



2026 BRIEFING

19 Vital Trust Signals for *AI & Human* Visibility

AI tends to recommend a business it trusts. Here's how to build that trust — and get the recommendations and sales that follow.

INTRODUCTION

Be Calm While Others Panic About AI

The last couple of years have seen a roller coaster of changes as we adapt to a world where AI doesn't just begin to replace Google — it changes the game entirely. We've been on both sides of this. We are consumers who use AI to choose products and services, and we act for our clients, helping them be chosen and recommended by AI.

"We've attended all the webinars and read all the right books, but there is no substitute for simply doing the work and seeing the results."

Our clients have seen remarkable results — from doubled business size, to ChatGPT actively recommending them by name, to ChatGPT now showing up as a referral source inside Google Search Console.

→ **1 in 4 people already prefer ChatGPT over Google for search. If your website isn't being recommended by AI, you're invisible to a rapidly growing segment of your market.**

This 2026 briefing is based on research by Marcus Sheridan's Impact Group (Nick Burrage is a Certified Coach for the Endless Customers Framework) and our own hands-on client experience.

Two Things You Must Understand First

Concept 1 — Your Entire Business Must Be Trusted

THE OLD WAY (TRADITIONAL SEO)

Google says: "Is the page content strong and easy to find? OK, I'll show this page to my users."

THE NEW WAY (AI SEO / AEO)

AI says: "Is the content strong, is the business verified, low-risk, and safe enough for me to recommend?"

Concept 2 — You Must Be Ready for Agentic AI

In the near future, Agentic AI — AI that acts as an agent for individuals — will expect to be able to:

- Get a quote on your website
- Book a call from your website
- Make a purchase on your website
- Determine whether you are the right fit for their human

This means your website needs to be information-rich, self-service friendly, with clear pathways for action.

The 19 Trust Signals That Matter Most

AEO isn't about ranking pages. It's about scoring brands.

Your goal is to become the most known and trusted business in your market. These 19 trust signals are how you get there in an AI-driven world.

These signals matter for both AI recommendations and human visitors. Think of them as a report card for your website's trustworthiness.

SIGNAL 01

Verified NAP Consistency

Your Name, Address, and Phone number must be identical everywhere online — your website, Google Business Profile, directories, and social media. Inconsistencies signal unreliability to AI.

SIGNAL 02

Website Security (HTTPS)

Your website must have an SSL certificate (the padlock in the browser). This is non-negotiable for both user trust and AI recommendations. There are also additional security layers worth exploring, especially for e-commerce.

SIGNAL 03

On-Page Pricing & Fee Transparency

This is becoming the **#1 trust signal for services** — especially where price variations can be large and hard to understand. AI needs to confidently compute costs in order to recommend you.

- If AI can't figure out your pricing, it won't recommend you — too high risk
- Transparent pricing gets you cited in cost comparisons
- It reduces AI "hallucinations" — AI making up wrong information about you
- AI agents expect self-service pricing tools

SIGNAL 04

Public Review Score & Volume

AI analyses four key factors: average rating, number of reviews, how recent they are, and the content of negative reviews. Low ratings, few reviews, or old reviews = high uncertainty = AI won't recommend you.

Our AI-based review gathering and reply system is tried and tested — one client achieved the #1 position in the UK for their vet practice with over 800 five-star reviews.

Important: No amount of content or optimisation can overcome a poor review profile.

SIGNAL 05

On-Page Content Richness

Deep, comprehensive content that thoroughly covers your topics. One blog post isn't enough — AI wants to see multiple related pieces.

Stop burying the answer. Ask the question — that's your title. Answer the question — that's the first line. Neither your reader nor AI has the patience for long intros.

SIGNAL 06

Accuracy of Claims

Everything you say must be factual and verifiable, consistent across all pages, aligned with known data sources, up to date, free from exaggeration, and transparently disclosed.

SIGNAL 07

Advanced Schema Deployment

Schema is code that labels your content so AI instantly knows what things are — product, price, review, service area, FAQ, author, video. It helps you earn richer search results and more trust.

Check your schema at: validator.schema.org

SIGNAL 08

Answer-Focused Semantic Structure

Your content should be structured to directly answer questions customers are asking. Use clear headings, FAQs, and natural language throughout your site.

SIGNAL 09

Author & Team Pages

AI wants to know who's behind your content. Each team member page should include: name and title, headshot, short bio, full bio, areas of expertise, credentials, experience timeline, featured articles, professional links, and schema markup.

SIGNAL 10

Educational Content Hub

AI needs depth to answer confidently. You need multiple types of content: related articles, explainer videos, cost breakdowns, troubleshooting guides, comparisons, how-to guides, definitions, alternatives, "best of" lists, FAQs, tools, and calculators.

AI scores brands, not just individual pages. Your educational hub is fundamental to your brand score.

SIGNAL 11

Case Studies & Testimonials

Real examples of your work and results. These prove you deliver on what you promise — and give AI concrete, verifiable evidence to reference when recommending you.

SIGNAL 12

Content Surface Area

The total amount of quality content on your site. More comprehensive coverage equals more trust. Broad and shallow is far less valuable than deep, well-structured topic clusters.

SIGNAL 13

Content Freshness

AI is wary of outdated information. Show that your content is current with visible "Last Updated" dates (using Schema markup), and by making meaningful — not just cosmetic — updates regularly.

- Update pricing pages and "Best of" lists regularly
- Publish new content consistently
- Add and update FAQs, tools, and calculators
- Keep your Google Business Profile active and updated

SIGNAL 14

Google Page 1 Ranking

Traditional ranking still matters. Being on page 1 of Google signals authority and relevance to AI — it's external validation that carries real weight.

SIGNAL 15

Brand Values

Not generic statements like "integrity" or "we put customers first." AI cares about specific, operational values: predictable behaviour, safety, transparency, accountability, communication standards, fairness, ethical practices, and accuracy of information.

Include 1-2 paragraphs per value explaining how it shows up operationally in your business.

SIGNAL 16

Contact & About Page Depth

Comprehensive information about how to reach you and who you are. Multiple contact methods, a detailed company history, and a clear mission and values — not a paragraph and a form.

SIGNAL 17

Policy & Ethics Transparency

Required pages, ranked by importance:

- Privacy Policy
- Terms of Service
- Accessibility Statement
- Code of Ethics / Values / Conduct
- Editorial Standards Page
- Content Attribution & Author Responsibility
- AI Disclosure Policy (*new and growing in importance*)
- Refund / Return / Warranty Policies

SIGNAL 18

Industry Awards & Recognition

Legitimate awards, certifications, and recognition from respected industry organisations. These provide third-party endorsements that AI can independently cross-reference.

SIGNAL 19

Authoritative Outbound Citations

When you make claims, link to authoritative sources. This shows you're not making things up — and adds significant credibility with AI. Citing credible sources is itself a trust signal.

Where to Start

- 1 Audit your current trust signals** — have us review your site, or ask for the self-audit checklist to see where you stand right now.

- 2 Prioritise pricing transparency** — if AI can't figure out what you charge, it will recommend someone who makes it clear.

- 3 Focus on review management** — monitor, respond to, and generate fresh reviews. No amount of content can overcome a poor review profile.

- 4 Build your educational content hub** — create deep, comprehensive topic coverage that positions you as the most informed voice in your market.

- 5 Complete your author and team pages** — AI wants to know exactly who is behind your content.

- 6 Implement schema markup** — label everything properly so AI understands what your content is about.

- 7 Schedule content updates** — outdated content is a trust negative. Set a regular refresh cadence.

- 8 Add required policy pages** — don't skip these. They signal legitimacy to both AI and human visitors.

- 9 Create self-service tools** — calculators, estimators, and booking systems that Agentic AI can use on behalf of your future customers.

This Is Simple to Understand. It's Hard to Do.

Reading through these 19 signals, you might think: *okay — I just need to do all of this.* And you're right. But let's be honest: building a content hub, managing reviews consistently, implementing schema, keeping everything fresh — this is a serious, ongoing commitment. Most businesses know what they need to do. The gap is always in the doing.

That's exactly what we're here for.

DONE WITH YOU

We guide, coach, and support you through the process. You build the capability — we make sure you do it right.

DONE FOR YOU

We build it, manage it, and keep it moving while you focus on running your business.

If you've read this far and you're serious about becoming the most trusted business in your market, the next step is simple. Get in touch — let's talk about where you are and what it would take to get you there.

Get in touch: nb@theambitionsagency.com