturity

In the report, we speak to the concept of agentic AEO maturity to further segment the data.

We placed each respondent's organization in a stage based on what it actually does across **three dimensions**: **data infrastructure**, **agent deployment**, and **AI visibility measurement**.



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The State of Agentic AEO

Where adoption, use cases, and investments stand today and where they're headed

AI Agent Deployment Status for AEO

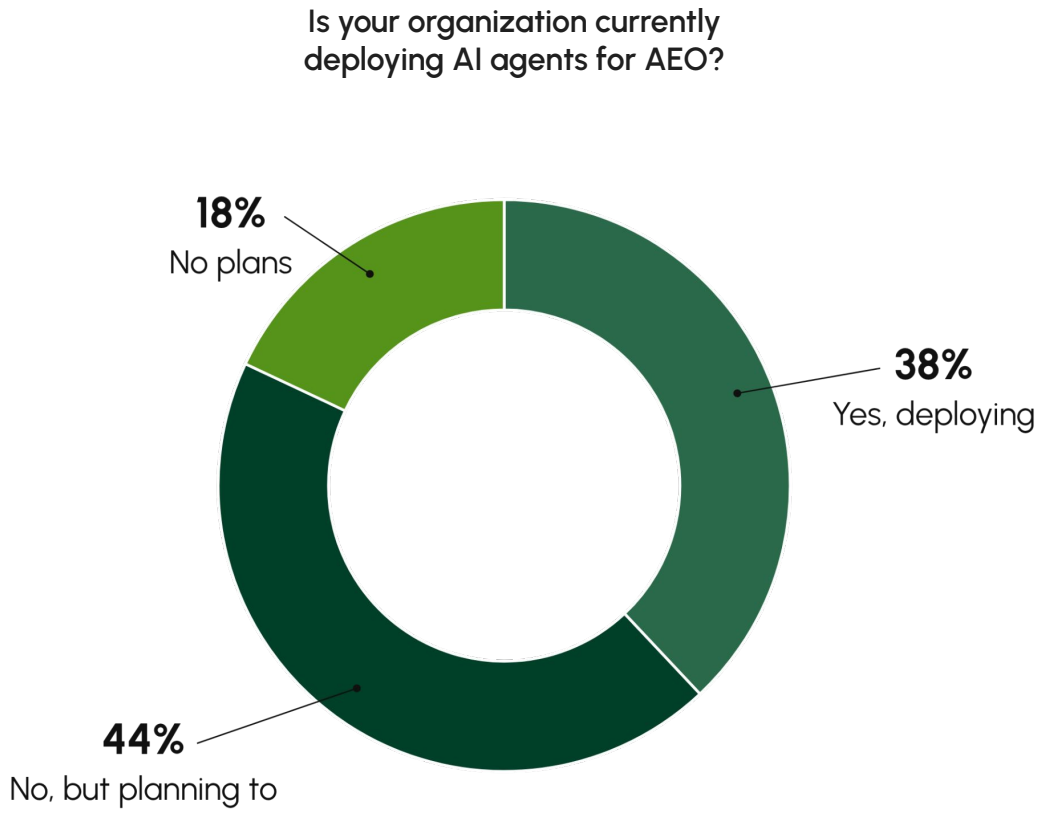
Overall

Most enterprises have moved past the *"should we"* conversation. Now they're figuring out how to get it right.

82%

of enterprises are deploying AI agents for AEO or plan to.

38% are already deploying AI agents for AEO, and another **44%** plan to. What those enterprises build on now will shape what they get back.



Agentic AEO Adoption by Industry

By Industry

Retail is moving fastest with agentic AEO adoption among analyzed industries.

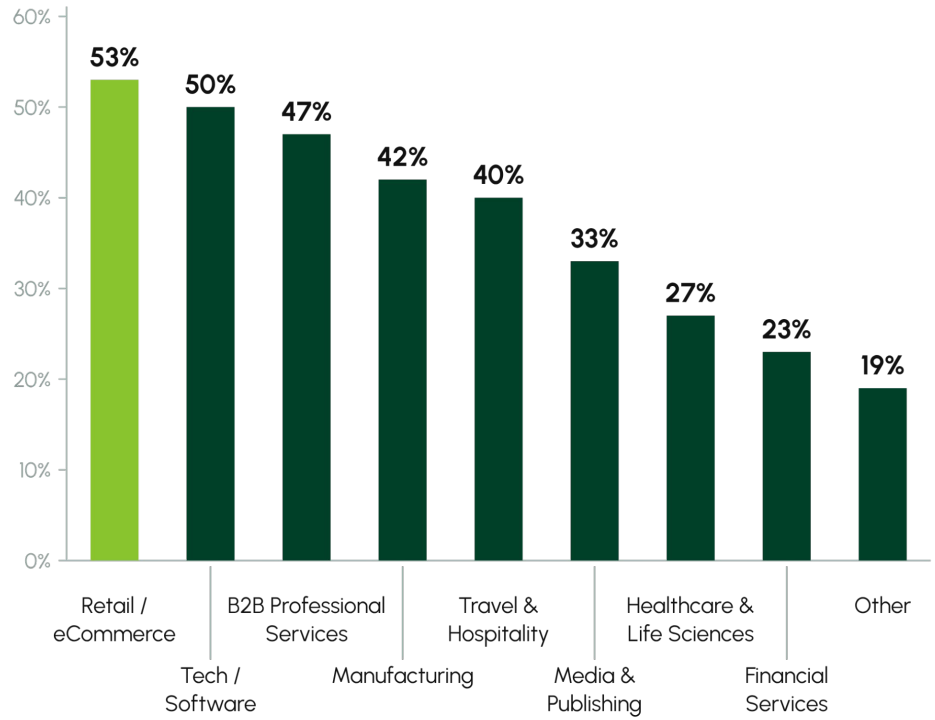
53%

of retail / eCommerce respondents are deploying AEO agents.

Retail/eCommerce (53%) and **technology/software** (50%) **lead** every other industry **in deploying AI agents for AEO**, well ahead of the 38% overall. The two may be moving fastest for different reasons.

- **Retail and eCommerce brands** have the most riding on discovery: brands compete to be found and chosen, and more product research now starts in AI-generated answers, while large catalogs create the kind of high-volume content work agents handle well.
- **Technology and software** companies are often early adopters of their own category: their teams tend to be comfortable building with AI, and their buyers increasingly research solutions in AI answers before they ever talk to sales.

Percentage within each industry currently deploying AI agents for AEO



What Enterprises Use AI Agents for in AEO

By Workflow Type

Content use cases lead by a wide margin. Technical use cases trail.

86%

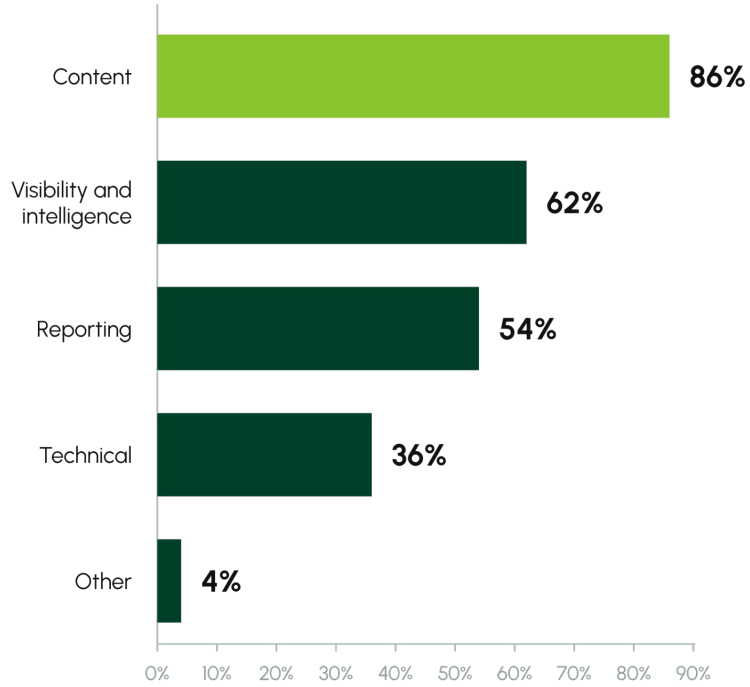
use AI agents for at least one content workflow.

Nearly every enterprise (86%) has put agents to work on **content**, with **strategy and planning** (58%) being the top use case, followed closely by **research and ideation** (56%), **content creation and drafting at scale** (55%), and **content optimization** (53%).

Far fewer have pointed them at the visibility, intelligence, and technical signals that can provide key context to those agents on what content to create or optimize.

Which AEO workflows is your team currently using AI agents for?
(Select all that apply)

Chart shows: % who selected at least one workflow in each of the survey's five groups



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Takeaways from the Experts

On The Workflow Types Enterprises Use AI Agents for in AEO

> It makes sense that people are turning to AI for content ideation, strategy, and production. The barrier to entry is low, and it takes real work off their plate.
>
> Technical workflows are different: a bad implementation can cause serious problems, so the hesitation there is understandable. Starting with lower-risk content work is how people build comfort with AI overall.

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Who Owns the Agentic AEO Strategy

Overall

Agentic AEO is most often a **shared mandate**, not owned by a single seat or team.

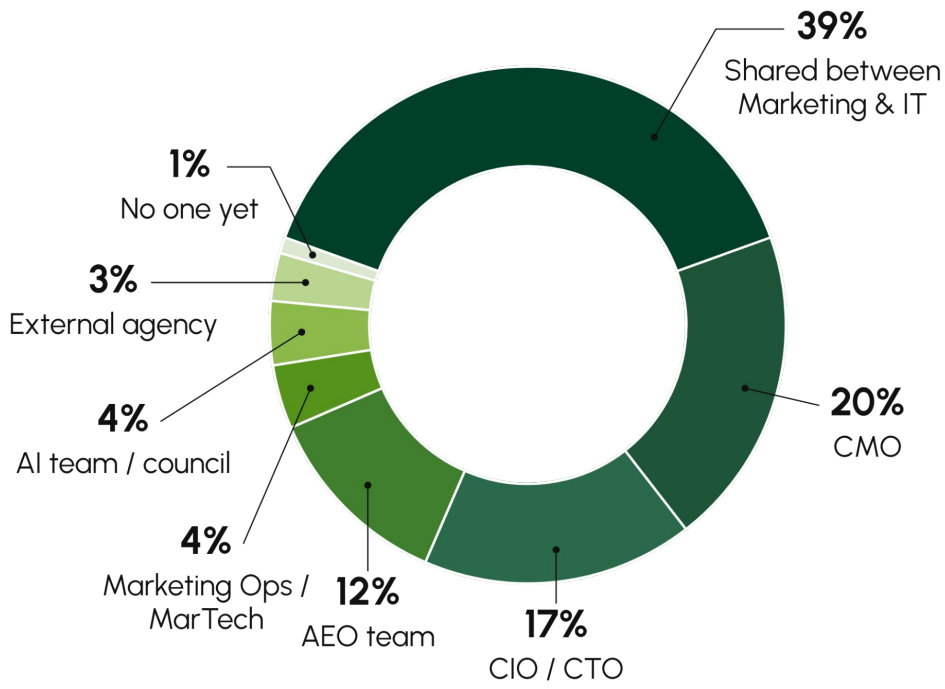
39%

report **shared ownership** of agentic AEO strategy **between Marketing and IT**.

Agentic AEO doesn't sit neatly with one team or department. The **most common approach** is **shared ownership between Marketing and IT (39%)**, ahead of CMO (20%) or CIO/CTO (17%) alone. Only 12% hand ownership to the AEO team itself.

That split mirrors what agents need to work: marketing's strategy, content, and performance data and IT's data, systems, and security.

Who is primarily responsible for your organization's agentic AEO strategy?



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Takeaways from the Experts

On Who Owns the Agentic AEO Strategy

> AEO is a C-level priority. How AI represents your brand reflects your position in the market. Brands **need to treat AEO as a business-level practice** rather than a siloed marketing program to succeed.
>
> That's why we see organizations building a Center of Excellence (CoE) for AEO winning in AI.

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How Agentic AEO Investments Are Changing in 2027

Overall

The investment is coming: virtually every enterprise pursuing agentic AEO plans to **spend *more* in the next 12 months**.

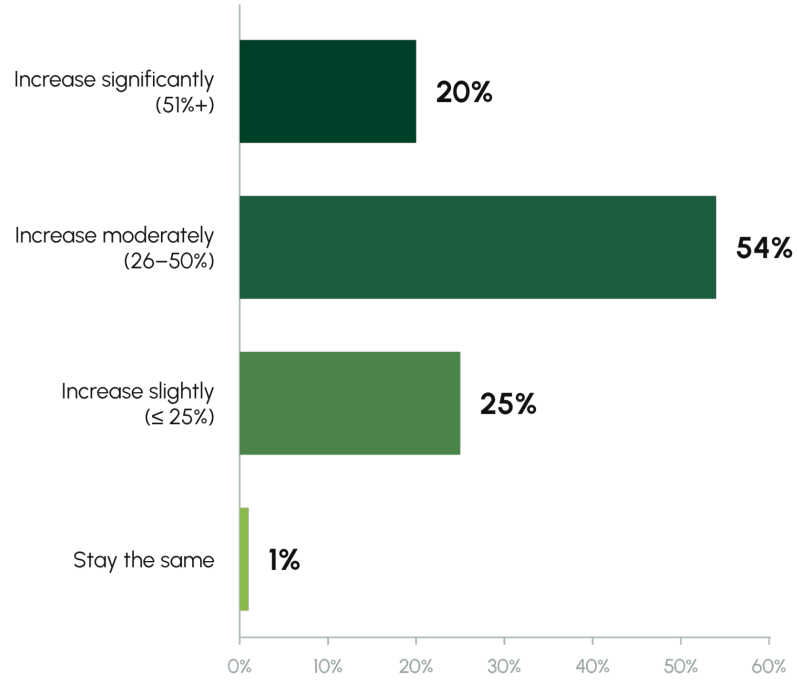
99%

plan to increase agentic AEO investment over the next 12 months. No one plans to cut.

Most of that growth is substantial: **74%** plan to raise investment **by 26% or more**.

The open question isn't whether budget is allocated. It's whether it goes to procuring/developing agents alone or to improving the intelligence and data foundation they run on to deliver better outputs.

How do you expect your organization's investment in agentic AEO to change over the next 12 months?



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The Intelligence Gap

How enterprises manage the data powering their AEO agents, the barriers holding them back, and the top accelerators

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How Enterprises Manage AEO Data

Overall

Agents are being deployed without the unified data meant to ground them.

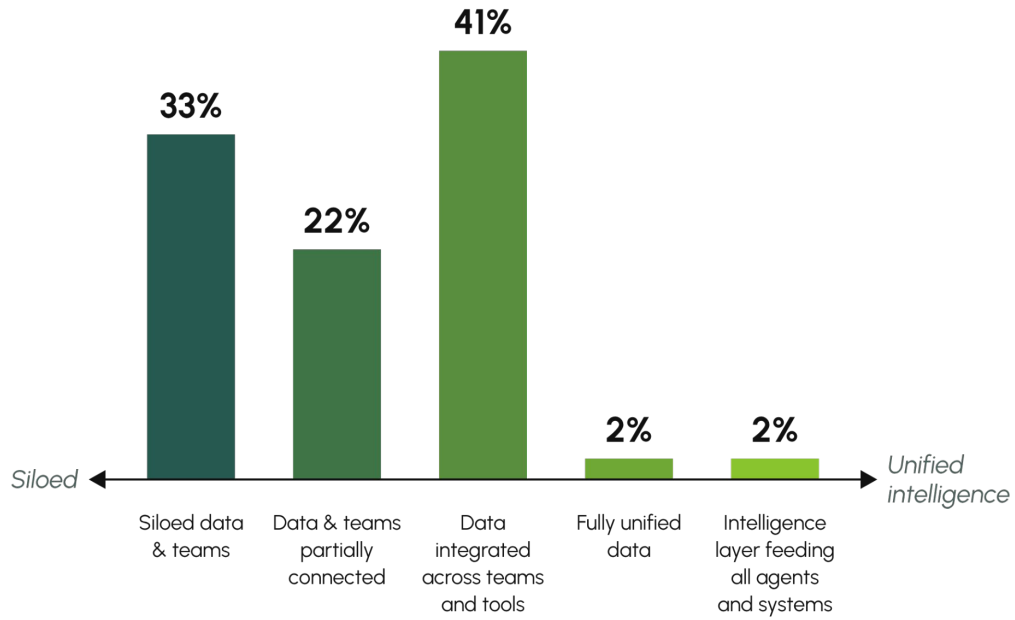
33%
report siloed AEO data and teams.

4%
have fully unified AEO data or an intelligence layer feeding all AEO agents and systems.

A **third of enterprises** (33%) still **manage AEO data across siloed tools and teams** and another **22% only have partially connected data**. Just **4%** have **fully unified AEO data or an intelligence layer** feeding AEO agents and systems directly.

That's the gap agents and agentic workflows are running into. When visibility, analytics, and technical data live in separate tools, an agent can only act on part of the picture. Yet 55% of enterprises are running agents or AI visibility measurement before resolving these data foundation issues.

Which best describes how your organization currently manages AEO data?



THE INTELLIGENCE GAP

Takeaways from the Experts

On How Enterprises Manage AEO Data

> A third of enterprises still manage AEO data across siloed tools and teams, and just 4% have fully unified AEO data or an intelligence layer feeding their agents and systems. That tells me **most agentic AEO today is being layered on top of fragmented systems without unifying context**.
>
> Agents can only reason over the context you give them. When visibility, analytics, and technical data live in separate places, an agent sees fragments, not the full picture.
>
> And unifying the data is only half of it. Every AEO metric is a fraction: your performance on top, the market you measure against on the bottom. If the bottom is a guess, then everything your agents act on is too. In an agentic model, **the quality of the system determines the quality of the outcome.**

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The Data Signals Feeding AEO Agents

Overall

The data measuring AI search performance ***isn't*** what feeds most AEO agents.

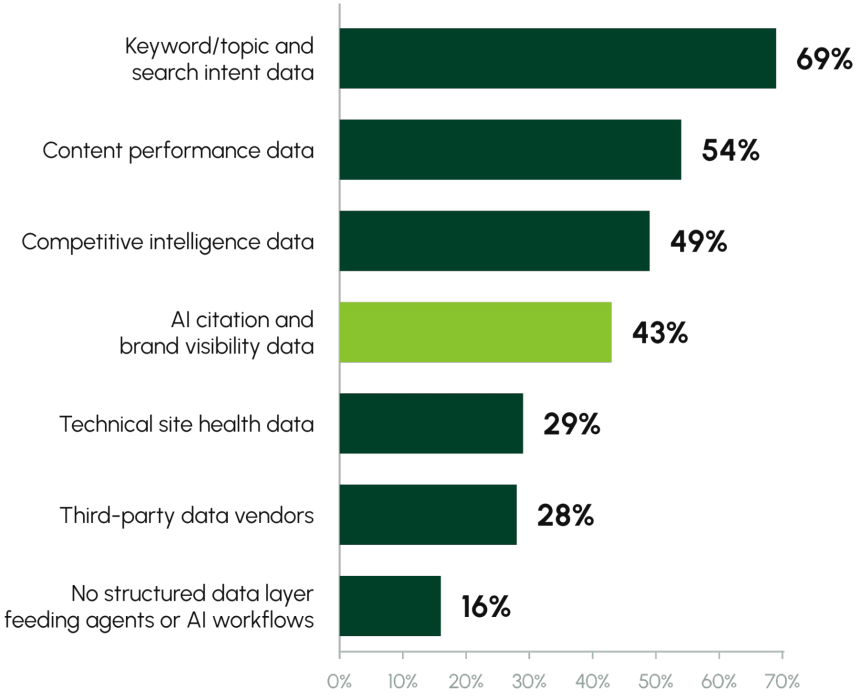
43%
feed agents AI citation and brand visibility data.

16%
have no structured data layer feeding their AI workflows

AI citation and brand visibility data is a critical signal built specifically for AI search, yet only 43% feed it to their agents. Keyword and search intent data (69%) still leads by a wide margin.

Agents built to improve AI visibility are running *without* visibility data at 57% of enterprises. They can't see where a brand is cited, what AI engines trust, or whether their work is paying off. Without that data, brands are relying on guesswork to determine what AI engines want.

What does your organization rely on to feed its AEO agents? (Select all that apply)



The Top Barriers to Advancing Agentic AEO

Overall

Fragmented data is the #1 barrier to advancing agentic AEO.

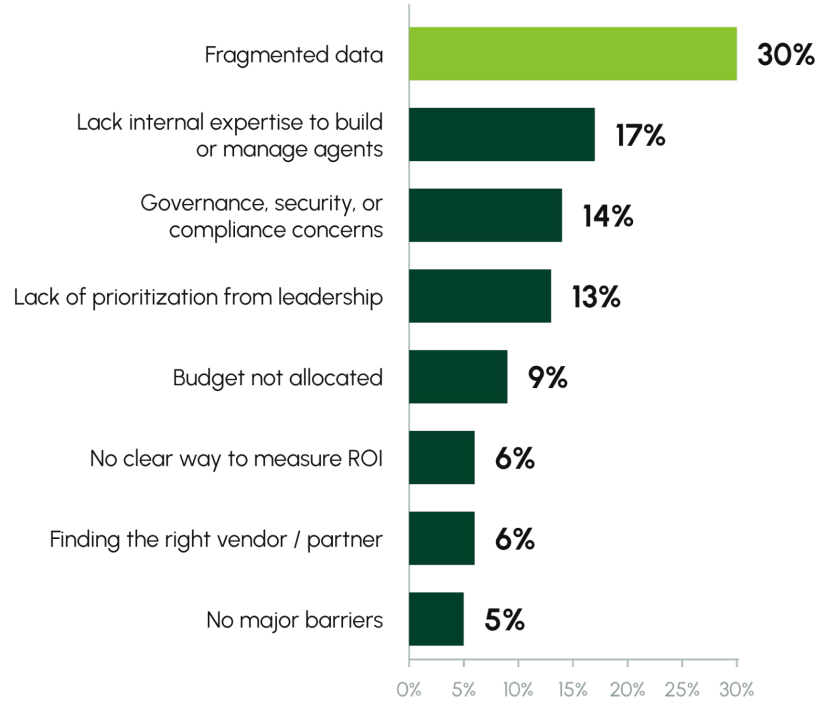
30%

say fragmented data is their single biggest barrier to advancing agentic AEO.

Fragmented data is cited nearly **twice as often** as the next top barrier.

Budget and tooling aren't what's in the way. Unifying visibility, analytics, and technical data signals is.

What is the single biggest barrier preventing your organization from advancing its agentic AEO program?



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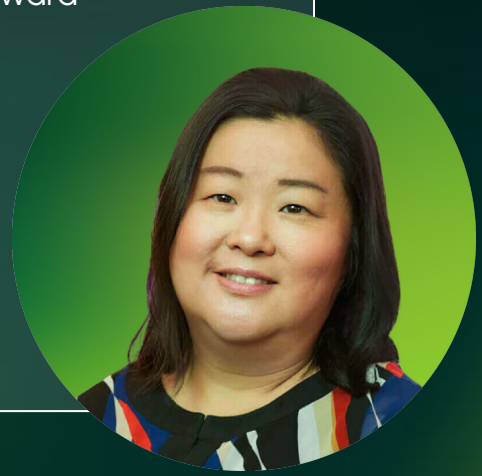
Takeaways from the Experts

On The Top Barriers to Advancing Agentic AEO

Fragmented data is cited nearly twice as often as any other barrier. Enterprises aren't short on ambition, budget, or tools. They're short on a single source of truth. You can't automate your way out of a data problem. You just get more AI slop, faster.

But a single source of truth only helps if it measures ***the right thing***. A mention where AI calls you the best choice and a mention with a caveat count the same in most AEO reporting, and only one of them wins the customer. Point agents at that metric and they'll optimize toward the wrong outcome. **Grounding matters more than generation.**

The teams that unify their data ***and*** measure how AI actually recommends them are the ones that will see agents do meaningful work that drives real results.



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The Top Accelerators for Agentic AEO Progress

Overall

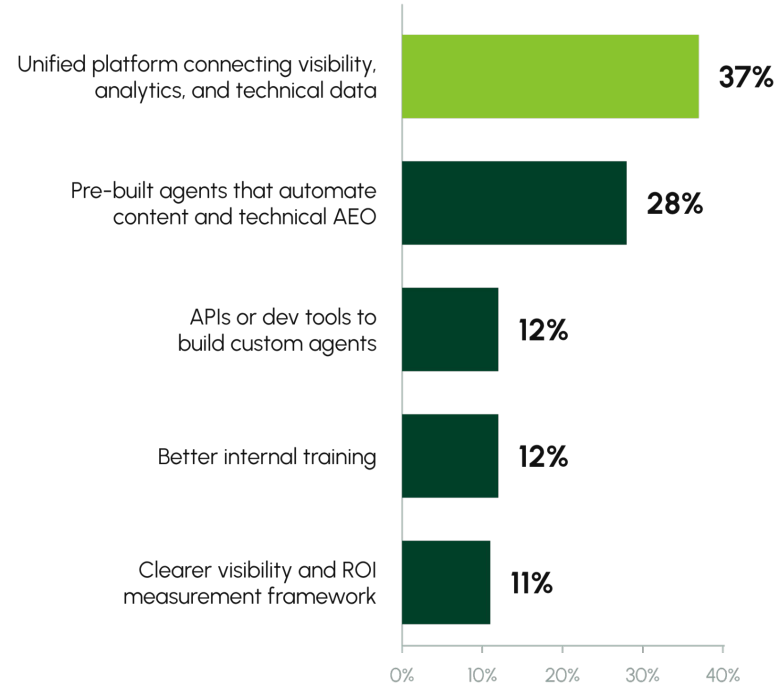
Unified intelligence ranks as the #1 accelerator of agentic AEO progress.

37% report a **unified platform connecting visibility, analytics, and technical data** would accelerate agentic AEO programs most.

Asked what would move them forward fastest, **more enterprises chose fixing the data foundation over adding agents**: 37% picked a unified intelligence platform, compared to 28% for pre-built agents.

Even when they know their data is the problem, some enterprises still reach for agents. A quarter (25%) of enterprises whose #1 barrier is fragmented data would still opt for pre-built agents first. It's an understandable shortcut when the pressure to keep up is high, but it doesn't pay off. Without unified intelligence underneath, agents end up scaling the same problems they were meant to solve.

Which of the following would accelerate your organization's agentic AEO progress most significantly?



The Top Accelerators for Agentic AEO Progress

By Seniority Level

The people doing the work want unified data.
Executives want pre-built agents.

60%

of **C-suite respondents** chose **pre-built agents** as their top accelerator.

45%

of **directors** chose a **unified platform** for visibility, analytics, and technical data as their top accelerator.

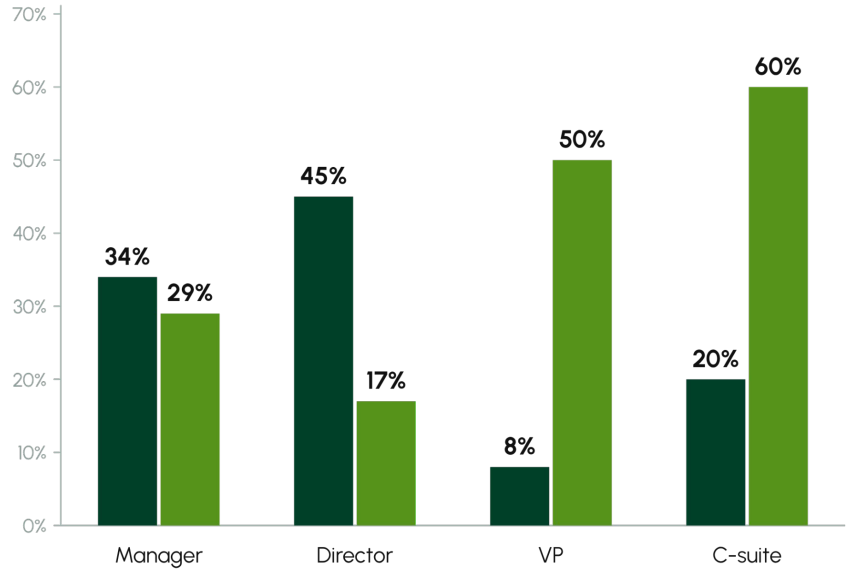
Leaders and practitioners see different fixes to accelerating agentic AEO efforts.

60% of C-suite and **50%** of VP respondents chose pre-built agents, while managers (**34%**) and directors (**45%**) were more likely to choose a unified platform.

Takeaway: Leaders should be involving the folks managing and doing the day-to-day AEO work in the conversation before shifting investments to what they perceive will be the right fix.

Which of the following would accelerate your organization's agentic AEO progress most significantly?

Chart shows: % at each seniority level who chose each option as the single biggest accelerator



THE INTELLIGENCE GAP

Takeaways from the Experts

On The Top Accelerators for Agentic AEO Progress by Seniority Level

> The teams doing the work often have a better understanding of the requirements needed to succeed. Agents are only as capable as the data and tools they connect to. Without the right infrastructure, they're significantly limited.
>
> Standing something up fast without the right intelligence isn't a winning agentic strategy.

AJ Kieffer
VP, Marketing
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Procurement Strategy

How enterprises are sourcing agents, and why

PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

Agent Procurement Strategies for AEO: Build vs. Buy

Overall

Most enterprises take a **hybrid path** to AEO agent procurement.

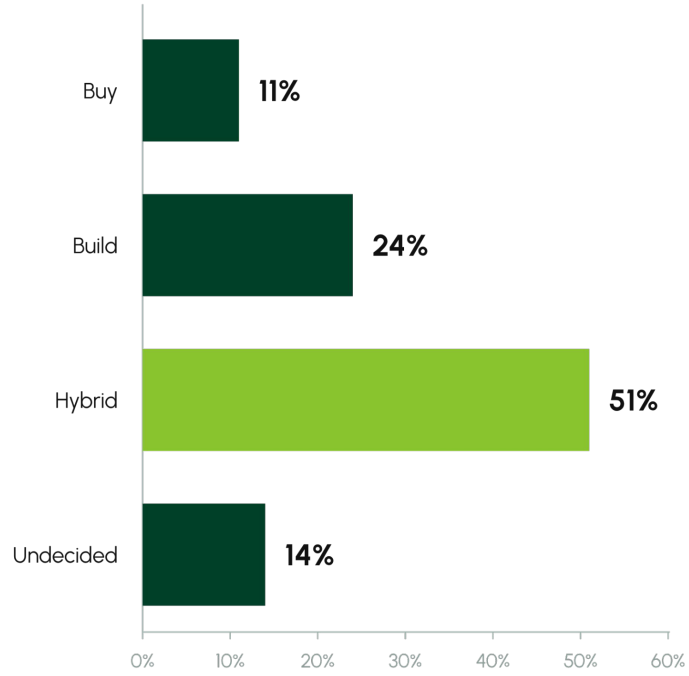
51%
take a hybrid approach to procuring AI agents for AEO.

24%
are building custom agents in-house or with a technology partner.

Few enterprises are buying agents off the shelf and stopping there. Only **11% rely on pre-built agents** from vendors alone. Most are building at least part of the stack: **24% build custom agents,** and **51% have a hybrid approach, buying** some agents **and building** others.

Whichever path enterprises take, those agents need the same thing to work: unified AEO intelligence that can plug into the tools and LLMs being used.

When it comes to AI agents for AEO, which best describes your organization's current strategy?



PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

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The Top Reasons Behind Agent Procurement Decisions

By Agentic AEO Maturity Stage

Speed is winning over data control among low maturity enterprises. That's how agents end up running on fragmented data.

42%

of high maturity enterprises chose **data control** as their primary reason for procurement approach.

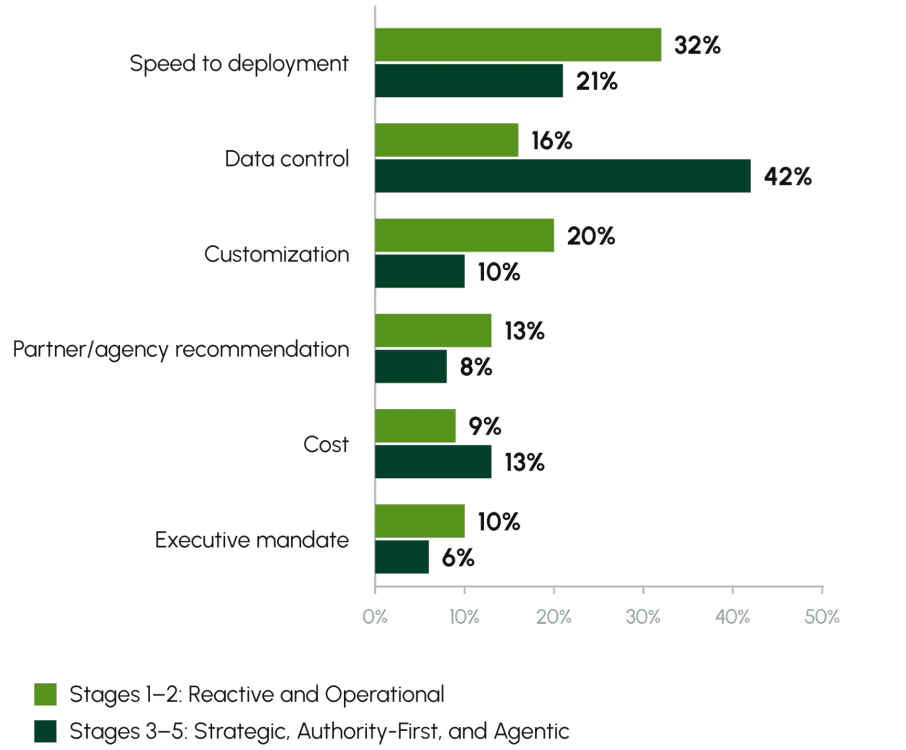
32%

of low maturity enterprises chose **speed to deployment** as their top reason.

Early on, speed wins. Among less mature enterprises (Stages 1–2), **speed to deployment** is the top reason (**32%**), followed by customization (**20%**).

As enterprises mature, the priority shifts. Among Stages 3–5, **data control** is the top reason (**42%**), more than double the share at Stages 1–2 (**16%**). The more mature the organization's agentic AEO program, the more it wants agents connected to its own unified intelligence.

What was the primary reason for your procurement approach?



PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

External Partner Preferences for Agentic AEO Development

Partner Types

When they pick a partner, **majority** of enterprises turn to **MarTech vendors** over agencies.

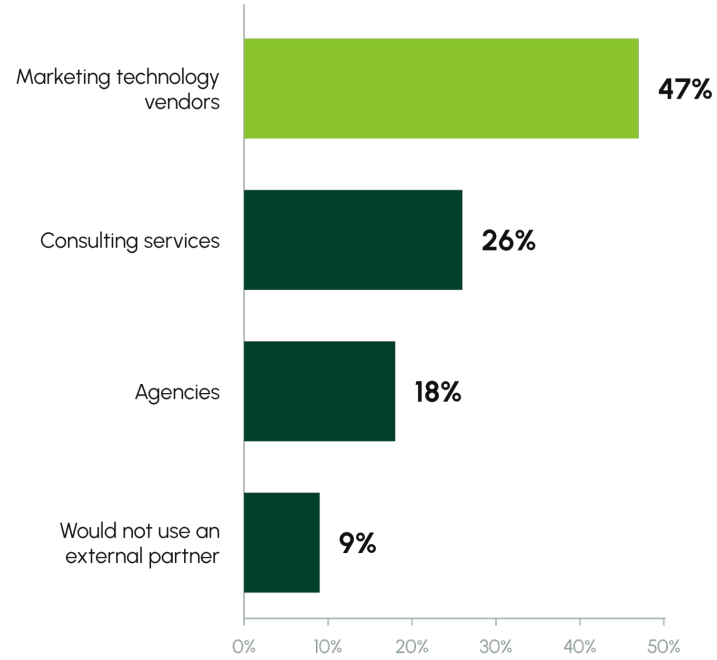
47%

turn to MarTech vendors first to build AEO agents.

When they pick a partner to build agents, enterprises turn to **MarTech vendors (47%)** first, ahead of consultancies (**26%**) and agencies (**18%**). **9%** wouldn't use an external partner at all.

One likely reason: agents are only as good as the data and systems they connect to, and MarTech vendors build those systems. Enterprises are going to the source rather than to intermediaries still building their own agentic AEO expertise.

Which type of external partners have you leveraged to build AI agents for AEO?



PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

Takeaways from the Experts

On External Partner Preferences for Agentic AEO Development

> It makes sense that enterprises turn to MarTech vendors most often. Agents are only as good as the data behind them. At Conductor, we didn't set out to build another LLM wrapper or agent fabric. We built a unified data engine that brings visibility, analytics, and technical data into a single source of truth, then puts that intelligence inside the agents, LLMs, and tools teams already use.
>
> **Enterprise brands don't need more AI noise.** They need a partner that grounds every agent in that intelligence, with the reliability and governance enterprise-scale demands.
>
> Following that, the next opportunity is **closing the learning loop**. Every action an agent takes is an experiment: what changed, how AI's recommendation of your brand moved, and what to do next. Almost no one is capturing that today. The enterprises that do will get smarter with every action. The rest will just get faster.

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CEO
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Outcomes

The results enterprises have produced from their agentic AEO investments

How AI Agents for AEO Have Changed Team Workflows

Overall

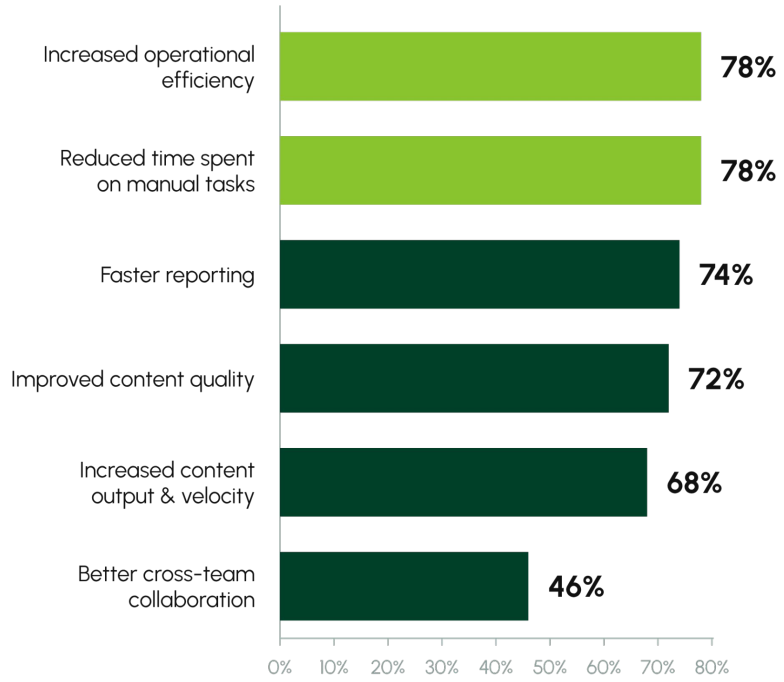
Every enterprise actively deploying agentic AEO reported at least one benefit.

78%

of deployers report less manual work and better operational efficiency.

The average deployer reported seeing improvements across four of the six areas we asked about, and 38% reported all six.

In what ways have AEO agents impacted your team's workflow? (Select all that apply)



The Business Impact of Agentic AEO Investments

Overall

Majority of enterprises see a **positive business impact** of agentic AEO investments across all five outcomes.

89%

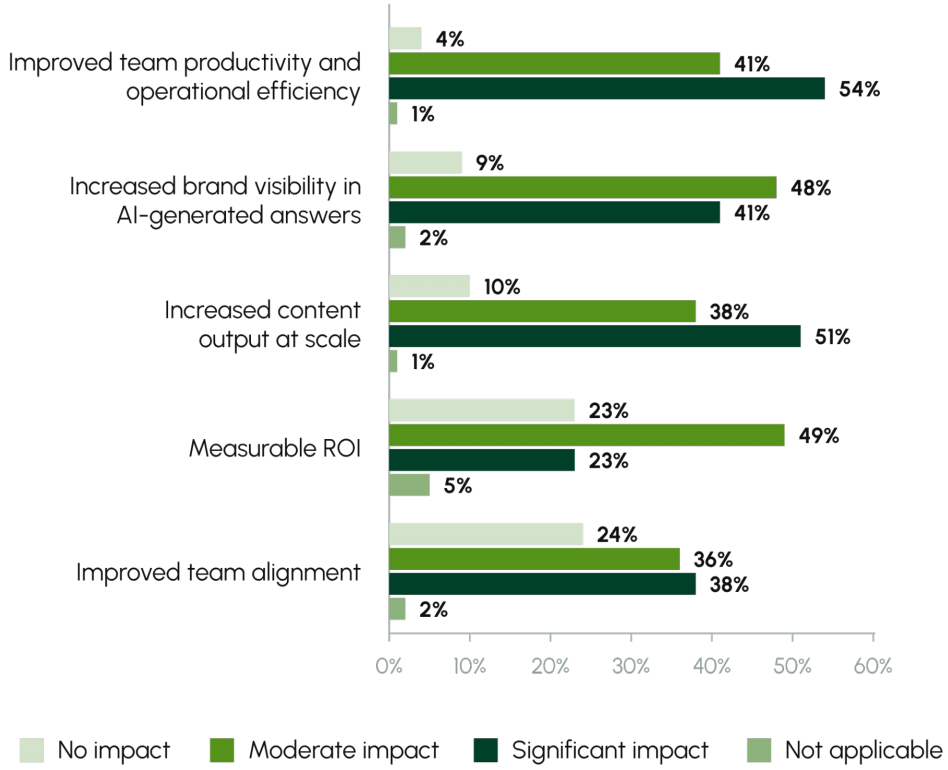
report a moderate or significant impact on **increased brand visibility in AI-generated answers**.

Positive impact is the norm: 95% report a moderate or significant impact on team productivity, 89% on improved brand visibility in AI-generated answers, and 89% on increased content output at scale.

But here's where things get interesting. Only 23% report a significant impact on **measurable ROI**. And the same percentage report no ROI impact at all.

The ROI gap aligns with the data gap. Enterprises reporting significant ROI are more than **twice as likely** to have integrated or fully unified AEO data (67% vs. 26%), while those seeing no ROI are **three times as likely** to still rely on fragmented data from siloed tools (44% vs. 15%). And proving ROI depends on measuring the right outcome. A mention isn't a recommendation, and only one of them wins the customer.

How would you rate the positive business impact of your agentic AEO investments across the following?



OUTCOMES

Takeaways from the Experts

On The Business Impact of Agentic AEO Investments

> Productivity and visibility gains are showing up quickly, which isn't surprising. **The bigger opportunity is ROI**. Only 23% report significant measurable ROI, and the gap comes down to data.
>
> Enterprises with unified AEO data are more than **twice as likely** to see that impact, while those stuck with fragmented tools struggle to prove value. **Getting the data foundation right is what turns early wins into results you can take to leadership.**

Patrick Reinhart
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Summary

SUMMARY

Five Moves to Close the Intelligence Gap

01 Start with the data foundation, not the agents

Fragmented data is the #1 barrier to advancing agentic AEO (30%), and only 4% have fully unified AEO data or an intelligence layer feeding their agents. Agents are only as good as the data they take in, so choose a partner or platform that brings your visibility, analytics, and technical data together before you scale.

02 Feed agents intelligence built for AI search

Only 43% feed their agents AI citation and brand visibility data, one of the critical signals built specifically for AI search. Agents working to improve AI visibility need to see where your brand is cited and what AI trusts to deliver accurate insights and opportunities that move the needle.

03 Measure before you scale

You can't know what's working if you can't measure it. Enterprises seeing significant ROI of agentic AEO investments are more than twice as likely to track AEO metrics programmatically as those seeing no ROI. Define the market you're measuring against, set AEO KPI baselines *before* agents go live, and track how AI recommends you, not just whether it mentions you, as you scale.

04 Run every agent on your own intelligence

Agents without access to the best AEO intelligence can only act on part of the picture. That's why data control becomes the top procurement driver as enterprises mature (42% at Stages 3–5 vs. 16% at Stages 1–2). Whether you build, buy, or do both, connect every AEO agent to the same unified intelligence.

05 Give practitioners and execs the same picture

Practitioners want unified data; executives want agents. Leaders should involve the people doing the day-to-day work in investment decisions to ensure everyone is aligned on what's actually holding agentic AEO efforts back.

SUMMARY

The State of Enterprise Agentic AEO in Review

Enterprises are **all-in on agentic AEO**: **82%** are deploying or planning to, and **99%** of those pursuing it plan to increase investment in the next 12 months.

But most are putting agents to work **before the intelligence underneath them is ready**. Fragmented data is the #1 barrier, only **4%** have **fully unified AEO data or an intelligence layer** feeding AEO agents and systems directly, and measurable ROI is the hardest outcome to prove.

The enterprises that pull ahead won't be the ones running the most agents. They'll be the ones that **unify their visibility, analytics, and technical data first**, feed it to every agent they use, and learn from every action those agents take.

Ground your agents in verified AEO intelligence

Agents are only as good as the intelligence behind them.

Conductor is the only end-to-end, enterprise AEO platform built on the industry's most complete data engine. It unifies your visibility, analytics, and technical data in one platform, then feeds it to the agents, LLMs, and tools you already use through API and MCP.

See how it works