

Report Finds AI Search Is Replacing Traditional SEO, Yet Nearly Half of Marketing Leaders Have No Strategy

Survey of 159 marketing decision-makers finds 58.5% expect AI search to matter most within three years

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, UNITED STATES, September 1, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [AMP Marketing and PR](#) is a San Francisco-based strategic communications firm whose leadership has supported global technology brands including Adobe, HP, Cisco, MuleSoft, Roblox and NTT Research. Today, the company released [The AMP Marketing Leaders Report](#), revealing a growing divide between the rapid rise of AI-driven discovery and marketers' readiness to compete in it.

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Marketing has spent decades trying to rank on Google. Now brands and thought leaders also need to understand how they are described, recommended and cited by AI.”

*Cara Milan, CEO and Founder
AMP Marketing and PR*

The report is based on two parts, an independent survey of 159 marketing leaders and, in-depth interviews with senior marketing and communications executives from NVIDIA, NTT Research and formerly MuleSoft. The report

finds that marketing leaders overwhelmingly expect AI-powered platforms to reshape search, brand visibility and reputation.

In the survey, nearly six in 10 respondents - 58.5% - believe AI search will matter most within the next two to three years. Only 17% selected traditional SEO. Yet 44.7% of marketing leaders still have no AI search strategy.

“Marketing has spent decades trying to rank on Google. Now brands and thought leaders also need to understand how they are described, recommended and cited by AI,” said [Cara Milan](#), 25 year plus communication strategist and founder and CEO of AMP Marketing and PR. “The people and companies that move first will have a significant advantage in shaping the answers clients and customers receive. Those who wait may find that AI has already written their story for them.”

Traditional SEO Is Losing Its Grip

The report, titled SEO Is Dead. Only 5% of Marketing Leaders Will Say It Out Loud, identifies a

significant divide between what marketing leaders believe privately and what many are willing to state publicly. Only 5% of respondents declared traditional SEO “dead.” However, another 50.9% said it is being replaced by AI-driven discovery. Together, the findings indicate that a majority recognize the traditional search model is rapidly changing, even if they use less dramatic language to describe it.

AI Is Already Speaking for Brands

The research shows that visibility is no longer marketing leaders’ biggest concern. Accuracy and control are.

Among respondents:

57.2% are concerned AI will misrepresent their company.

56.6% worry about losing control of their brand narrative.

24.5% have never checked how AI platforms describe their organization.

17.6% say no one currently owns AI visibility within their company.

22% do not have an internal term for the discipline.

Marketing Budgets Are Moving Toward AI Visibility

AI-driven visibility was the leading destination for increased marketing investment, selected by 35.2% of respondents. It ranked ahead of paid media and performance marketing, PR and earned media, and traditional SEO.

The survey also found that 66% of marketing leaders consider AI search visibility an immediate priority or one they expect to address within six months.

Earned media is an important part of that shift. Nearly six in 10 respondents - 59.1% - believe media coverage influences how companies appear in

AI-generated answers and search results. This finding reflects a larger change in the role of public relations. Credible articles, expert commentary, executive thought leadership and authoritative content do more than reach human audiences. They inform AI platforms.

A New Mandate for Marketing Leaders

The report recommends that organizations immediately:

Audit how major AI platforms describe their company, executives and products.

Assign clear ownership of AI visibility.

Develop a formal AI search strategy.

Integrate PR, content, SEO and AI visibility instead of managing them separately.

Establish systems for monitoring AI-generated brand narratives.

Treat AI platforms as a distinct audience within the marketing strategy

The full AMP Marketing Leaders Report: <https://amppublicrelations.com/cmo-ai-marketing-report/>

About the Report

The AMP Marketing Leaders Report is based on a Centiment survey of 159 marketing decision-makers, all at the management level or above, supplemented by interviews with senior leaders from NVIDIA, NTT Research and formerly MuleSoft.

About AMP Marketing and Public Relations

AMP Marketing and Public Relations is a senior-led strategic communications consultancy specializing in authority building for technology and high-growth companies. AMP leadership has helped leading technology brands, including Adobe, LinkedIn, Cisco, Roblox, Hewlett Packard Enterprise and MuleSoft, build industry authority, launch breakthrough innovations, and secure global media visibility.

Through the AMP Authority Engine, the firm integrates public relations, SEO and AI search strategy to help brands and thought leaders shape how they are discovered, referenced and trusted in an AI-driven information landscape.

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