

PROPOLIS
FROM B2B MARKETING

GEO:
How B2B Brands Can Win Visibility in AI Search Era

b2bmarketing.net/propolis

PROPOLIS
FROM B2B MARKETING

The AI Shift Reshaping Discovery



Lina Vaz,
Senior Editor,
Propolis

Artificial intelligence has inserted a new layer between B2B buyers and brands, one that doesn't rank results, but rewrites them. Generative AI systems now synthesize and deliver answers directly, collapsing the traditional search journey into a single interaction.

For two decades, digital visibility meant ranking in search results. Today, it means something tfundamentally different: being cited, interpreted and trusted by large language models (LLMs).

For B2B marketing leaders, the implications are immediate. Visibility is no longer defined by where a brand ranks, but whether AI systems recognize a company as a credible source of expertise.

Generative Engine Optimization (GEO) is the practice of structuring content, authority signals and digital presence to influence how AI systems interpret and surface a brand. It reflects a broader transformation in digital discovery: buyers are no longer navigating multiple websites. They are increasingly relying on AI-generated answers that synthesize insights from across sources.

Insights in this report draw from a **Propolis** Best Practice Briefing led by AI expert Steve Mudd, alongside perspectives from Raja Rajamannar, Senior Fellow, Former CMCO, Mastercard, and David Borish, AI strategist, Trace3. The central message is clear: the way buyers research vendors is changing rapidly and marketing teams must adapt accordingly.



Raja Rajamannar,
Senior Fellow,
Former CMCO,
Mastercard



Steve Mudd,
AI Expert,
Propolis



David Borish,
AI strategist,
Trace3 and LinkedIn Top Voice

PROPOLIS
FROM B2B MARKETING

The Search Funnel Is Collapsing

Traditional search engine optimization (SEO) assumes a linear buyer journey: prospects discover information through search results, explore vendor websites and gradually move through a marketing funnel toward conversion. Generative AI disrupts this model entirely.

Unlike traditional search engines, LLMs don't retrieve information from ranked lists. They synthesize insights from multiple sources to generate a single response. In many cases, users never click through to a website at all.

This challenges a core assumption of digital marketing: traffic is no longer the primary indicator of influence. Increasingly, discovery happens inside AI systems themselves. Steve describes this as the collapse of the search funnel, a shift that fundamentally redefines what "intent" looks like in digital channels:

> *If somebody makes it to your website now, they've probably done their homework. AI-driven visitors have higher intent and higher value."*

Buyers are already adapting their research behavior. Advanced AI tools allow procurement teams and stakeholders to analyze hundreds of sources simultaneously, summarizing industry viewpoints, case studies and vendor positioning in minutes.

Steve used **Google NotebookLM** to prepare for the Propolis Best Practice Briefing, analyzing more than 150 sources almost instantly. In this environment, search is no longer just a channel but an interface layer between human decision-makers and machine intelligence.

PROPOLIS
FROM B2B MARKETING

From SEO to GEO:
The New Rules of Visibility

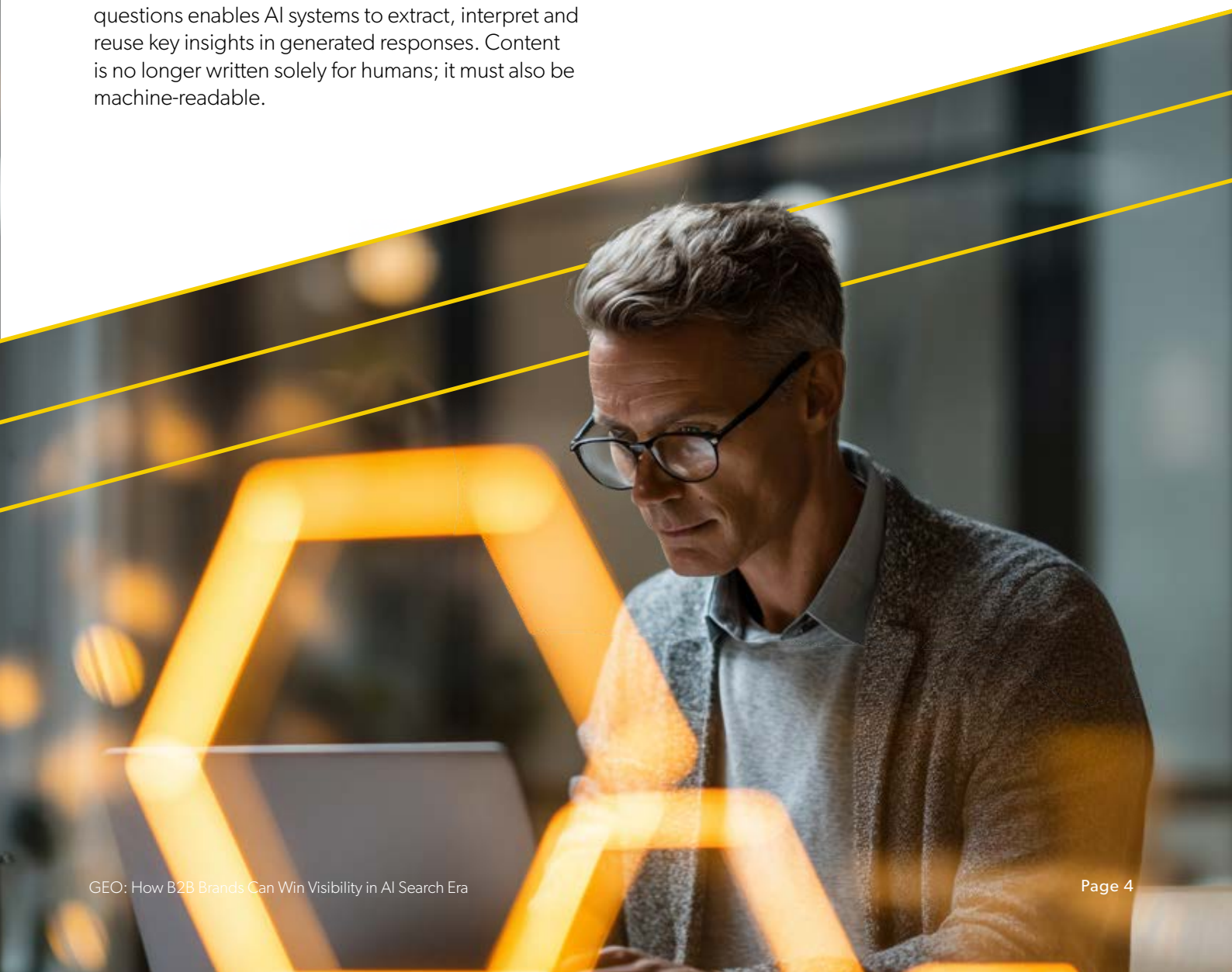
As AI systems increasingly mediate discovery, organizations must rethink how their content surfaces and how their expertise is represented across the web. Many companies are only beginning to adapt their digital presence for AI-driven discovery.

Basic GEO practices are quickly becoming as essential as traditional SEO. As David notes: *"Every company website needs to be GEO compliant. One simple step is adding FAQ sections across pages, because that's one of the ways AI systems retrieve answers."*

Structured content that clearly addresses specific questions enables AI systems to extract, interpret and reuse key insights in generated responses. Content is no longer written solely for humans; it must also be machine-readable.

However, generative AI introduces new complexity. LLMs predict language based on patterns in training data rather than verifying facts. As a result, inaccurate or misleading information can propagate if it appears consistently across sources. *"There's no truth filter. Large language models can be gamed in interesting ways,"* Steve explains.

Companies need to establish consistent, authoritative signals across credible sources to reinforce accurate representations of their expertise. This raises a critical question: which sources do AI systems trust?



PROPOLIS
FROM B2B MARKETING

How AI Systems Decide What to Cite

AI systems prioritize information based on perceived authority and corroboration. At the top of the hierarchy sits authoritative journalism and earned media: established publications, recognized journalists and trusted institutions.

This is followed by high-quality third-party content and corporate blogs that clearly demonstrate subject matter expertise or cite credible sources. Press releases distributed through recognized news wires are often treated as factual records.

Individual thought leadership also plays a significant role. AI systems frequently surface expert commentary published by individuals rather than corporate accounts. "Not company pages, but individual thought leadership, often pulled from LinkedIn Pulse," Steve notes.

At the lower end of the spectrum sit general reference sources such as Wikipedia, typically used for definitions rather than strategic insight. The implications are clear: GEO cannot succeed without credible external validation. David has observed similar patterns when analyzing how AI platforms surface expertise:

"Consistent naming, descriptions and positioning across platforms is very important. Backlinks are still evidence and validation, and publications or reports help give authority."

The same signals that establish credibility in human relationships such as authority, consistency and third-party validation, now determine how machines interpret the web.



PROPOLIS
FROM B2B MARKETING

The Power of Niche Authority

AI systems tend to reward depth of expertise rather than breadth of coverage. Brands that dominate a narrowly defined topic often outperform larger competitors with broader positioning.

Steve illustrates this with highly specialized domains with few authoritative voices such as green energy finance: *"How many sites are really writing about this? If the answer is one or two, AI will treat them as the authority."*

For B2B marketers, this reframes category strategy. Rather than attempting to own an entire industry conversation, companies can gain disproportionate visibility by becoming the definitive source on a specific problem or niche domain.

This shift favors fewer, in-depth assets over high-volume content production. A single authoritative resource can outperform dozens of generic articles if AI systems perceive it as the most credible explanation available.

The Competitive Advantage of Proprietary Data

Original insight is becoming one of the most defensible assets in AI-driven discovery. When multiple companies publish commentary based on the same publicly available data, AI systems struggle to differentiate between them. David explains:

"When every company publishes the same insights from the same data, the models don't know the difference. But if a brand has original research or unique benchmarks, that gives the models something distinctive to cite."

Proprietary insights from benchmarking studies, research reports and original datasets are valuable marketing assets and provide a clear advantage. In an environment where AI systems synthesize existing knowledge, original data is one of the few signals that competitors cannot easily replicate.



PROPOLIS
FROM B2B MARKETING

Why GEO Is Now a Brand Strategy Issue

AI-mediated discovery is rewriting the rules of brand visibility. As Raja Rajamannar, Senior Fellow, Former CMCO, Mastercard, observes: "Brand visibility isn't about where you rank on a page. It's about whether you get selected, summarized and recommended inside the AI layer that sits between the buyer and the marketplace."

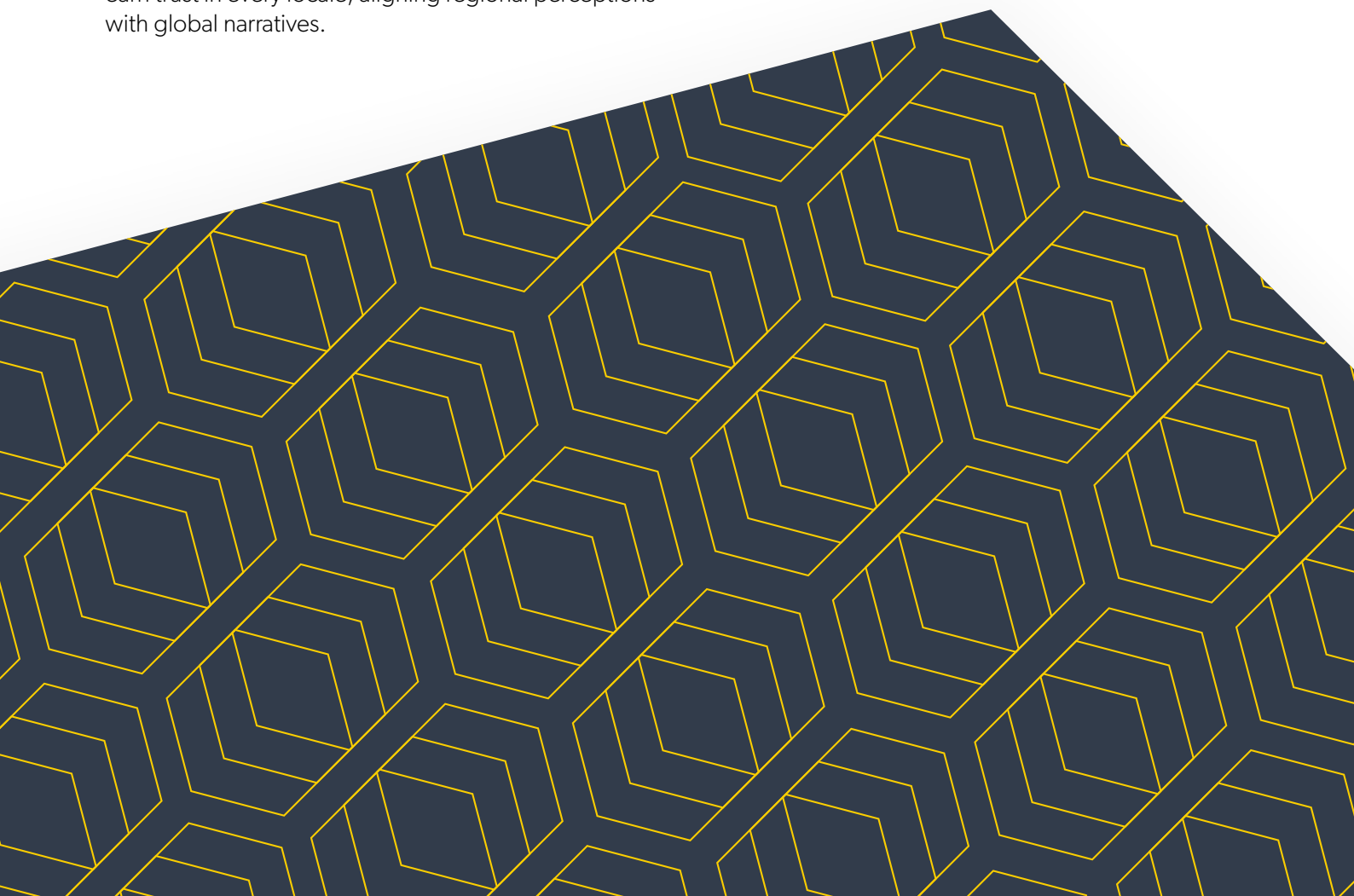
Digital authority is no longer about scale alone, but about credibility, and how consistently a brand is validated across AI-verified environments. Raja explains: "For humans, credibility and trust are earned through real value and lived experiences. For machines, it's all about consistency, corroboration and reliability across an ecosystem."

Authority is now relational. Machines measure networks of trust while humans measure experiences and emotions. Brands that thrive design systems that earn trust in every locale, aligning regional perceptions with global narratives.

As Raja puts it:

> *"The brands that will thrive are the ones that build durable trust and distinctiveness through real value and experience—not just optimization."*

Measuring influence requires new metrics: engagement depth, response velocity and trust signals, particularly at the regional level. Brands that understand where they matter, and why, can influence both human and machine decision-making.



PROPOLIS
FROM B2B MARKETING

Managing Brand Presence in AI Systems

As AI platforms increasingly represent companies in generated responses, brand accuracy is now a cross-functional responsibility. Marketing, communications, legal and executive teams must actively monitor how their brands are represented in AI-generated outputs, and intervene when necessary.

David says that responsibility cannot sit within a single department: "It has to be cross-functional: marketing, communications, legal… AI governance is becoming a big thing, especially in larger organizations."

Many enterprises are already establishing governance frameworks to manage reputational risks and correct inaccurate representations. As David explains:

> *Citation quality, where it was cited, positioning accuracy and narrative matters more than anything at this point. It's more than a click. It's the whole story."*

Brand reputation is no longer shaped solely by media coverage or owned channels. Increasingly, it's mediated by machine interpretation.

Leadership in the AI-Mediated Era

The shift toward AI-mediated discovery isn't an incremental change. It demands a fundamental rethink of how companies build and sustain authority online. "Whatever you were doing in the past, set it aside. Let it go. Start from scratch," Steve advises.

Winning in this environment requires a coordinated strategy that aligns marketing, communications and PR to generate signals that are credible, consistent and machine-readable. Original research, niche authority and narrative consistency become key differentiators.

GEO is not an evolution of SEO but a redefinition of visibility itself. As AI systems interpret, compress and recommend the market, brands are no longer competing for clicks. They are competing for inclusion in the models that shape buyer perception before a single website visit occurs.

The implication is stark: if your expertise isn't consistently recognized, cited and reinforced across the ecosystem, it effectively doesn't exist. The companies that win won't be those that publish the most content but those that build the most credible, corroborated and machine-readable authority.

In an era where machines and humans jointly decide which brands matter, GEO is what determines whether your brand is even in the conversation.

PROPOLIS
FROM B2B MARKETING

8 Strategic Takeaways for Strengthening AI Visibility in B2B

1. **Make GEO a strategic priority.**
   Treat AI discovery as a core growth channel, not an SEO add-on, aligning leadership, content and PR.
2. **Optimize content for machine interpretation.**
   Use structured formats (clear headings, FAQs, concise answers) so AI systems can easily retrieve and summarize your expertise.
3. **Invest in authoritative third-party coverage.**
   Earn media mentions, analyst citations, and credible backlinks strengthen trust signals that influence AI-generated responses.
4. **Build niche authority.**
   Focus on a clearly defined domain, publishing consistently within it to increase topical relevance and citation likelihood.
5. **Publish original research and proprietary data.**
   Create benchmarks, surveys and unique insights that give AI systems distinctive sources to cite.
6. **Activate expert voices across platforms.**
   Develop visible thought leadership from named subject-matter experts on LinkedIn, industry media, podcasts and events.
7. **Maintain consistent positioning everywhere.**
   Ensure messaging, value propositions and category narratives align across channels.
8. **Measure beyond clicks and rankings.**
   Track AI citations, narrative accuracy, share of voice in generative results and AI-driven discovery.



Propolis helps B2B marketers confidently build the right stratgies and skills to drive growth and prove their impact.

Full of relevant experise and tools, it cuts straight to the answers and advice marketing leaders and teams need to overcome their biggest challenges.

Learn how to join the community

b2bmarketing.net/propolis | linkedin.com/company/propolisb2bmarketing



B2B Marketing
Westgate House
9 Holborn
London
EC1N 2LL

info@b2bmarketing.net
b2bmarketing.net

B2B MARKETING