

New Analysis Reveals Small Businesses Spend Up to 30% of Revenue on SEO as AI Overviews Reduce Clicks by 58%

Small business SEO now averages \$3,199/month. AI Overviews cut clicks by 58%. A new agentic platform proposes an alternative at \$59-\$169/month.

LIVERPOOL, UNITED KINGDOM, July 4, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Small businesses are spending \$18,000 to \$60,000 per year on search engine optimisation, according to a new analysis of 2026 agency pricing data. For a business turning over \$200,000, that is up to 30% of gross revenue on a single channel. For a business doing \$100,000, it hits 60%.

The analysis consolidates data from three industry sources. A GoodFirms survey of over 300 agencies found that 48% charge between \$1,500 and \$5,000 per month. Clutch puts the average monthly SEO spend at \$3,199. DigitalApplied reports a median retainer of \$3,500.

The pricing model is under scrutiny. Most agency contracts do not tie fees to results. Businesses pay the same retainer whether traffic goes up, down, or sideways. They spend \$15,000 to \$30,000 before knowing if the work pays off. If it does not, they start over with a new agency and another six-month commitment.

Google AI Overviews are compounding the problem. An Ahrefs study of 300,000 keywords found AI Overviews reduce organic click-through rates by 58%. For keywords triggering an AI Overview, position one CTR fell from 7.3% in December 2023 to 1.6% in December 2025. ChatGPT and Perplexity are siphoning queries that used to go to Google. Businesses are paying the same fees for a shrinking pool of clicks.

AI tools have cut the cost of routine SEO work by 20 to 30%, according to DigitalApplied. Tasks



A stressed small business owner reviewing marketing spend on a laptop at night, with rising paid ads and SEO costs compared against flat business revenue.

that took 15 to 20 hours per month now take 5 to 8 with AI assistance. But retainers have not dropped by the same amount. Seventy-three percent of agencies now include AI in standard packages, yet the median retainer remains at \$3,500.

"The question is whether a small business needs a \$30,000-a-year retainer for work that is often a mix of junior execution, reporting, and repeatable research," said Mike G, founder of PageRise. "AI can handle the routine parts. The owner still makes the judgement calls."

PageRise is an [agentic SEO platform](#) in private beta. It uses autonomous AI agents connected to Google Search Console and DataForSEO to handle keyword research, content strategy, technical audits, and reporting. Pricing ranges from \$59 to \$169 per month.

For businesses already spending on SEO, the analysis suggests three questions: what percentage of the monthly fee goes to strategy versus execution, how the agency's workflow has changed with AI, and what the plan is for declining AI Overviews traffic. Vague answers mean the business is paying 2024 prices in a 2026 market.

The full analysis is at <https://pagerise.ai/blog/posts/seo-cost-small-business-2026>.

About PageRise

PageRise replaces fragmented agency workflows with autonomous AI agents. Built for small businesses who cannot justify a \$2,500 monthly retainer, the platform connects to Google Search Console and DataForSEO to handle research, strategy, and content generation. Based in Manchester, UK, PageRise is in private beta. Early access signups: <https://pagerise.ai/early-access/>.

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