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ORIGINAL RESEARCH

The AEO Pulse

What 56 B2B marketing leaders say about AEO, and what the 16% who can prove pipeline do differently

FALL 2026

16%
can prove AEO drives pipeline. Page 7 shows what they do differently

46%
say their hardest problem is knowing which questions buyers ask AI

50%
run AEO in-house by hand

By Anita Moorthy, Co-founder and CMO, Rocksalt

56 respondents · Fielded Oct 2 – Nov 9, 2026

AT A GLANCE

Five things B2B marketing leaders told us about AEO

01 **Only 16% can prove AEO drives pipeline.** 9 of 56 say AEO has brought in significant pipeline and they can measure it. All 9 have a named owner, and 5 of the 9 combine two or more approaches.

02 **Knowing which questions buyers actually ask AI is the #1 AEO challenge**, named by 46%.

03 **Teams with AEO tools feel the question problem most.** 8 of 13 tool users name it their hardest problem, compared with 10 of 28 teams running AEO by hand.

04 **Half of B2B teams (50%) run AEO in-house by hand**, and 27% say AEO has no single owner.

05 **Few teams name volume as their bottleneck, but teams seeing results publish more.** 5 of the 9 teams that can measure AEO pipeline publish 11+ pieces a month, compared with 13 of the other 47.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

56
B2B marketers responded

66%
are CMOs or heads of marketing

73%
work at companies under 200 employees

Oct–Nov
2026, fielded online

FINDING 01 · PIPELINE

Only 16% of B2B marketing leaders can prove AEO drives pipeline

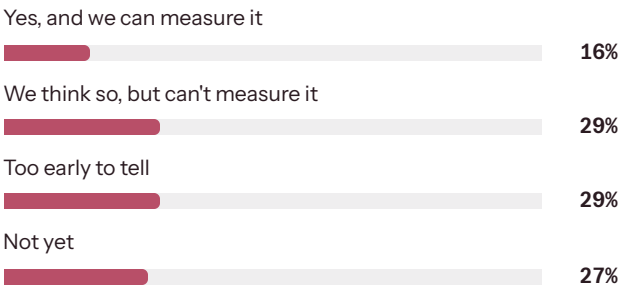
Only 16% of B2B marketing leaders (9 of 56) said AEO has brought in significant pipeline and they can measure it. 29% believe it has but can't measure it, 29% say it's too early to tell, and 27% say not yet.

The gap is widest at larger companies. At companies with more than 200 employees, 10 of 15 respondents said tying AEO to pipeline is their hardest problem, and only 1 of 15 can measure AEO pipeline.

- **What the measurers do differently:** every one of the 9 has a named owner for AEO, and 5 of the 9 tie pipeline or revenue directly to AI sources.

Has AEO brought in significant leads or pipeline?

% of 56 respondents · single choice



Rounded, so totals add to 101%.

FINDING 02 · CHALLENGES

The #1 AEO challenge is knowing which questions buyers actually ask AI

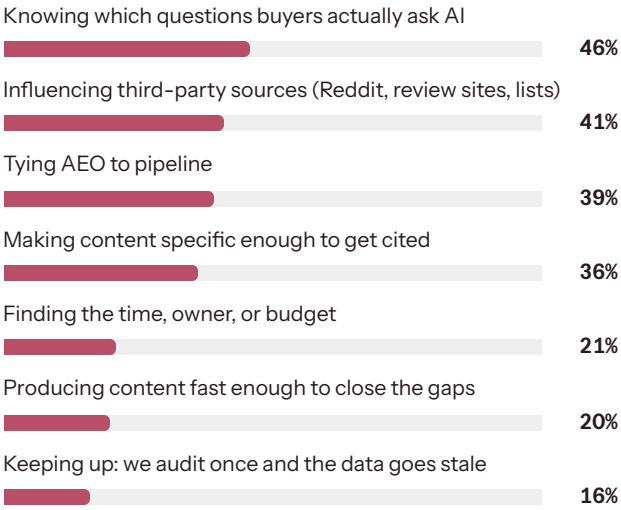
46% of B2B marketing leaders say their hardest AEO problem is knowing which questions buyers actually ask AI, ahead of influencing third-party sources such as Reddit and review sites (41%).

Few teams name volume as their bottleneck: only 20% say producing content fast enough is their hardest problem, though 48% publish 4 or fewer website pieces a month. But teams seeing results publish more (page 7).

- **Why it matters:** real B2B buyers ask AI long, specific questions, and those questions decide which brands get cited.

What is the hardest part of AEO for your team right now?

% of 56 respondents · multiple choice



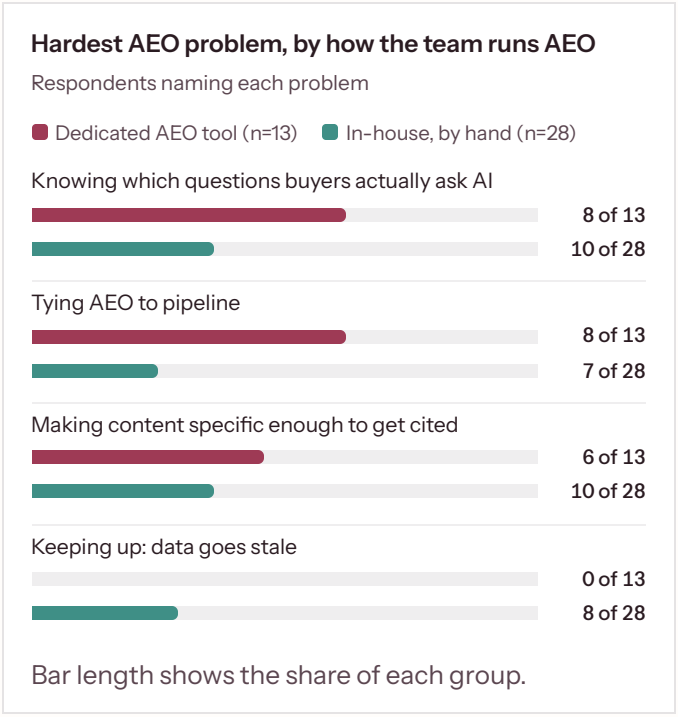
FINDING 03 · TOOLS

Teams with AEO tools feel the question problem most

8 of 13 teams using a dedicated AEO tool named knowing what buyers ask AI as their hardest problem, compared with 10 of 28 teams running AEO by hand.

One likely reason: tracking makes the gap visible. A team monitoring a prompt list can see what it tracks, but not whether those prompts are what buyers ask. Tools clearly help with staleness: none of the 13 tool users said their data goes stale.

▶ **Read this as directional:** the groups are small, so we report counts rather than percentages.

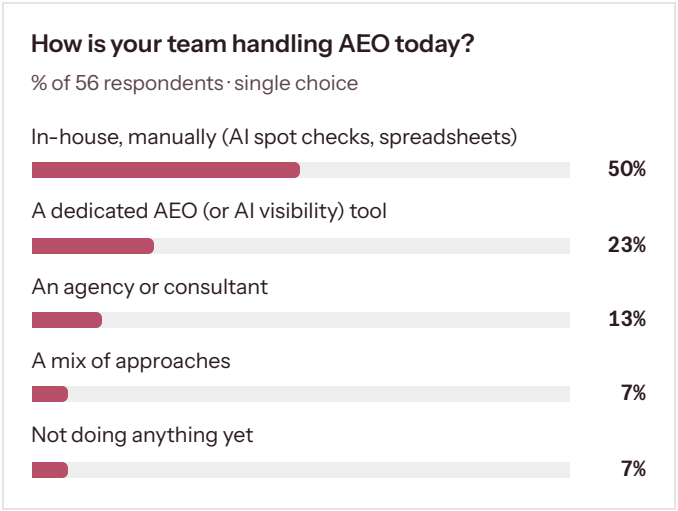


FINDING 04 · APPROACH

Half of B2B teams run AEO by hand

50% of B2B teams run AEO in-house manually, checking AI tools themselves and tracking results in spreadsheets. 23% use a dedicated AEO tool and 13% use an agency or consultant.

Asked what they've done about their hardest problem, 43% built their own workflow. 13% looked for a solution and didn't find one.



FINDING 05 · OWNERSHIP

For 27% of B2B teams, nobody owns AEO

AEO most often sits with SEO or organic (27%), and just as often it has no single owner (27%). Only 3 of 56 teams have a dedicated AEO lead.

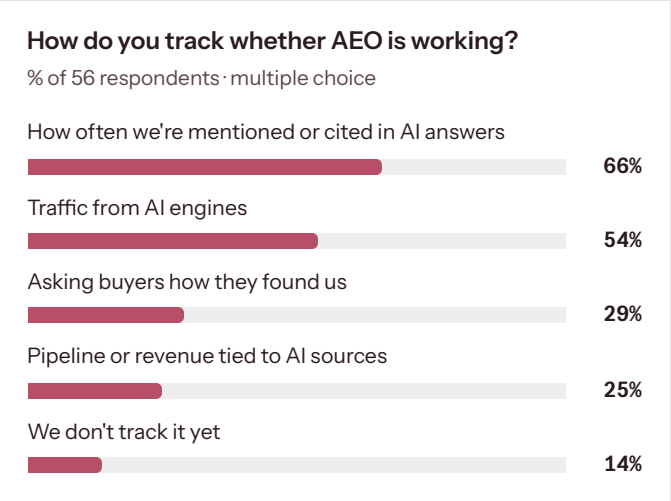
- **Ownership tracks results:** 2 of the 3 teams with a dedicated AEO lead can measure AEO pipeline. None of the 15 teams without a single owner can.



FINDING 06 · MEASUREMENT

Most teams measure AEO by mentions, not pipeline

66% of B2B teams track how often they're cited in AI answers and 54% track AI traffic. Only 25% track pipeline tied to AI sources, and of those 14 teams, only 5 can actually measure it.



FINDING 07 · BY COMPANY SIZE

Mid-sized B2B teams are furthest along on AEO

Companies with 50–200 employees are the most likely to measure AEO pipeline and to publish 11+ pieces a month. Most use a tool or an agency. Under 50, teams mostly work by hand. Over 200, proving pipeline is the hardest problem, and only 1 of 15 can.

	Under 50 (n=25)	50–200 (n=16)	Over 200 (n=15)
HARDEST AEO PROBLEM	Knowing which questions buyers ask AI, and making content specific enough to get cited (10 of 25 each)	Knowing which questions buyers ask AI (8 of 16), then influencing Reddit and review sites (7 of 16)	Tying AEO to pipeline (10 of 15)
WHAT THEY'VE DONE ABOUT IT	Built their own workflow (13 of 25). Nothing yet (7 of 25)	Bought a dedicated AEO tool (9 of 16) or hired an agency (6 of 16). None said "nothing yet"	Bought a tool (5 of 15) or built their own workflow (4 of 15). 3 of 15 looked and found no solution
HOW THEY RUN AEO	By hand (17 of 25)	With a dedicated AEO tool (7 of 16)	By hand (6 of 15) or with a tool (4 of 15)
CAN MEASURE AEO PIPELINE	3 of 25	5 of 16	1 of 15
PUBLISH 11+ WEBSITE PIECES A MONTH	3 of 25	10 of 16	5 of 15

Respondents in each group. Multiple-choice answers can appear in more than one row.

- **Output tracks results at mid-sized companies:** all 10 respondents at 50–200 employee companies who say AEO is bringing in pipeline (measured or not) publish 11+ pieces a month. All 6 who don't say so publish 10 or fewer. Bigger budgets may drive both, so read this as a pattern, not proof.

HOW THE 16% DO IT

What teams that can measure AEO pipeline have in common

9 of 56 respondents said AEO has brought in significant pipeline and they can measure it. 5 of the 9 work at companies with 50–200 employees.

9 of 9

have a named owner for AEO. None said "no single owner," compared with 15 of the other 47.

5 of 9

combine two or more of: their own workflow, a dedicated AEO tool, an agency. Only 5 of the other 47 do.

5 of 9

publish or update 11+ website pieces a month, compared with 13 of the other 47.

5 of 9

tie pipeline or revenue directly to AI sources, rather than stopping at mentions and traffic.

3 of 9

ask buyers how they found them, in forms or on sales calls.

5 of 9

say their hardest remaining problem is influencing Reddit, review sites and lists.

METHODOLOGY

Rocksalt ran a 10-question online survey of B2B marketers from October 2 to November 9, 2026. Respondents were recruited through Rocksalt's email list and LinkedIn and received the results in return for taking part.

- **Respondents:** 56 B2B marketers
- **Roles:** 66% CMO or head of marketing, 13% demand generation or growth, 11% SEO or organic, 11% other
- **Company size:** 45% under 50 employees, 29% 50–200, 18% 201–1,000, 9% over 1,000
- **Reporting:** percentages rounded; groups under 20 shown as counts; multiple-choice totals exceed 100%

The sample leans toward smaller companies and toward marketers already engaged with AEO, so treat the results as a pulse check rather than a census.

FROM THE TEAM BEHIND THE AEO PULSE

The #1 AEO problem is knowing what buyers ask. See the real questions your buyers ask AI.

Rocksalt finds the questions buyers ask in your sales calls, on Reddit and on LinkedIn, tells you which to answer first, then drafts original content from what your company knows, so AI answers can cite it.

See real buyer questions →

Full results, charts and the data download
rocksalt.ai/research/b2b-aeo-survey-2026

How to cite
Rocksalt (2026). The AEO Pulse: Fall 2026. Survey of 56 B2B marketing leaders, fielded October 2 – November 9, 2026. rocksalt.ai/research/b2b-aeo-survey-2026

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