PREDICTIONS

Insights from Semrush Ambassadors on What to Expect and What to Do in 2027

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INTRODUCTION

In late 2022, OpenAI launched ChatGPT to the public. The tool was flooded with millions of users, and the Artificial Intelligence (AI) revolution for the online world started.

For Search Engine Optimization (SEO) practioners, there was a debate that raged . . . what was different? What do we need to do?

Candidly, the well-rounded practitioners were in a good spot. They had already shifted their thinking from 'keywords' to 'topics', integrated external media, developed linking strategies, optimized for local search, connected to social platforms and understood the power of a technically sound website.

As AI expanded and was integrated in the Google Search Results Pages (SERPs), websites started to see declines in traffic, new strategies needed to be developed and a generational shift was underway.

So what do we need to do?

We ask practitioners who are part of the Semrush Ambassdor program to provide their insights on what lies ahead and how companies can stay ahead in this new landscape.



LINDA GROENDYKE
President and Founder
Digital Insight Labs

For a long time, the website was the spoke around which digital marketing operated. Over time, it also became the hub and target for disciplines like events, public relations, media relations and social marketing. That model is going to shift to have content being the central spoke.

Why? According to a SparkToro, over 68% of Google searches ended without a click in the first four months of 2026. That means users are learning about your brand outside of any controlled environment including your website.

Don't get me wrong. A technically sound website will be the brand vault, so it needs to be support not only the best user experience possible, but it also needs to be the source of truth for any brand information. It should serve as a mirror in the online ecosphere.

Although SEO has always been about multiple elements such as external sources, technical architecture, and content development, AI Search will force a shift to develop content orchestration and analysis across all of the surfaces to make an impact.

There is not long-term impact of earned media tactics without owned media channels (website, socials) driving in the same direction. Having your marketing in slices (digital, pr, comms, social, website) will not work anymore. You need all of channels to make your brand enticing for AI and AI information seekers.

The common ground in all of these disciplines is content. The brands that understand their content pillars and how the channels radiate from that center will be the ones that win. Companies will need a content conductor to make sure all of the parts of the brand symphony are playing in tune.



JOSE NUNEZ

Global USO Strategist & AI-forward Optimizer

AIO, AEO, GEO & LLM Search Visibility

Ranking is not Retrieval. Retrieval is not Citation. Citation is not Recommendation. Recommendation is not Conversion.

We will soon transition to **Universal Search Optimization (USO)** as a cross-system framework designed to **Evaluate AI Discovery** across various platforms without making unsupported assumptions. The core function of USO will be to prevent the "measurement collapse" that happens when distinct observations are merged into a single, vague AI Visibility claim.

USO will be focused on 4 main public-facing states:
(1) - Visibility: Whether the resource, source, or entity surfaced.
(2) - Retrieval: Whether relevant information was selected or used.
(3) - Representation: How the source, content, or entity was presented.
(4) - Trust: What observable patterns support recurring use, citation, corroboration, selection, or recommendation.

Each of the above states will be classified using only 3 values:
OBSERVED: Sufficient evidence establishes the state occurred.
NOT OBSERVED: The output could be evaluated and the state did not occur.
NOT ESTABLISHED: Available evidence is insufficient to determine if the state occurred.

An **OBSERVED** State value will not infer:
(1) - Traffic from Citation frequency.
(2) - Conversion from Mentions.
(3) - Revenue from Inclusion.
(4) - Source causality from Citation.
(5) - Retrieval from Citation.
(6) - Recommendation from List Order.
(7) - Platform-wide behavior from limited Executions.
(8) - Consumer preference from Recommendation frequency.

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JOSE NUNEZ

Global USO Strategist & AI Optimizer
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Because of the above rule, USO will not be simply be GEO applied everywhere; instead, its purpose will be to keep cross-system evidence distinct so that an observation from one Discovery Surface (like Local SEO) does not become an Unsupported Claim about another surface (like an AEO response).

The “optimization” aspect of USO will involve acting on this Cross-system Evidence rather than on any Discovery Single Surface in isolation, aligning decisions with what the Evidence actually supports.

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WILLIAM ALVEREZ

Enterprise Organic & AI Search Professional | Practice Lead/Group Director with WPP Media

The AI search hype corrects, and the money goes back to Google

The data has pointed this way all year.

In Datos' Q2 2026 clickstream report, search engines took 10.5% of US desktop visits while every AI tool combined took 1.83%, and Google's share of desktop search users grew year over year.

ChatGPT's web traffic has been roughly flat while Gemini, a Google product, took share (Alphabet just reported its fastest query growth in five years.)

For SEOs, this reversal won't bring the old traffic back. AI answers moved into Google, and June 2026 hit a record low, with only 40% of US desktop searches sending a click to the open web.

The brands that win in 2027 will stop running AI search as a separate channel with its own team and budget.

They'll put that effort back into earning visibility on Google, where most people now get their AI answers.

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GERALD LUCERO

SEO & Growth Consultant, Semrush Ambassador

My prediction for 2027 is that executives will finally stop treating AI assistants as the next big traffic channel. The biggest impact of AI on search will keep happening inside Google, where AI Overviews are already changing who gets the click.

Traffic from AI assistants is still small, even for big brands. For example, Booking.com reported in its Q3 2026 earnings call that LLM referrals are growing, but they still account for well under 1% of the nights booked on its platform.

The bigger change has been happening on Google's own results page for the past two years. DataForSEO found AI Overviews in 61% of the US results it analyzed, up from 6% in September 2024, and that growth is hitting clicks hard. When Google launched AI Overviews in France in July 2026, Glenn Gabe saw some sites lose a big share of their clicks overnight. And with Google now expanding ads inside AI Overviews and AI Mode, I expect organic clicks to keep shrinking in 2027.

In the RFPs I review, clients are far less excited about AI than LinkedIn would make you believe. They ask for SEO all the time, and the few who mention AI usually aren't sure how it works or how to measure it. Almost none of them ask what we would do to show up more often in LLMs. I think that's because, without reliable data, it's hard to judge whether any tactic is working.

Measuring classic search isn't getting easier either. Nozzle, a rank-tracking company, found that since late September, Google has been feeding misleading results to rank trackers for 5% to 11% of the searches they check each day. I'd still use keyword rankings, but as a trend across groups of related keywords, because a single position on a single day is harder to trust now.

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GERALD LUCERO

SEO & Growth Consultant, Semrush Ambassador

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AI tracking has the same problem, with some platforms already restricting access to their data. So in 2027, I expect SEOs to rely more on first-party data from Search Console, Bing Webmaster Tools, and their own analytics when they report to leadership.

That's why I welcome Business Hub, which OpenAI recently launched in beta. It gives businesses first-party data on how often ChatGPT references their website and how many clicks those answers send. My guess is that, for most businesses, those numbers will show plenty of mentions but far fewer clicks than Google sends. There's also no way to tie those numbers to revenue yet, so once leadership teams see that gap, I expect most of them to value AI visibility for the exposure it gives their brand. They'll stop expecting it to replace the traffic they're losing on Google.

That shift also changes where it makes sense to invest. In 2027, I expect unique content with real effort and real people behind it to win in classic results and in AI answers, and Google is already pushing in that direction. It treats fake author profiles as deception and asks site owners to fact-check AI-generated content manually. Readers want the same thing, and I see more and more people pushing back on content that feels fully AI-generated, even in social media comments.

All of this is why I expect companies to stop buying GEO as a separate service, since we all know that most of the work that earns visibility in AI answers is SEO work. The parts that are actually new, like tracking AI visibility, fit inside a good SEO program, even if leadership evaluates those numbers as brand awareness.

AI search still matters, and SEOs should keep learning how it works. I just expect 2027 to be the year companies start judging it by what it actually delivers.



LIZ BOWERS
SEO Manager
Mosaic eMarketing

By 2027, the greatest threat to your brand reputation won't be bad PR—it will be unmanaged legacy data.

For years, teams treated noindex tags and orphaned URLs like a junk drawer for retired services, deprecated pricing, and outdated policies.

But AI engines scrape and synthesize everything, pulling that buried sludge back into the light. When an autonomous agent or AI Overview quotes obsolete terms as current fact, it directly damages customer trust and introduces massive brand liability.

Technical SEO and Online Reputation Management (ORM) are officially merging into defensive data hygiene.

The priority in 2027 is ruthless data stewardship—leveraging platforms like Semrush for continuous site audits and brand monitoring to scrub conflicting historical fragments before an LLM permanently distorts your brand's reputation.



LIZZIE LACOUR

Senior Community and Content Manager
Semrush

Prediction: Customers who teach and advocate for your brand will become your strongest moat

We now know AI systems form their picture of a brand from what other people say about it: reviews, forum threads, LinkedIn posts, conference talks, and the tutorial someone wrote for their team. A brand controls its own website (which is important!). It can't control those other sources. However, it can support the people who create them.

In the Semrush Ambassador program, the posts that get cited in LLMs come from practitioners who share a specific result from their own work, with the tools and numbers included. How often someone posts and how many likes they get haven't predicted citations for us.

In 2027, I expect more companies to connect their advocacy and customer education programs. The customers who teach others are often the same people creating the content AI cites, so supporting one strengthens the other.

A competitor can copy a feature in a quarter. It takes years to build a group of experienced practitioners who trust each other and help each other succeed, and I think (and hope!) more leadership teams will start investing in that in 2027.



ROB PECK

Director of PPC and SEO

Mambo Media

Since the SEO Stone Age, we've all obsessed over keywords. Keyword rankings, keywords in titles, keyword density (remember that?), etc.

Then we had begun a gradual shift from keywords towards topics, with topical authority (rightfully) leading the way.

2027 is going to see this accelerate. SERPs are too personalized, LLM prompts are too nuanced, and AIOs are too blended to continue to expect clean 1 through 10 keyword rankings.

Forward-thinking SEO tools like Semrush are already getting in front of this with how prompt tracking is researched and reported on. In 2027 topic reports are going to take over keyword reports for 'regular' SEO as well.



Victoria Kurichenko

SEO Specialist and Founder of Behind Rankings

I've been working in SEO since 2019, and I've seen the industry evolve from 10 blue links, to SERP features and AI Overviews. Here are a few of my thoughts about where we're heading in 2027.

I think Google will continue expanding AI Overviews to more queries, which means organic traffic will likely keep declining, even for websites that maintain strong rankings. Eventually, I believe we're heading toward a situation where websites will increasingly serve as data sources for AI, while site owners compete to get their content cited and their brands mentioned in AI search results.

This also means SEO will become even more closely tied to brand building. SEO specialists will need to work more closely with PR, social media, and other marketing teams. For independent site owners, it means wearing even more hats. I've already experienced this with Behind Rankings, expanding into social media and video content, even though recording videos seemed like a no-go for me not that long ago!

I also expect Google-owned platforms, especially YouTube, to play a bigger role in AI search results. I believe Google wants to keep users within its ecosystem, and I wouldn't be surprised to see YouTube become an even more important source for retrieving information and generating AI answers.

Overall, I think 2027 will be another year when SEO moves further beyond optimizing pages. We'll need to think more about how people discover brands, where AI systems get their information, and how to build visibility across different platforms.



PHOO EI WAI WAI SOE

Sr. Marketing Manager
Transcendence Creatives Asia

My prediction for 2027 is that SEO tools will develop AI-search prediction features that show which keywords and questions are most likely to trigger Google AI Overviews or AI Mode.

Today, businesses can track rankings and search volume, but they still have limited visibility into how Google generates AI answers for different searches.

A tool that tests real queries, identifies AI Overview opportunities, and recommends the content, format, and sources needed to appear in those answers would become extremely valuable.

SEO will focus less on simply ranking for keywords and more on predicting the questions Google will answer with AI.



NICOLE GRODESKY

Founder and
Lead SEO Consultant
BOHO SEO

SEO practitioners will increasingly take on the role of market research strategists and content leads. I've been predicting this shift for a while, and I think it will become even more pronounced as AI and fragmented search continue to reshape digital discovery.

Historically, content and brand strategy have largely been led by people with traditional brand, editorial, or content backgrounds, with SEO brought in later to optimize the work. I think that model will increasingly change.

Market research and search intelligence need to inform strategy from the beginning, influencing what brands say, what they publish, and where they show up.

This will also require closer integration between SEO, brand, content, and social teams. SEO practitioners will need to become more brand-conscious and understand how content across websites, social platforms, YouTube, digital PR, and other media channels interacts within the broader search ecosystem.

Likewise, content and digital marketing leads will need a stronger understanding of search behavior and market intelligence.

The opportunity is for SEO to move upstream, from optimizing content after it's created to helping shape the marketing strategy that determines what gets created in the first place.