



The Future of AI Search

16 Actionable Pivots That Improve Visibility & Conversions

CallRail

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Search Engine Journal®

Optimizing For Your Real Audience, Not Just Algorithms: The Future Of AI Search

Gone are the days when ranking first on Google meant easy conversions. These days, buyers aren't following the same predictable paths.

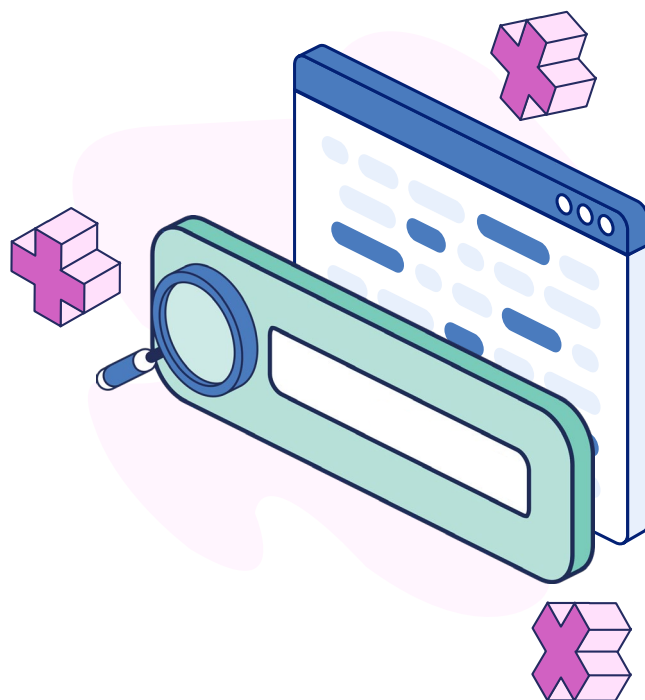
Users are skimming AI-generated summaries instead of clicking through. Buyers are making decisions in private channels, and they're spending time on platforms your analytics **might not even capture**.

While marketers are busy optimizing for search engines, many users are skipping the SERP while they talk to AI assistants, doomscroll social media, and lurk in forums. **All of this means buyers are bypassing the traditional content marketing funnel in greater numbers.**

At the risk of stating the obvious, Google will continue to rock the SEO industry, and AI will keep being a major disruption as it rapidly develops. **What matters more** is how customer behavior is changing in response, and what smart marketers are doing about it.

Take a gut check: Are you optimizing for how people actually shop today?

In this ebook, we will explore how to optimize for how real people behave with recent developments in search marketing.



Chapter 1 Are You Optimizing For People Or Just Search Engines?

Traditional SEO methods that focus solely on algorithms become less effective with each passing month.

Customers are finding and engaging with content in new ways, such as AI summaries, conversational chatbot searches, and cross-device queries.

Today, successful marketers base their strategies on how people behave.

Let's discuss the do's and don'ts of modern search optimization.

✗ Don'ts: Optimization Mistakes To Avoid

Don't chase keyword volume over content that appeals to your target audience.

Focusing solely on high-volume keywords ignores how AI systems process content. Unlike traditional crawlers that scan for keywords, [large language models](#) (LLMs) analyze semantic relationships between concepts.

Don't ignore AI Overviews and LLM behavior.

Google's [AI Overview coverage](#) varies by industry. Entertainment search queries saw 175% growth in AI Overviews, travel queries 108%, while B2B technology queries only 7%. Ignoring these patterns means missing opportunities.

✓ Do's: Optimize Content For Modern User Behavior

Structure content for people, search engines, and answer engines.

RESEARCH SHOWS AI SYSTEMS PRIORITIZE:

- **Direct answers.** LLMs extract the most relevant sentence first.
- **Structured data over narrative.** Tables, lists, and schema markup get higher weight.

Use schema and conversational language.

Recent studies find AI search crawlers prioritize natural writing, not keyword repetition.

- Favor clarity over keyword density in your content. Meaning matters more than repetition.
- Exact match keywords are mentioned in only 5.4% of AI Overviews. This reinforces that keyword stuffing is a thing of the past.
- To rank in these AI-generated summaries, write in simple, accessible language.



Insight

Track AI-Specific Behavior

Using AI-powered attribution, CallRail is able to identify visitors from ChatGPT, Gemini, and Perplexity. Ryan Johnson, chief product officer at CallRail, noted many AI search providers had “historically obscured the true source of traffic,” making this tracking essential.

Monitor Deeper Metrics

A multi-location veterinary group discovered **35% to 44%** of callers from organic search scheduled appointments, a high conversion rate that justified increased SEO investment. AI-referred visitors show similar high-intent patterns. This highlights the benefits of deeper attribution in closing the insight gap. With the right tools, marketers gain visibility into high-intent visitors previously hidden in analytics.

Chapter 2 Are You Creating Content That Purposefully Converts?

In an era where AI tools can generate endless content, it's not enough to sound smart. Your content needs to actually be useful. That means focusing on insights only your brand can offer, while understanding the full customer journey.

The following findings highlight two major blind spots even savvy marketers are still correcting for: the rise of detectable AI slop, and the revenue leakage happening in untracked voice and call-based conversions.

Let's discuss the do's and don'ts of content successful creation.

✗ Don'ts: Content Mistakes To Avoid

Don't prioritize AI slop over original insights.

AI-written content without human editing fails to build trust. [Recent studies](#) show consumers can detect AI-generated content and may develop negative feelings toward brands using it.

More critically, focus on original insights and first-hand expertise, rather than producing basic content that AI systems can create. If AI creates it, your content can be easily replicated. AI-generated, non-unique, uninsightful content is just noise.

Don't forget conversion paths post-click.

3 Men Movers [discovered](#) **80% to 90% of their Yelp conversions came through phone calls** they weren't tracking. Without proper call tracking, you're missing your highest-intent conversions.

✓ Do's: Create Content That Converts

Answer real questions with structured, clear content.

Data from [Google](#) reveals **72%** of B2B buyers encounter AI Overviews and **90%** click through to cited sources.

Here are content elements that help answer buyer questions:



Transparent pricing tables
(that AI can extract and cite)



Technical documentation for IT
stakeholders



Implementation timelines with
specific milestones



ROI calculators with industry
benchmarks

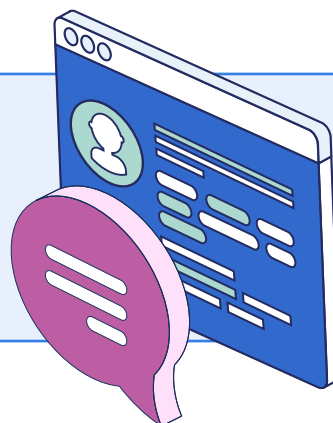
Use call insights to refine messaging.

Workshop Digital [achieved 67% more leads](#) and 11% [higher ROI](#) after using CallRail's conversation intelligence to understand customer terminology.



Insight

By revealing the specific questions and concerns these educated buyers have, you can create content that addresses their validation needs.



Chapter 3 Are You Tracking The Full Customer Journey?

Traditional analytics tell a pretty simple story: a visitor clicked an ad and converted. Most marketing attribution models are still stuck in a world of last-click logic and siloed reporting.

When you miss key touchpoints like voice search, call-based inquiries, or AI-driven discovery, you're not optimizing the full journey or allocating for your buyer's change in behavior. Traditional analytics rarely connect these dots.

It's time to rethink what attribution really means in the age of AI and conversation intelligence.

Today's buyer journey doesn't follow a straight line, and it rarely ends on the same screen where it started.

A manager might discover your brand in an AI-generated search snippet on a desktop, send the link to themselves in Slack, and later call your sales team from their iPhone after revisiting the content on mobile.

Without proper attribution, you're optimizing based on incomplete data. That's like trying to solve a puzzle with half the pieces missing.

Let's discuss the do's and don'ts of conversion tracking.

✗ Don't Let Common Tracking Mistakes Cost You Conversions

Don't rely on last-click or siloed analytics.

Relying solely on last-click attribution is like judging a book by its final sentence. According to [BrightEdge data](#), 94% of AI search referrals originate from desktop, while 58% of Google's mobile traffic comes from iPhones.

Without multi-device visibility, you're missing context that could reshape how you allocate budget and optimize campaigns.

Don't overlook invisible conversion signals.

Buyers are finding answers in AI Overviews, completing voice searches without ever clicking, and making purchase decisions offline.

These interactions don't leave the kind of digital trail that your traditional tracking depends on. If your attribution model doesn't account for zero-click behavior and offline touchpoints like phone calls, you're flying blind in critical moments of conversion.



Don't miss out on critical user behavior.

Voice searches often end without a click, and AI Overviews can answer users' questions without sending them to your site. Traditional analytics tools don't capture this important user activity.

✓ Do's: Track Behavior That Reflects Modern Decision-Making

Map the full path from AI impression to real-world conversion.

The new buyer journey often begins in a place you can't fully measure, like an AI Overview or a voice search result. But there are ways to trace intent across multiple stages:



AI Overview mention →
brand visibility



Click-through →
high-intent signal



Multi-page sessions →
research stage



Phone call → conversion or
near-conversion behavior

Tracking across this journey requires attribution models that are flexible, multi-touch, and include offline behavior like calls and texts.

Integrate conversation data to close the gaps.

Tools like CallRail allow you to capture what happens after the click, especially when that “click” becomes a phone call.

One healthcare marketing agency saw a [23% increase in sales](#) after using conversation intelligence to uncover high-intent queries that weren’t being addressed on landing pages. Once they adjusted their messaging, conversions followed.

Catch up with how buyers are making decisions and change how you track user behavior.

If you’re only tracking what happens onscreen, you’re leaving revenue on the table. Modern attribution requires stepping beyond pageviews and form fills into conversations, AI interactions, and real-world intent.



Insight

Many marketers are surprised to learn just how much revenue is hiding in call patterns.

Brands report closing [10% more leads](#) simply by tracking missed calls. One law firm used this data to reduce missed calls from **30% to 21%**, resulting in a measurable uptick in consultations.



Chapter 4 Are You Using AI And Data To Plan Smarter Campaigns?

Today's high-performing campaigns are grounded in qualitative insight you can't get from traditional dashboards.

AI's most powerful role in marketing isn't generating content. It's uncovering what your customers actually care about by analyzing the language, emotion, and context behind conversations.

By analyzing call transcripts, you can find out what customers struggle with, the phrases they prefer, and what they want to achieve. AI gives marketers a window into the buyer mindset that no keyword tool or heatmap can replicate.

Let's explore how leading marketers are leveraging AI to move from guesswork to growth.



✗ Don't Undervalue AI's Strategic Role

Don't treat AI as just a writing tool.

While AI-generated content can speed up workflows, its real value lies in analysis.

AI can sift through thousands of call transcripts, chat logs, and survey results to surface patterns you'd never catch manually.

When you only use AI to crank out blog posts, you're leaving its most strategic function on the table: turning messy customer data into marketing clarity.

Don't overlook automation opportunities.

With **58% of buyers** seeking expert input before making a decision, the number of touchpoints has ballooned. Manually reviewing every call, email, and message is a time sink.

If you're not automating insight extraction, you're either missing critical signals or wasting valuable time that could be used to act on them.

✓ Do's: Use AI To Fuel Smarter, Faster Campaign Decisions**Automate insights from real conversations.**

Brands using conversation intelligence platforms are cutting through the noise and identifying buyer needs at scale.

CONSIDER THESE PERFORMANCE GAINS REPORTED BY BRANDS USING CALL TRACKING:**7%**

higher call-lead-
to-close rate

50%

faster lead
qualification

200 to 400%

ROI in the first year through smarter
messaging and targeting

The Takeaway

AI helps digest insights from real customer language and behavioral clues. With those insights you can refine your messaging, prioritize high-intent channels, and improve campaign performance from the start.

For instance, [Webistry](#) increased conversions by 400% after using CallRail to uncover messaging gaps and optimize their lead follow-up process.



Use data to plan campaigns that meet buyers where they are.

With 70% of the buying process happening before a prospect ever contacts sales, your campaigns need to deliver real value in the research phase. Focus on content formats that reduce friction and build trust:



Comparison pages that highlight clear differentiators



Industry-specific case studies with detailed results and benchmarks



Integration guides showing how your product fits into existing workflows



Interactive tools like ROI calculators or self-assessments

These aren't just content pieces. They're decision accelerators.



Insight

Combine social, call, and content data for adaptive strategy.

One regional service business used AI to run [sentiment analysis](#) on [recorded calls](#). The team then coached customer-facing staff based on tone and keyword trends.

Within one quarter, their **close rates improved by 7%**. It's not because they changed their offer, but because they improved how it was communicated.

AI can't replace strategic thinking. When used properly, AI helps inform strategy. AI can help you listen at scale, uncover patterns humans can't see, and prioritize the campaigns that will actually move the needle.

The smartest marketers are using AI to do what matters most.



Chapter 5 Are You Aligning PPC With Search And Conversation Intelligence?

The key to modern PPC success isn't simply better targeting. Successful PPC strategy includes smarter alignment with organic search trends, device behavior, and conversation data.

As we've discussed in this ebook, search is no longer a straight line from query, to click, to conversion. With the rise of AI overviews and voice-enabled discovery, users are spending more time in the Google ecosystem. They read summaries and ask follow-up questions. By the time they arrive at your business, they have context and higher expectations.

If your paid campaigns operate in a silo, you're likely overspending on clicks that don't convert and underserving prospects who are ready to talk.

Let's break down what it means to run paid campaigns that actually work in the AI era.

✗ Don'ts: Paid Search Pitfalls That Kill Performance

Don't run paid campaigns in isolation from SEO and content strategy.

Today's buyers don't distinguish between paid and organic when making decisions. They're looking for relevance, clarity, and trust.

With [43% of AI Overviews linking to Google-owned properties](#), users often linger within the Google ecosystem before clicking to a site. If your ad messaging isn't aligned with the organic themes they're already encountering, you're interrupting the journey instead of accelerating it.

Don't optimize for vanity metrics like clicks and impressions

Search behavior shows that [94%](#) of the traffic from ChatGPT originates from desktop apps, while Google is the only major AI search with mobile majority traffic referrals at 53%. That device context matters. Desktop sessions often reflect research mode; mobile often indicates urgency or action.

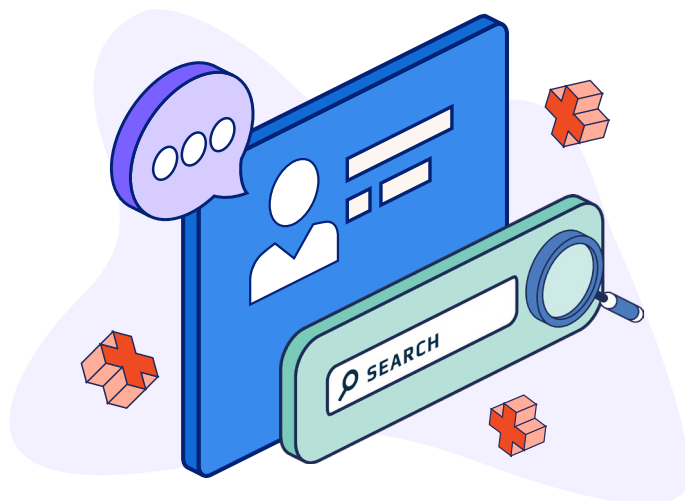
If you're not segmenting campaigns by device behavior and layering in conversation intelligence, it's likely you're misreading buyer intent.

✓ Do's: Align Paid Search With The Full Funnel

Use keyword, call, and conversation data to sharpen ad copy and targeting.

The smartest marketers aren't guessing which keywords to bid on. They're listening to how real customers describe their needs.

Pull high-converting phrases from call transcripts and chat logs, then bake them directly into ad copy and extensions. This creates consistency across the journey, and improves click-to-call conversion rates.



Match landing pages to buyer sophistication, not just keyword themes.

Informed prospects often skip past beginner-level content. Your PPC landing pages should assume some baseline knowledge and instead address mid-to-bottom funnel concerns like:



Implementation steps and onboarding complexity



Integration with existing tools or workflows



Specific use cases by role or industry



ROI projections and payback timelines

By anticipating these advanced questions, you meet the buyer where they are, and accelerate the sales cycle.

Connect PPC performance to real business outcomes.

[CallRail's Google Ads integration](#) helps marketers go beyond surface metrics by tracking calls, texts, and form fills alongside ad performance. It matches each paid click with real offline actions, so you can attribute revenue to the exact keyword, ad group, or campaign that drove it.

Instead of relying on clicks or impressions alone, you can set conversion values for calls and calculate cost per lead automatically, ensuring your bidding strategy optimizes for outcomes, not just activity. This level of attribution enables smarter budget allocation and better-qualified traffic.

Extend PPC impact with AI-powered lead capture.

A key insight from CallRail's recent webinar with Search Engine Journal is that the success of a paid campaign doesn't stop at the click, it depends heavily on what happens after. That's where Voice Assist can transform performance.

Voice Assist is an AI-powered call responder that captures and qualifies inbound calls 24/7, ensuring **no lead is missed, even after hours or during high call volumes**. This becomes especially valuable in verticals using Local Services Ads, where call responsiveness can impact ad placement and ranking.

By handling calls in real-time and filtering out low-quality or spam traffic, Voice Assist helps reduce cost per lead and shortens the time between inquiry and conversion. **Marketers no longer need to rely solely on staffing hours to scale phone-based campaigns.**

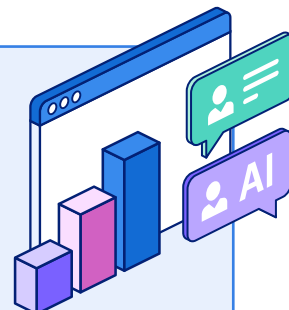
This tool also feeds higher-quality data back into ad platforms. With every call automatically categorized and qualified, it becomes easier to align paid media efforts with actual revenue outcomes. Instead of optimizing for clicks, brands can optimize for what really drives ROI: **meaningful conversations with real buyers.**

This level of post-click intelligence **closes one of the biggest gaps in PPC today** and positions marketers to compete more effectively in an AI-influenced ad landscape.



Insight

PPC isn't about bidding higher, but listening better. When you connect your ad strategy to AI search trends and offline conversations, your campaigns become more persuasive and more profitable. Integrated strategies reveal a clearer path to increased revenue.



Conclusion Your Strategy Reset For The AI Era

AI is changing how people search, how they evaluate options, and how they convert. The old playbook of optimizing for rankings and clicks is no longer enough.

Winning teams are shifting their focus to what actually drives revenue: insights, conversations, and full-funnel intelligence.

Attribution and conversation intelligence connect search behavior to real-world outcomes. CallRail provides AI-powered tools to close the loop on conversions.

Tools like CallRail's [Convert Assist](#) and [Voice Assist](#) help surface high-intent leads, extract meaningful insights from conversations, and eliminate blind spots between marketing and sales.

If you're not automating insight extraction, you're either missing critical signals or wasting valuable time that could be used to act on them.

Let's test your knowledge!

What *percentage* of customers whose calls go unanswered will *not* call back?

The Facts

According to **77% of marketers**, **tracking phone calls** helps them better understand which **marketing channels** are **driving conversions**, allowing for **smarter budget allocation**

Call Tracking

Total calls: 1,820

Unanswered calls by hour

Call attribution by source

- Direct Mail
- Google Ads
- Blog Ad
- Billboard
- Referrals

HERE'S WHAT THIS NEW REALITY DEMANDS FROM MODERN MARKETERS:



CREATE WITH PURPOSE

AI can generate content, but only you can create original insights that earn trust and drive action.



TRACK WHAT MATTERS

Conversions don't just happen on websites. They happen in conversations, on phone calls, and inside AI Overviews. If you're not tracking that behavior, you're flying blind.



ALIGN YOUR CHANNELS

PPC, SEO, content, and voice need to work together, not in silos. When you connect the dots across channels and touchpoints, you uncover the real drivers of ROI.



LISTEN HARDER

Your best messaging comes directly from your customers. Call transcripts, chat logs, and AI attribution tell you what your audience is thinking, asking, and needs.

Smart marketing in the AI era isn't about working harder. It's about seeing more clearly and acting more intentionally.

As search changes, so must your strategy. The marketers who thrive won't be the ones shouting the loudest, but the ones listening the closest.

CallRail provides the attribution and conversation intelligence needed to understand today's buyer behavior.

If you're looking to better understand where your leads are coming from and how your marketing is performing, CallRail offers a [full suite of analytics tools](#) that can help.

Features like AI answering assistant, conversation sentiment and analysis, plus conversion insights give you a clearer view of what's working, and what's not. You can **try the platform free for 14 days** to see how it [brings your attribution and ROI data into focus, no commitment required](#).

See CallRail in Action - Free!