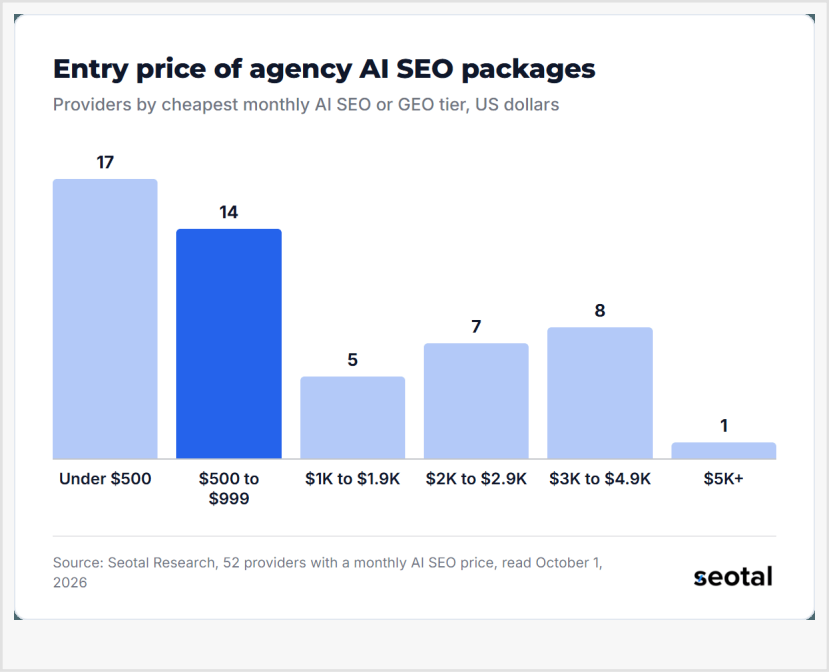
AI SEO Costs Small Businesses 20% More at Most Agencies, Seotal Research Finds

A study of 60 agency price lists, 88 software plans and 1,460 freelancers shows a small business can start for $29 a month. Agencies charge a median $750.



LOS ANGLES , CA, UNITED STATES, October 1, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Agencies that sell AI search optimization charge more for it than for regular SEO, according to a new study by Seotal Research, the research arm of freelance SEO marketplace Seotal. The study compares AI SEO and SEO prices at the same firms. It also finds that freelancers who advertise AI search skills charge no more than SEO-only freelancers, because most of them are new to the market.

AI SEO, also sold as generative engine optimization (GEO) or answer engine optimization (AEO), aims to get a business named in answers from ChatGPT, Perplexity, Gemini and Google's AI Overviews. Seotal Research read every price on the seller's own website on October 1, 2026.

Full study and free datasets: What AI SEO Costs a Small Business or Startup

Key findings

- Agencies: the median entry price of an agency AI SEO package is $750 a month. The middle half of the 52 monthly price lists runs from $461 to $2,000. Four providers require a 6-month minimum term.
- AI SEO vs. SEO: at 13 of 21 agencies that publish both, the AI SEO package costs more than the same firm's SEO package, a median of 1.20 times as much. Five charge the same, and three charge less.
- Hidden pricing: 35 of 95 agencies offering AI search work (37%) publish no price, only "book a

call."
- Software: the median entry plan across 17 AI visibility trackers is $99 a month. The cheapest cost $29, and the cost per tracked prompt varies eightfold between tools.
- Freelancers: the 660 Freelancer.com profiles listing GEO, AEO or ChatGPT Search Optimization skills ask a median $14.50 an hour. In Pakistan, AI search freelancers ask $11 an hour against $25 for SEO-only freelancers. 505 of the 660 have no client reviews.

What it costs a small business per month

-Tracking tool, do it yourself $29 to $129

-Freelancer, 20 hours plus a tracker $189 to $599

-Agency package $461 to $2,000

Most of what agencies sell as AI SEO is the work a small business needed anyway: pages AI crawlers can read, consistent business facts and structured data. Founders should check the contract term and ask what the AI package adds before paying a premium for the label," said Ali, co-founder and SEO/GEO lead at Seotal.

Methodology

Seotal Research collected three datasets on October 1, 2026:
- Agency prices: about 120 providers, found through searches for AI SEO, GEO, AEO and LLM optimization pricing in the US, UK, Australia, Canada, India, the Philippines and Singapore.
- Tool prices: the pricing pages of 27 AI visibility tools and SEO suites, at monthly billing.
- Freelancer rates: the Freelancer.com public directory. This covers every profile with an hourly rate and an AI search skill, compared with 200 SEO-only profiles each in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the US.

About Seotal

Seotal matches US businesses with vetted freelance SEO specialists. Fewer than 5% of applicants pass its written test, live interview, English assessment and reference check, and clients receive 3 to 5 matched profiles within 72 hours. Hourly work starts at $15 an hour with no platform fees. Seotal Research publishes original data on search and AI visibility at https://www.seotal.com/research.

Trivita Utami
Seotal
+62 896-1080-1846

email us here

This press release can be viewed online at: https://www.einpresswire.com/article/946726158

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.
© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.