

*GEO Readiness Report:*  
How Marketers Are  
Embracing AI Search  
Disruption



# Overview

Marketers are scrambling to figure out what the new world of AI search means for their businesses. They see their website traffic nosediving. While they increasingly use AI platforms like ChatGPT and Perplexity to find answers in their personal and work lives—and they know their prospects and customers are too—many marketing leaders are confounded in their efforts to “game” AI search systems.

This is a period of massive adjustment for a generation of marketers who’ve grown up in a world addicted to SEO and website traffic. So, how are they adjusting to the fast-moving target of generative engine optimization (GEO)? To answer this and other questions about the new world of AI in marketing, Scribewise recently conducted a survey of 205 U.S.-based professional services marketers and leaders to gauge their GEO readiness and how aggressively they are embracing the new AI marketing paradigm.

# The Big *Takeaways*

95%



of respondents say it is important or very important for their content to show up in AI search, and they are diving into GEO with strategic urgency. 72% of those in the beginning stages say their timeline for fully implementing their GEO strategy is six months.

[\[click to dive deeper\]](#) ↘

63%



of those with GEO strategies and visibility tracking in place say they've gotten more exposure with clients as a result of these efforts. Those prioritizing GEO are already seeing important, measurable benefits.

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67%



of respondents say they plan to optimize their website content as part of their GEO strategy, one of a variety of strategies being implemented. 58% report amping up their public relations efforts.

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45%



of respondents say one of their biggest concerns about the future of content marketing in an AI-first search world is that optimizing for AI search platforms is “more obtuse” than it is for traditional search engines. Marketers are struggling to move on from legacy SEO strategies, even though this disruption requires immediate strategic redirection.

[\[click to dive deeper\]](#) ↘

55%



of respondents say they have investment provisioned for GEO within their marketing budgets, with 70% reporting that GEO activities account for 11-20% of that budget. Funding is essential for GEO success, and those not dedicating budget for these efforts are at risk of becoming “invisible” to prospects and clients.

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1 in 5



respondents completely agree with the statement, “GEO is just the next evolution of SEO.” This sentiment gravely miscalculates the nuances and importance of changing strategies for GEO, which will likely disadvantage their marketing efforts.

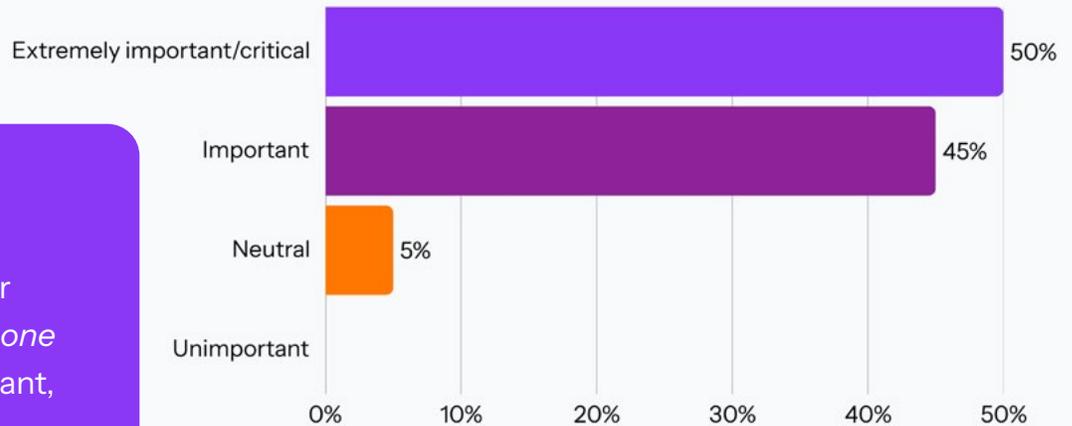
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# The *Strategic Urgency* of GEO

Marketers realize that AI search disruption is a gold rush moment, and they are racing to position their firms in a future dominated by winning GEO strategies.

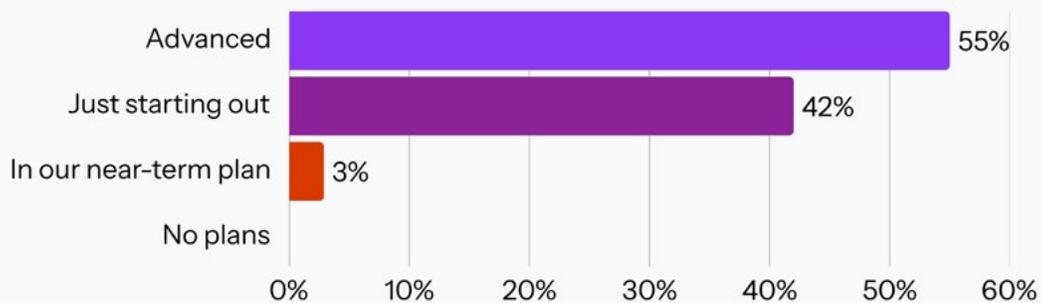
How important is it for your organization's content to show up in AI search?

95% say GEO is important or very important for their organizations. *No one* said it is unimportant, although 5% were neutral.



More than half (55%) of the leaders we surveyed consider their GEO efforts to be “advanced.” The remaining respondents said they’re just starting out or have GEO in their near-term plan.

What is the status of your organization's generative engine optimization (GEO) strategy?



72% of professional services marketers who've started a GEO strategy plan to fully implement it within six months. Clearly, the train is leaving the station, and firms that wait much longer are at risk of being left behind to play an expensive game of catch-up.

What is your organization's timeline for fully implementing its generative engine optimization (GEO) strategy?



### Scribewise *Take*

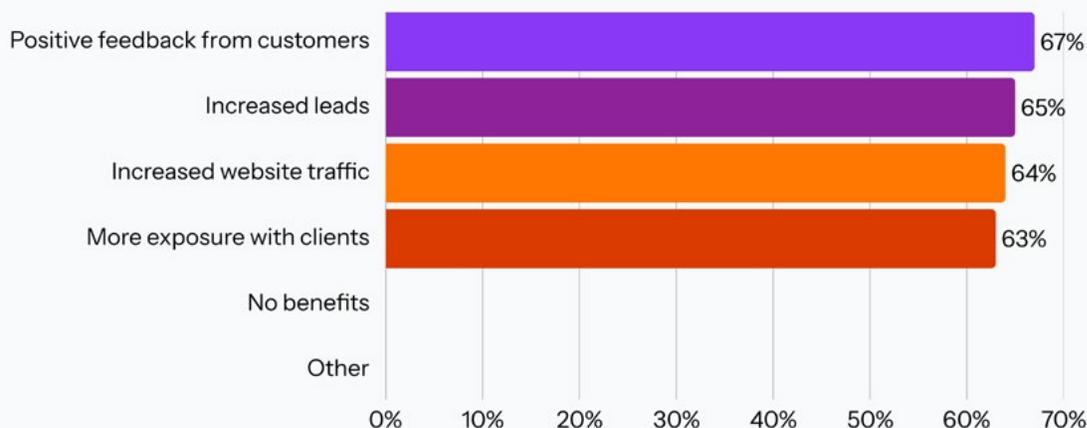
It is becoming clear that the GEO race will be won by the nimble. Your GEO strategy needs to go far beyond SEO tactics to account for large language models' (LLMs') capriciousness in the source material they train on; what seems like the perfect path today might be laughably pointless in a month. Further, this is not a project that "ends"—AI search will be an ever-evolving puzzle to solve, requiring continuous attention and informed expertise.

# Marketers are Seeing *Strong Early Returns* for GEO Efforts

There is a clear advantage for GEO first movers. The firms that have dived into GEO practices here in the early days report that they are reaping early benefits. If you're still a skeptic, these numbers provide overwhelming rationale for letting go of that skepticism and diving into the deep end. Consider that those who've implemented GEO strategies and visibility tracking report getting:

- **More leads (65%)**
- **More exposure with clients (63%)**
- **More website traffic (64%)**

What are the biggest benefits your organization has realized from its generative engine optimization (GEO) strategy?

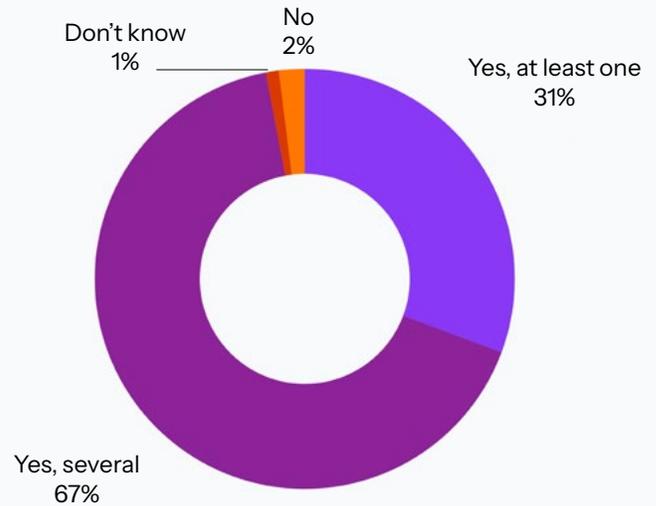


That last point is especially interesting. Marketers are crediting GEO—not SEO—with helping them grow website visits in a year in which just about every company is reporting declining website traffic.

Best of all, a whopping 97% of respondents told us their firms have received one or more leads through answer engines like ChatGPT and Perplexity.

This is simultaneously hard to believe and completely understandable. The rate of adoption of generative AI has been astronomical—ChatGPT in particular now reports 800 million active weekly users. Sophisticated buyers have stopped using Google for any nontransactional query, preferring instead the far superior experience of AI answer engines.

Has your organization captured one or more leads as a result of its generative engine optimization (GEO) strategy?



## Scribewise *Take*

In these early days of GEO, it's possible to have a significant impact in a relatively short time (we've seen it ourselves, quadrupling our AI visibility in just two months).

These responses from marketing leaders show that leaning in to GEO helps firms rise above the overwhelming, ever-present noise that is today's internet. We believe this channel is only going to increase in value, and smart firms are embracing it today.

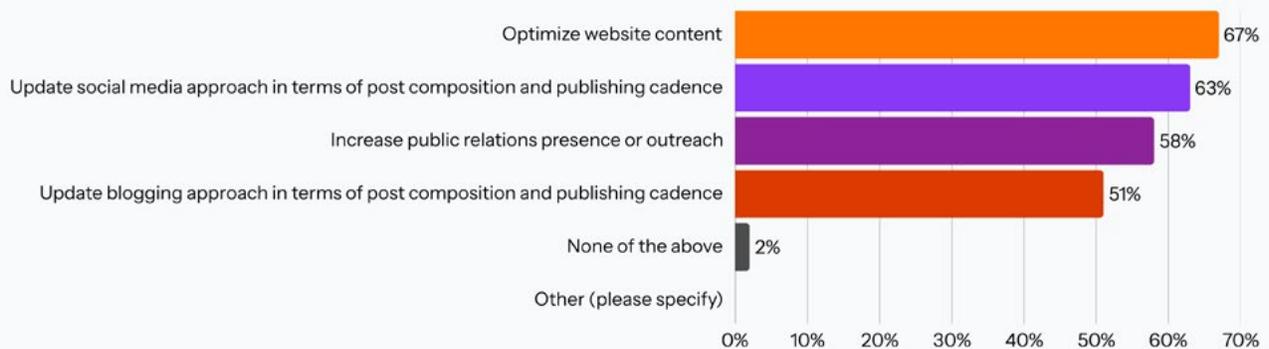
# How Marketers Are Trying to *Move the Needle*

You may have heard the old quip, “There’s only one way to eat an elephant—one bite at a time.”

In other words, the best way to tackle any big project is to break it down into smaller tasks and accomplish them one at a time. So it is with launching a GEO strategy—there are a number of labor-intensive directions in which to go, and it’s important to focus on what will have the most impact. This is difficult to do when experts are telling you that you need a lot more content, formatted in a different way from what you’ve traditionally done, and spread across the internet.

Our survey shows that digital marketers are diving into GEO strategies the right way—focusing on impactful activities with methodical urgency. Marketing leaders are prioritizing new content formats at scale, spread across owned, shared and earned media.

Are there any marketing or communications activities you intend to initiate or better support (e.g., increase funding, add staff, etc.) as part of a generative engine optimization (GEO) strategy?



**67%** **of respondents told us that optimizing their web content for LLMs is a top priority.** This is a big project, but it is the one your marketing team can most easily control; your website is, after all, an owned property. It is also something that is basically a one-time project—the other activities marketers say they are embracing are ostensibly never-ending efforts.

**51%** **of marketers are prioritizing another key owned channel: their blog.** Again, you control your own blog, so the barrier to success is lower ... not that creating an increased quantity of high-quality content is necessarily easy. Similarly, 63% of marketers are working to increase their social media publishing cadence, with posts formatted specifically for LLMs.

**58%** **of marketers tell us that they are focused on increasing their public relations presence.** This is potentially the most impactful tactic, but it can also be the slowest-moving. Public relations success builds over time as you create media relationships and generate momentum. PR has always been worth the time—for decades, it has been the most efficient way to build brand awareness, affinity and trust. Many firms have not embraced PR and media relations because they don't have the patience required to get the flywheel turning, but AI search realities are reemphasizing its importance, which marketers recognize today.

### Scribewise *Take*

We advise clients to focus on what you can most easily control first—your website. Rewriting website copy to appeal to LLMs, increasing your blogging cadence and adding FAQs, comparison charts and wiki-style pages will help LLMs surface your brand. As you're doing this, begin to lay the groundwork for increasing your presence across the internet, specifically targeting media websites, which have an outsized influence on ChatGPT, Perplexity and other AI engines.

An important consideration in all of this work is that content creation for LLMs needs to be simultaneously concise and complete—something that typically requires experienced writers who can pack a lot of meaning into just a few words.

# It Seems We Can't *Quit SEO*

Fact: Change is hard.

It's especially hard when the universe is telling you that the thing that you've based your entire professional existence on really doesn't matter that much anymore. And so it is with SEO. Yes, it's still relevant, but this is increasingly only because the LLMs are, in these early days, favoring sites with solid SEO signals.

(Disclosure: We have always been **SEO cynical**—it has very rarely been worth the effort for professional services firms.)

GEO is fundamentally different from SEO. Yes, SEO influences GEO performance today, but it is only a small (and shrinking) piece of the puzzle—

LLMs are looking at the totality of a firm's online presence, not just its website. Additionally, website traffic is plummeting for many firms, in part because Google is embracing AI overviews and in part because human beings want to consume content where they are, rather than zigzagging all over the internet.

In short, the metrics and attribution models that so many have prioritized over the last quarter century don't make sense anymore. And that is distressing for marketers.

What are your biggest concerns about the future of content marketing in an AI-first search world?



45% of marketers told us that AI engines being “more obtuse” than traditional search engines was one of their biggest concerns for the future of content marketing. 39% are concerned that traditional success metrics will no longer apply.

Twenty-five years ago, marketers were excited because there was finally a way to “keep score” for our work, which held the promise of giving us a seat at the C-suite table. In reality, we convinced other leaders to trust surface-level metrics that really didn’t matter, and they got addicted to the easy metric of website traffic. Now we have to wean them off that addiction and move them toward the idea of “share of model”—keeping track of how you show up in the various AI models as opposed to how your competitors show up. Several platforms have emerged to enable you to do this (at Scribewise, we use Scrunch).

Further, what works today seems like it might not work tomorrow. For instance, in the summer of 2025, Wikipedia and Reddit were two of the most important websites for your brand to be on to influence how you showed up in LLMs. This importance is significantly diminished only months later.

We’ve seen this trepidation ourselves. Even marketers who understand that the world is changing are clinging to the metrics they’ve focused on throughout their professional lives. This attitude is understandable but frankly, it doesn’t matter. This is the direction in which the world is headed, and there’s no turning back.

We need to let it go.

## Scribewise *Take*

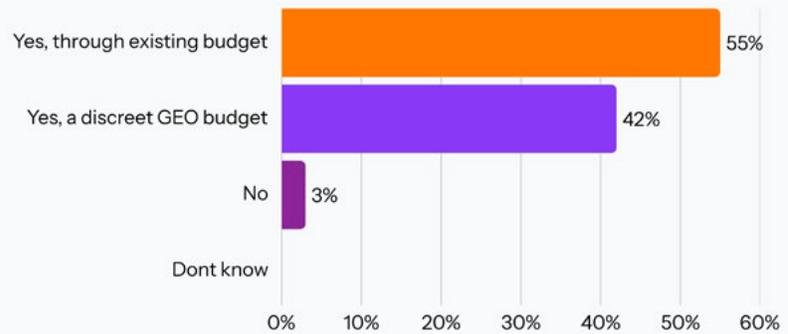
We understand that the chaos is unsettling, but this uncertainty is true of anything new. We believe GEO first movers will establish a moat around their online presence, just as early adopters of SEO did in the early aughts. Therefore, it behooves your firm to move toward GEO—a smart approach to GEO will take care of your SEO needs today and position you for the future. Our best advice is to hire smart people who can think strategically and are capable of creating and distributing provocative content that your future clients crave.

# Carving out a *GEO Budget*

GEO is not a strategy many of us have budgeted for in the past. It's such a brand new marketing channel that, odds are, very few companies had it as a discreet line item in their 2025 marketing budgets.

But our survey shows a refreshing flexibility in how marketing budgets are being used, further demonstrating the strategic urgency discussed in Section 1.

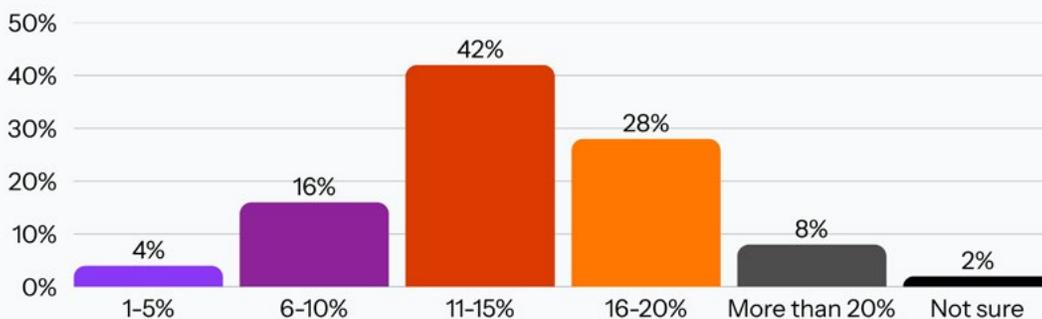
Does or will your organization have a budget for its generative engine optimization (GEO) initiative?



42% of professional services marketers tell us they have a discreet GEO budget, and another 55% say they have carved out funds for GEO through already-existing marketing allocations.

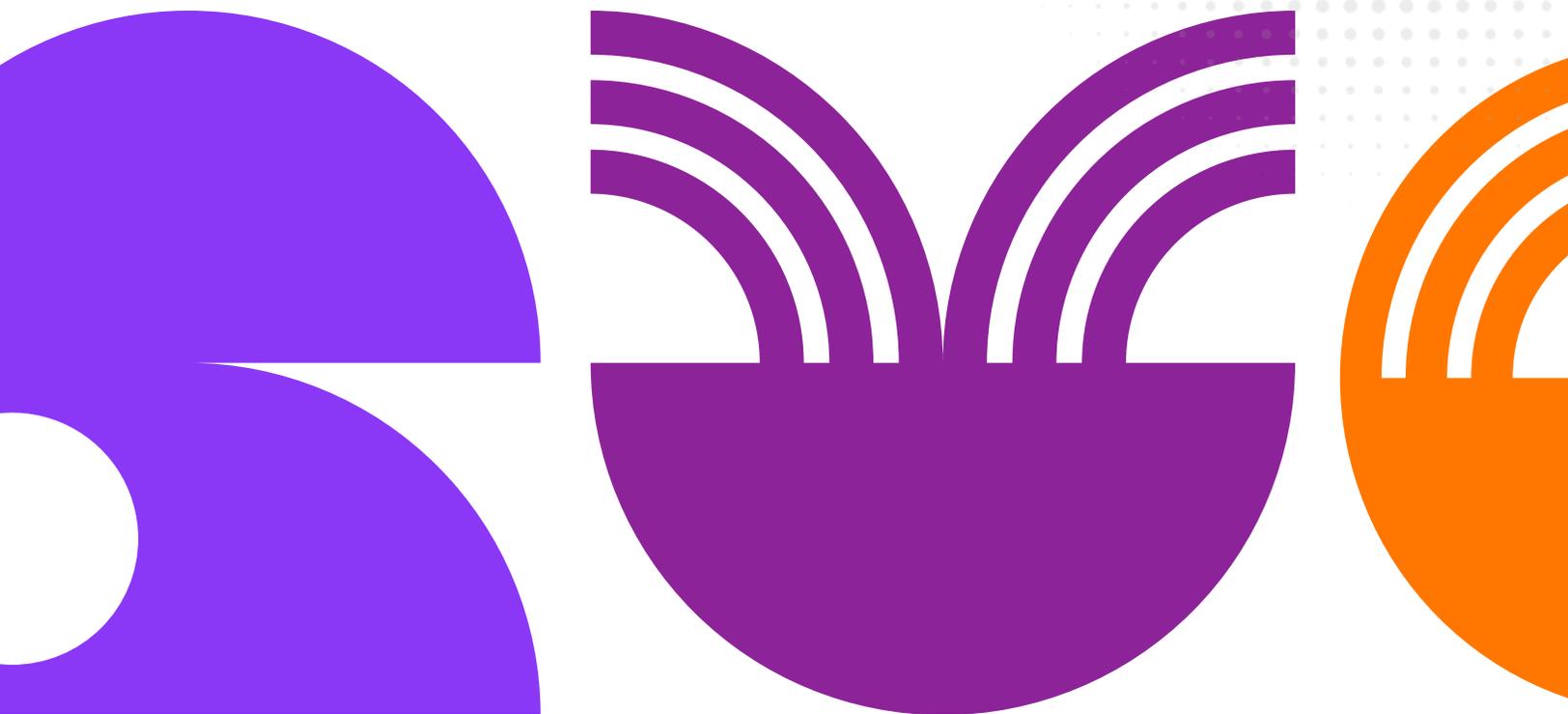
Of those with GEO budgets within marketing, 42% say they have allocated 11-15% of their marketing budget to GEO; 28% say they've allocated 16-20% of their budget to GEO.

Approximately how much of your organization's marketing budget is or will be allocated to generative engine optimization (GEO)?



## Scribewise *Take*

It is great to see marketing departments diving in and investing in GEO. This is the most exciting new marketing channel since the emergence of social media 20 years ago, and it demands attention. But we caution against siloing your GEO budget as you move forward—GEO success will depend on a combination of smart strategy focused on owning the answers to specific AI prompts, content creation, social media community management and media relations. If your budgeting process balkanizes those activities, you run the risk that the sum of your efforts will be less than the whole of your investment.



# Last Word: GEO *is Not* SEO

Based on our survey and discussions with clients and prospects, it seems that some marketers are looking at GEO as “SEO 2.1.” One in five marketers tell us they completely agree that GEO is just the next evolution of SEO.

1 in 5 completely agree that GEO is just the next evolution of SEO.



**But it is not.** This is a tectonic shift in how people find information. Yes, SEO plays into it, but succeeding in AI search requires a new mindset and different skills.

As mentioned in Section 1, more than half of marketers say that their firm’s GEO strategy is “advanced,” citing that they “saw the importance of AI search early, engaged with experts either internally or as partners, and continue to execute on robust content optimization measures, with progress tracking in place.”

Established GEO practices are yielding measurable results for those with specific strategies and progress tracking already in place. Indeed, a clear majority of firms said they’ve captured several leads as a result of these efforts. Those on the bleeding edge of GEO are seeing competitive advantages.

## Scribewise *Take*

Paradoxically, the rise of AI seems to have created an opening for more human interactions online—people are overwhelmed by AI work slop, and they’re longing for deep dive, well-crafted niche content presented in a compelling way. We recommend that your team move beyond the traditional SEO skill set and embrace old-school competencies that bring more of a human element to your marketing.

Yes, this is hard work, and it’s incredibly tempting to use the AI shortcut for content creation. But easy ways lead to mediocrity, while hard work informed by expert guidance will lead to measurable results and glory for the marketing team within your business. And the good news is that no one has to go it alone. Indeed, 59% of marketers said they’ll engage with third-party experts and firms to accumulate the necessary expertise for their GEO strategy.

## About Scribewise

Scribewise helps professional services firms grow by combining thought leadership marketing, brand strategy and generative engine optimization (GEO). We work with expertise-driven businesses to create trust-based relationships with clients—and ensure that your expertise is discoverable by humans and AI assistants alike.

Learn more at [scribewise.com](https://scribewise.com) ↗

## How we conducted this survey

Scribewise conducted an online survey of executive leaders and marketing managers working at U.S.-based organizations from September 18, 2025 to September 29, 2025. To qualify for the survey, respondents were required to be familiar with their organization’s content creation and digital marketing strategy. After disqualifying ineligible respondents and screening submitted responses for data integrity, the total sample base was 205 qualified professionals.