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WHITEPAPER

SEO and PR:

Finding visibility in an AI-first search world

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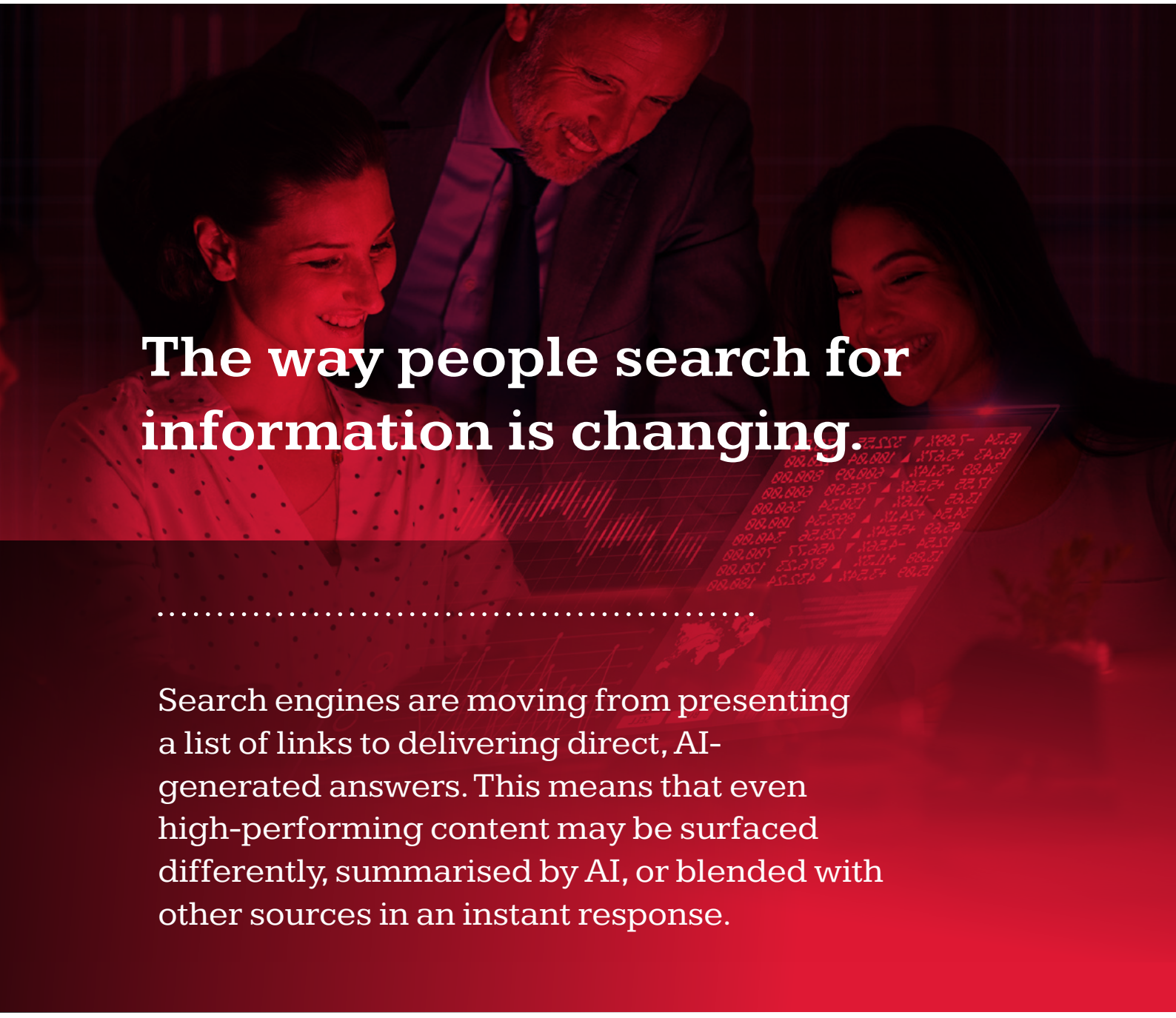

The way people search for information is changing.

Search engines are moving from presenting a list of links to delivering direct, AI-generated answers. This means that even high-performing content may be surfaced differently, summarised by AI, or blended with other sources in an instant response.

For technology companies, this changes the playbook for digital visibility. SEO alone is no longer enough. Brand authority, clarity of message, and reputation across multiple channels are becoming critical factors in determining whether a company's perspective is accurately represented in search results.

This whitepaper explains some of the complex changes at play and offers practical guidance for tech companies on how to work with PR to stay visible and have a clear SEO strategy.

The new search environment

One of the most pressing concerns for tech companies is that visibility does not always translate into visits.

Google's AI overviews, Bing Copilot and other generative search tools now deliver answers directly to the results pages. This means the top result is often a paragraph of AI-generated text built from multiple sources, which doesn't redirect the reader to the source.

Recent research shows that AI overviews are now appearing in nearly twice as many UK desktop searches as they did in late 2024. At the same time, UK publishers, including MailOnline, have reported that click-throughs on some queries are falling **by around 50% when AI summaries are present**.

This creates a measurement challenge. A successful piece of content might still be influencing prospects even if web traffic looks lower. The goal for PR teams is to ensure that when AI generates an answer, the brand's perspective is included and accurately represented, which requires a thorough investment in authority, credible messaging and a joined-up PR and SEO approach.

For tech companies, this means two things:

- **Being recognised as a thought leader is as important as ranking.**
- **Content needs to be clear, credible and easy for both humans and AI to interpret.**
- **Content needs to be in well-respected, trusted media outlets, and not just on your company website or blog.**

As a result, companies with strong thought leadership, clear product messaging that avoids marketing fluff, and a consistent online presence are more likely to have their perspective included in AI-generated search results.

Why PR matters for SEO in the AI era

Search tools are constantly looking for trusted signals of authority. They reward companies that are regularly mentioned in credible outlets and associated with expert viewpoints.

In fact, **research** shows that brands consistently mentioned online, even more so without a link, are more likely to appear in AI-generated results. Generative models work by recognising patterns, so if your company is regularly referenced alongside relevant terms - for example, "secure cloud platform" or "leading HR tech provider" – that language is more likely to show up in automated recommendations.

It's not only about how often you're mentioned. The tone and setting matter too. Appearances in expert guides, industry roundups or practical how-to articles reinforce credibility and teach AI systems to associate your brand with authority and trust. Inconsistent or negative coverage, on the other hand, can just as easily shape those associations in the wrong direction.

Today's users are also changing how they search. Instead of typing "best CRM for small businesses" into Google, they ask ChatGPT, Gemini or Perplexity simple questions and get an instant answer that sounds like a recommendation. These responses are built from the very types of content PR teams target, including bylined articles, comment pieces, Q&As, buyers' guides, review roundups and top-10 lists.

Organisations that secure a place in this content ecosystem become the "go-to" options AI tools surface – think of it like a form of digital word-of-mouth that builds visibility and credibility, even when users never click through to a website. And PR, therefore, acts as a tool that strengthens SEO by creating the reputation signals that search engines rely on.

Practical steps for tech companies

- **Audit your online presence** – Check how your company is represented across owned channels, media coverage and social platforms. Ensure product descriptions, messaging and leadership profiles are consistent and up to date.
- **Invest in thought leadership** – Publish articles, data studies and expert commentary that position your company as a knowledgeable voice in your field. Ensure these are attributed to real people within your organisation – some publications even prefer linking content to the spokesperson's LinkedIn page rather than their website.
- **Optimise for clarity** – Use direct language and clear formatting so your content can be easily understood and cited by AI systems.
- **Earn coverage in authoritative outlets** – Work with your PR team to secure interviews, bylines and news coverage that reinforce your expertise and create high-quality backlinks. However, it's important to note that not all publications offer those. Being represented in a piece positively and authoritatively plays as important a role as having the backlink.
- **Track your representation** – Look beyond click metrics. Monitor how your company appears in generative search results and adjust your content if your messaging is being shortened or misunderstood.

In fact, traditional SEO metrics such as traffic, impressions and keyword rankings, only tell part of the story.

Tech companies should broaden their measurement frameworks to reflect the new ways audiences encounter their brand.

Consider adding:

- **Citation tracking to monitor** whether your content or brand is being referenced in AI-generated answers, even when clicks are not recorded.
- **Share of voice to measure** how often your company is mentioned in industry media compared with competitors.
- **Message accuracy** to regularly review how your brand is described in AI summaries to ensure key messages are intact.
- **Engagement quality** to track whether leads and conversions from organic channels remain strong, showing that those who do click are well-qualified.

By focusing on influence and representation, tech companies can better understand whether their investment in PR and SEO is helping shape market perception.

Conclusion

AI-driven search is rewriting the rules of discoverability.

For technology companies, visibility now depends less on keyword rankings and more on whether your brand is trusted, cited and viewed as an expert in the industry.

Combining a strong PR strategy with smart SEO is the most reliable way to achieve that. Investing in credible content, securing meaningful media coverage and maintaining a clear, consistent voice will help you not only ensure that your brand appears in searches but also position you within the first few lines of the AI-generated summary.