



AI-Proof Your SEO Strategy with SAIO (Search Artificial Intelligence Optimization)

Generate visibility and traffic with citations and links in conversational chatbots like Bing Copilot, Google SGE, Google Gemini (formerly Bard), ChatGPT Plus, Perplexity, and more.

by Marc Engelsman

If you've been following the Google SGE (Search Generative Experience) storyline for as long as we have, you've seen the continuing saga of how and when SGE will be rolled-out of its current experimental status. The [latest news about SGE testing IRL](#) continues to cloud the full-launch time frame. This uncertain timeline might lull some SEO-ers into taking a wait-and-see approach to determine the best course of action or reaction to the live version when finally launched.

But the reality is conversational AI chatbots like Bing Copilot, ChatGPT Plus, and Perplexity are:

1. *already* live;
2. *already* stealing traditional SEO visibility;
3. and *already* driving clicks via citations and links to what they deem trustworthy content sources.

So, in the immortal words of Rocky's manager, "*What are we waiting for!?*" Now is the time to protect your investment in organic search marketing by adding Search AI Optimization (SAIO, pronounced "say-oh") to your traditional SEO strategy.

Here's an Executive Summary of why SAIO is important and how you can approach these AI platforms as an opportunity rather than a threat to your organic search traffic:

- Simply put, a SAIO strategy focuses on optimizing websites to show up in searches—with link attribution—on conversational chatbots like Bing Copilot, Google SGE, ChatGPT Plus, and Perplexity.
- SAIO and SEO are not mutually exclusive strategies. In fact, they are both rooted in technical, content, and authority signals that address the EEAT and "helpful content" search quality standards for achieving search rankings and visibility.

- Successful implementation of a SAIO strategy requires shifting your SEO mindset. Your approach to keywords, website content delivery, and how you leverage social media for authority signals is different with SAIO.
- You should be thinking about how to integrate SAIO now, even if tools for monitoring and measuring “chat-tribution” haven't fully emerged yet.

Now let's dig deeper into SAIO by sharing some of the questions our clients are asking about this new strategy.

Table of contents

1. [Who should be thinking about a SAIO strategy now?](#)
2. [Which conversational AI chatbots do you target with your SAIO strategy?](#)
3. [What are the similarities and differences between SEO and SAIO in terms of optimization tactics?](#)
4. [Can you further explain why you need different types of content for SEO and SAIO?](#)
5. [How should you approach links and social signals for SAIO?](#)
6. [How do I know implementation of SAIO tactics is working?](#)
7. [Final thoughts on SAIO](#)
8. [Other resources](#)

Who should be thinking about a SAIO strategy now?

Reports estimate Google SGE's potential negative impact on search traffic [could range from 17% on the low end to 76% on the extreme high end](#), depending on industry (more details on [AI chatbot ads here](#)). Regardless of your industry, you should be thinking about SAIO if:

- You are already leveraging traditional SEO tactics to bring significant volumes of relevant and “convert-able” organic search visitors to your website and/or
- You want to protect your brand's competitive visibility in these new search environments.

Which conversational AI chatbots do you target with your SAIO strategy?

Given the goal of SAIO is to enhance brand visibility and drive relevant clicks directly to your website from AI chatbots, our initial focus for SAIO has been on Bing Copilot and ChatGPT Plus (which are live), Google SGE (which we have been testing since the

experiment started last year) and more recently, Perplexity. These platforms currently and consistently include citations with links pointing back to their sources of information.

We are also closely following how Google's Gemini (formerly Bard) and the free version of ChatGPT are evolving their use of citations and links in their AI platforms. Based on how we are already achieving SAIO success on the AI chatbots mentioned above, we are confident these tactics will also lead to success on the other conversational AI chatbots and new entries as they emerge.

Here's a visual comparison on the AI chatbots:

| AI Platform | ChatGPT/ SearchGPT | Bing Copilot | AI Overviews (formerly Google SGE) | Gemini (formerly Bard) | Perplexity AI |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Affiliation | OpenAI | Microsoft (with OpenAI ChatGPT license) | Google | Google | Privately Held |
| Access to Internet and processes real- world information | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Generates citations with links | ChatGPT: Must Prompt SearchGPT: Yes | ✓ | ✓ | Sometimes | ✓ |
| Responses can include sponsored content (ads, product listings, etc.) | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ | Rarely | ✗ |
| SAIO Target? | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | Secondary | ✓ |

www.digitalbrandexpressions.com/saio

What are the similarities and differences between SEO and SAIO in terms of optimization tactics?

DBE's success in SEO over the past 22+ years is rooted in a foundational strategic structure that addresses three mainstays of best practices: On-Website Technical, On-Website Content, and Off-Website Links/Social Signals.

This approach has allowed us to modify our tactics as search engines have evolved over the years. Our SAIO strategy uses the same strategic structure, but some tactics have been enhanced or changed to attract the AI conversational search bots.

See the strategy comparison below:



SEO Best Practices

Hundreds of factors for best practices tend to fall into these **3 key areas**:

Technical On-Website

This ensures that search engines can crawl the site and recognize the site's content by applying sanctioned, technical techniques. Core Web Vitals are reviewed and optimized to ensure a great page experience.

Content On-Website

This identifies the keywords/phrases that match the user/search intent of your stakeholders and optimizes those keywords appropriately throughout the website, aligned with current and projected best practices. Internal linking strategies are leveraged to help guide users (and search bots) to relevant content.

Links/Social Signals Off-Website

This attracts engagement from other websites and social profiles/influencers with share-worthy content that fosters the Experience, Expertise, Authority, and Trust (E-EAT) quality factors search engines value as signals of relevant, helpful content.



SAIO Best Practices

SAIO also has **3 key areas** of best practices:

Technical On-Website

This ensures that search engines can crawl the site and recognize the site's content by applying the same sanctioned, technical techniques mentioned above for SEO. Additional technical focus for SAIO should include leveraging schema markup, product listings/feeds, and other elements of structured data that help the AI bots see and categorize your content.

Content On-Website

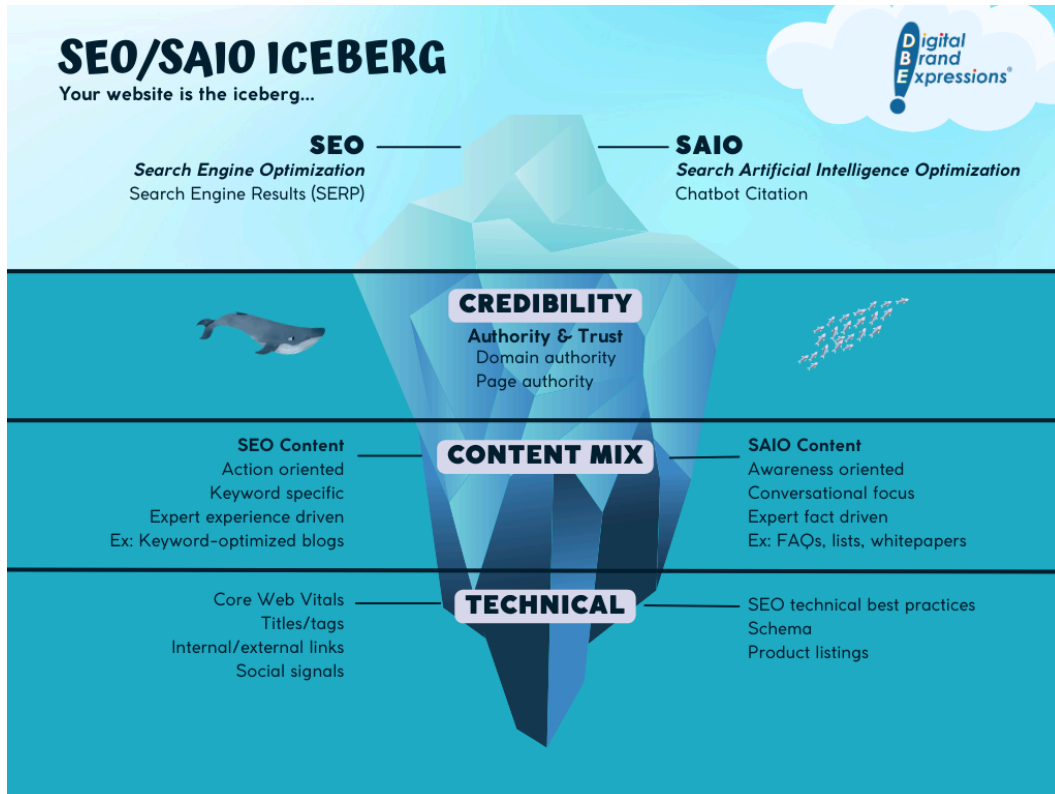
This identifies the topics and long-tail search terms your stakeholders will most likely use when searching via AI chatbots. SAIO content should have a conversational focus while still delivering expert, fact-based information. Recommended content formats include FAQs, blog posts, whitepapers, etc.

Links/Social Signals Off-Website

Links and social signals pointing to your content attract conversational AI chatbots to your website, influencing the authority and trust factors that prompt citation inclusion to relevant AI searches. In our research and results, LinkedIn and YouTube are far more frequently cited with links than Facebook and X (Twitter).

As you can see, the core tenets for both SEO and SAIO lie in establishing credibility, trust, and authority for your website as a source that has relevant content aligned with the searcher's query.

Here's a quick overview of the similarities and differences:



Can you further explain why you need different types of content for SEO and SAIO?

One of the biggest adjustments when approaching SAIO vs. SEO is how you approach page architecture and content. For example, one of today's popular SEO strategies utilizes a "pillar" approach with a primary page optimized for a topic that is supported by and linked with a series of sub-topic pages optimized for related keywords.

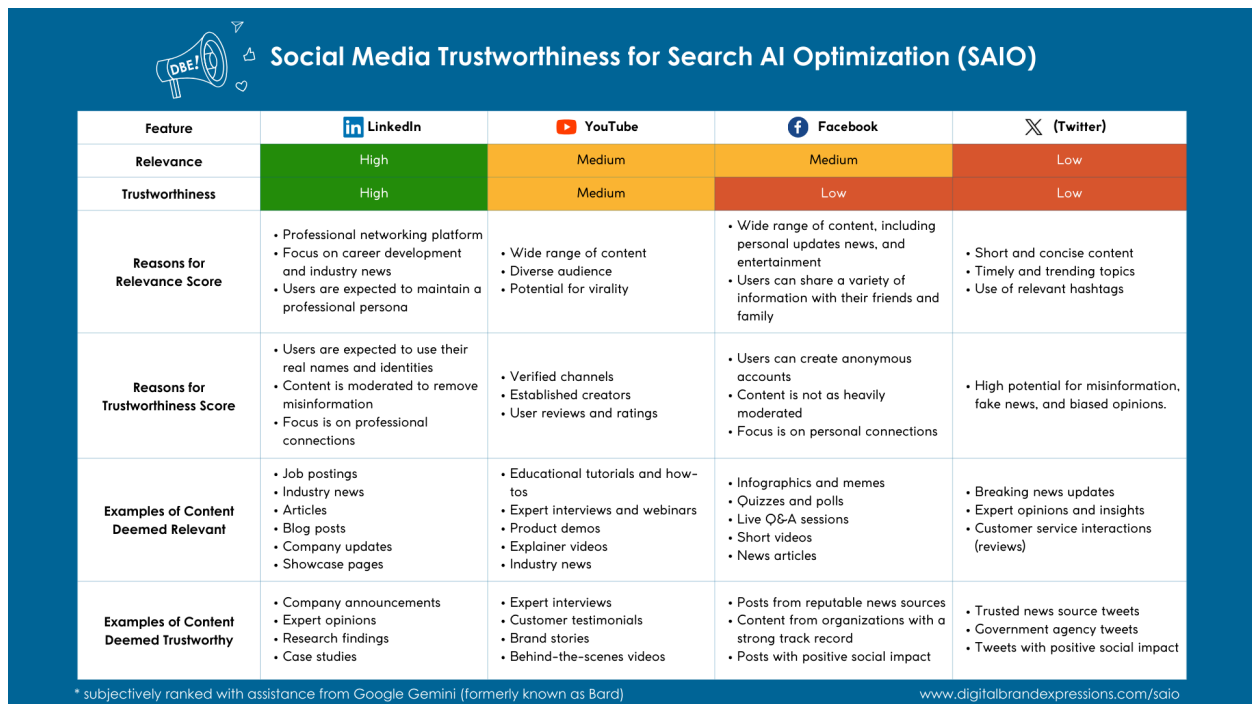
SAIO also takes a topical approach but, rather than separating sub-topics into separate pages, you can cover the supporting concepts on the topic page. However, the content on this single page needs to be more structured in formatting. This helps the AI learning models "see" the relevance of the content to the variety of intentions of potential user queries. Content formats we've found to have led to citations in AI chatbots responses include:

- FAQ's (with all questions on one page)
- How-tos with step-by-step instructions
- Q & A interviews
- Longer form white papers or blogs split into distinct sections with topic headers
- Listicles or other ranked/sorted information

We've also seen the AI chatbots display and link to image graphics and videos that follow these structured approaches to content.

How should you approach links and social signals for SAIO?

Similar to the traditional search bots, the AI chatbots are looking for signs of authority and trust that support citing your content as relevant and reliable. To that end, we are seeing LinkedIn and YouTube as particularly attractive vehicles for supporting citations. LinkedIn is considered more credible than X or Facebook as its user base is composed of identifiable brands and professionals with demonstrated expertise and experience in their fields. YouTube channels with dedicated content around key topics similarly connote the EEAT values that work for both SEO and SAIO.



Social Media Trustworthiness for Search AI Optimization (SAIO)

| Feature | LinkedIn | YouTube | Facebook | X (Twitter) |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Relevance | High | Medium | Medium | Low |
| Trustworthiness | High | Medium | Low | Low |
| Reasons for Relevance Score | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional networking platform • Focus on career development and industry news • Users are expected to maintain a professional persona | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide range of content • Diverse audience • Potential for virality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide range of content, including personal updates, news, and entertainment • Users can share a variety of information with their friends and family | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short and concise content • Timely and trending topics • Use of relevant hashtags |
| Reasons for Trustworthiness Score | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Users are expected to use their real names and identities • Content is moderated to remove misinformation • Focus is on professional connections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verified channels • Established creators • User reviews and ratings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Users can create anonymous accounts • Content is not as heavily moderated • Focus is on personal connections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High potential for misinformation, fake news, and biased opinions. |
| Examples of Content Deemed Relevant | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job postings • Industry news • Articles • Blog posts • Company updates • Showcase pages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational tutorials and how-tos • Expert interviews and webinars • Product demos • Explainer videos • Industry news | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infographics and memes • Quizzes and polls • Live Q&A sessions • Short videos • News articles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breaking news updates • Expert opinions and insights • Customer service interactions (reviews) |
| Examples of Content Deemed Trustworthy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company announcements • Expert opinions • Research findings • Case studies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert interviews • Customer testimonials • Brand stories • Behind-the-scenes videos | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posts from reputable news sources • Content from organizations with a strong track record • Posts with positive social impact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trusted news source tweets • Government agency tweets • Tweets with positive social impact |

* subjectively ranked with assistance from Google Gemini (formerly known as Bard) www.digitalbrandexpressions.com/saio

How do I know implementation of SAIO tactics is working?



There is currently a “chat-tribution” gap as analytics platforms figure out how to track clicks from AI citations. That said, there are several ways to extrapolate SAIO success:

1. Closely monitor changes in your overall website traffic:
 - a. Is Organic Search traffic going down vs. prior periods? Is the drop more or less than the anticipated decline for your industry per the article cited above?
 - b. Is Direct traffic going up vs. prior periods? We have seen AI clicks sourced as “direct” traffic in some cases.
 - c. Are Bing/Organic and/or Bing.com/Referral traffic going up? What are you seeing in Bing Webmaster Tools (that now includes “Web and Chat” as a source)?
 - d. Are you getting more referral traffic from SAIO social sources like LinkedIn or YouTube?
2. Keep an eye on your SEO rankings and where you are appearing on the SERP. Since implementing SAIO content tactics, we have noticed a significant uptick in achieving higher levels of visibility on a variety of SERP features including One Box, Featured Snippet, Knowledge Graph, Image Searches, Video Searches, Product Listings, etc. These improvements are indicators of the authority, trust, and relevance factors that are important signals for AI chatbots. So, SEO helps SAIO and SAIO helps SEO.
3. Do your own chatbot research on the topics you are optimizing. Are you included in the results with citations? Are your competitors? If so, what are they doing better than you in terms of optimization?

Final thoughts on SAIO

Those involved with SEO from the early days understand organic search is an ever-evolving, never-gonna-die part of an integrated digital marketing strategy. The introduction of conversational, generative AI chatbots like Google SGE and Bing Copilot are just another advancement in how people find relevant information to help them in their professional and personal lives. This AI search world is already live and rapidly gaining traction. So now is the time to protect the efficacy of your SEO program. By adding a SAIO strategy, you can reach and influence these AI searchers – and bring them directly to your brand, services, and products.

Other resources

- [Perceptive Marketer](#) - Weekly digital marketing briefs with a mindful twist!
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- [DBE Website](#)
 - [DBE SAIO Services](#)
- [SAIO LinkedIn Page](#)
- [Latest SAIO News and Blogs](#)
 - [Spring 2024 Rains Ads On Gen AI Results!](#)
 - [From Brand Authority to EEAT to SEO to SAIO](#)
 - [SEO vs. SAIO Content Strategy](#)
 - [The Yin & Yang of SEO and SAIO](#)
 - [SAIO and YouTube: Another Click In The \(EEAT\) Wall](#)
 - [SAIO and EEAT: The LinkedIn Connection](#)
 - [Search Artificial Intelligence Optimization \(SAIO\) News](#)
 -  [SAIO and SEO FAQs Answered](#)
 - [A SAIO \(Rhymes with Day-oh\) and SEO Strategy Success Story](#)
 - [The Chattribution Gap](#)
 -  [What AI Can and Can't Do in the Search and Social Space](#)
- [Search Engine Land AIO \(another name for SAIO\) Article Library](#) - Get the latest updates on AI optimization topics.
- [Brand Nexus Prompt Templates](#) - A tool that helps create AI chatbot prompts that produce valuable digital marketing insights.