RESPONSAB

SEO & Localization: Get Found by Local Customers

Help customers find your business in Search, Maps and AI answers

Presented with Small Business, Mayor’s Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion

Small Business Workshop Series · Session 2 of 3

About these slides

Session 2 of 3: SEO & Localization

These slides are from the free Small Business Workshop Series, presented by the City of Boston's Small Business team (Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion) and Responsab.

Maple Lane Bake Shop and its customer Maria are fictional examples we follow through all three sessions.

Polls, live tests and exercises happened during the live session. Try them on your own website.

Free take-home handouts for every session are on the same page as these slides.

Websites, tools and statistics were checked in October 2026 and may change.

Need help with your own website?

Book free one-on-one office hours with the Responsab team:

crm.responsab.com/schedule/l/city-of-boston-workshop-series

hello@responsab.com · (617) 890-6010

A partnership for Boston's small businesses

City of Boston
Small Business, Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion

+

Responsab
Boston-area web agency

WHY THE CITY IS OFFERING THIS SERIES

"To provide all small business owners and entrepreneurs with the tools and guidance to successfully start, grow, and build a business in Boston."
The City's Small Business team

- Your website and online presence are now core business tools
- Free, practical training that fits a small team's time and budget
- Follow-up help so you can act on what you learn

WHAT EACH PARTNER BRINGS

The City
Makes the series free, promotes it in its small business newsletter and supports follow-up office hours

Responsab
Workshop content, live teaching, take-home guides and one-on-one office hours

Office hours: one-on-one help for your business

Questions about your own business after the workshop? Book a time with us.

HOW IT WORKS

- Scan the code and pick a time
- One-on-one, about your business
- Supported by the City of Boston
- Bring your website, listing or questions

No cost to workshop attendees

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BOOK WITH OUR TEAM

Scan to book office hours for your business

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About Responsab

RESPONSAB

Helping Local Business Grow Online

“Responsible” in Haitian Creole

Responsab is a Quincy-based, Black-owned web development agency specializing in high-performing websites for small businesses and digital strategy in Boston and Quincy. With more than twenty years of experience, we build sites that are fast, secure, and easy for business owners to manage.

Meet your presenters



Ralph Francois

CEO & Tech Lead

Ralph is a tech leader, web architect, & entrepreneur with over 23 years of experience in web development & digital strategy. He started his business in 2003 & has since worked with businesses, universities, and organizations of all sizes to build & improve their digital platforms. His entrepreneurial ventures also include founding Quincy Yoga & Massage.



Alaina Tucker

Marketing Director

Alaina is a marketing and demand generation professional with over a decade of experience helping companies define their brand and build their engines for growth. She has an MBA from Boston College's Carroll School of Management.

What we will cover today

1. What SEO means today
2. How search works, plus Search Console
3. Local: Business Profile and area pages
4. The shift to AI and answer engines (AEO)
5. Content that answers real questions
6. What to do now

You will leave with

- A clear picture of how Google and AI tools see your business
- A local SEO plan built around your Google Business Profile
- A monthly SEO checklist and free tools

Where we left off: Session 1 recap

IN SESSION 1, WE COVERED

- Your website is the one online space you own
- Plan first: main action, best customer, pages
- The vocabulary: domain, hosting, CMS, SSL
- Choosing a platform that fits your business
- Homepage essentials and the five-second test



MAPLE LANE, SO FAR

Our sample business

MAIN ACTION

Request a catering quote

BEST CUSTOMER

The office catering planner

WEBSITE

Five pages on a website builder

Today's challenge: make sure office managers can find them.

Session 1 built the foundation. **Today we make it discoverable.**

Meet Our Sample Business



Maple Lane Bake Shop

A family-owned bake shop in Dorchester

A fictional business we will plan a website for, step by step, throughout today's session.

Who they are

Two owners and four staff. Great reputation with strong walk-in business.

Online today

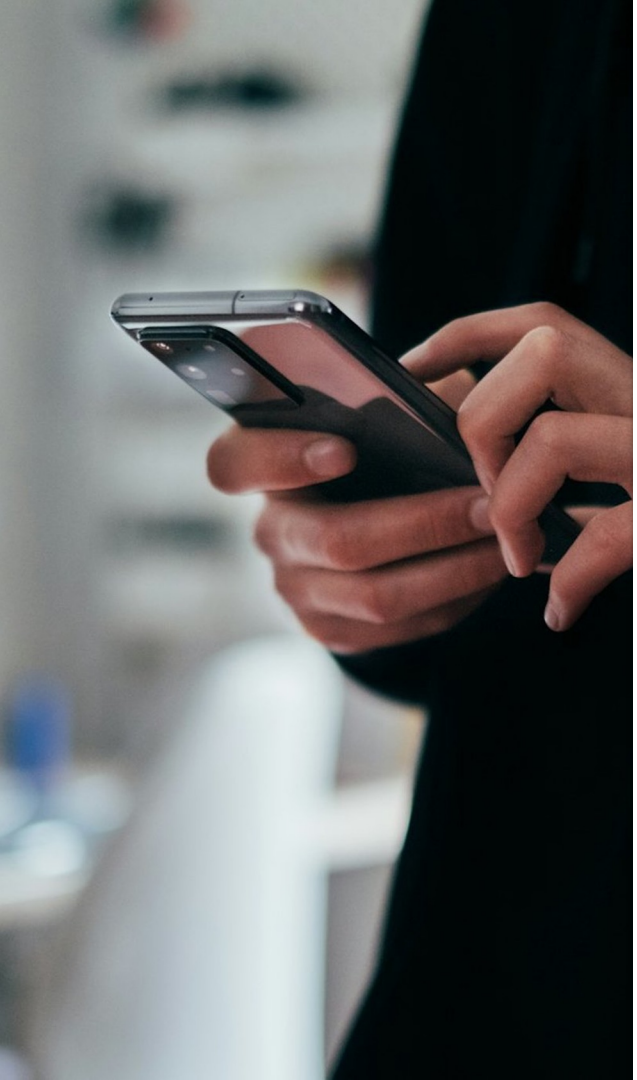
An Instagram account and a Google listing with old hours. Catering orders come in by DM and phone.

The goal

Grow weekday catering orders from nearby offices and schools.

The challenge

Little time, a small budget and no technical background.



OUR TARGET CUSTOMER

Maria needs breakfast for 40 people by Tuesday

Office manager at a 40-person company. Searches “office catering Dorchester.” Trusts real photos, reviews and clear prices.

		WHAT YOU LEARN
1	**She searches**	What SEO is, and what it can and cannot do
2	**Google finds the page**	How Google reads your site; Search Console and sitemaps
3	**She checks the map**	Your Business Profile and local area pages
4	**She reads an AI answer**	How AI tools find and use business information.
5	**She opens the page**	How to answer the questions customers really ask
6	**She asks for a quote**	Your checklist for this month

Quick poll

Tell us where you are starting from. There are no wrong answers.

How comfortable are you with SEO for your website?

- **A** Very comfortable, I know what I am doing
- **B** Somewhat, I understand the basics
- **C** I am pretty new to this
- **D** What is SEO?

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01

The Modern State of SEO

Structured clarity, building reputation over time.

What SEO is — How search works — Local — AI & AEO — Content — Next steps

How Search Engines Work: Crawl, Index, Rank

What happens before a page can show up in Google

Crawl = Find

Google sends out automated programs, called crawlers, that follow links across the web and discover pages.

Index = Understand

Google reads each page and stores what it's about in a huge index, like a library catalog.

Rank = Judge

When someone searches, Google picks the pages that best match the question and shows them in order.

SEO takes time. Search engines need to discover, understand and evaluate your pages.

Why SEO still matters

Search is how people discover and evaluate local businesses.

- People search to find businesses that meet their needs
- They compare options before calling, booking or buying
- A strong search presence helps customers judge credibility

83%

of surveyed U.S. consumers use search engines to discover local businesses

Source: SOCi Local Discovery Index, 2026 (survey of 1,000+ U.S. consumers).

SEO vs. Paid Search

Two ways to reach customers searching for your products or services.

Paid Google Search	Organic SEO
Pay per click, ongoing	No per-click cost, but costs time or professional help
Can start working within days	Results build over months
You choose the message, keywords, and budget	Google decides rankings, and you influence them
Costs rise with competition via bidding	Slow to start, and rankings can shift
Stops the moment you stop paying	Keeps working, though it needs upkeep

VS.

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02

How search works

Five fundamentals that decide whether you show up

How Search Engines See Your Site



Site structure
How your pages are organized and linked

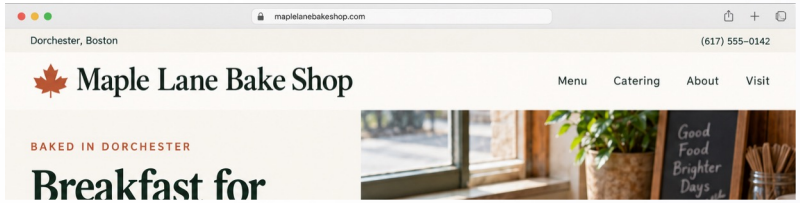
Performance
Speed, mobile experience and security

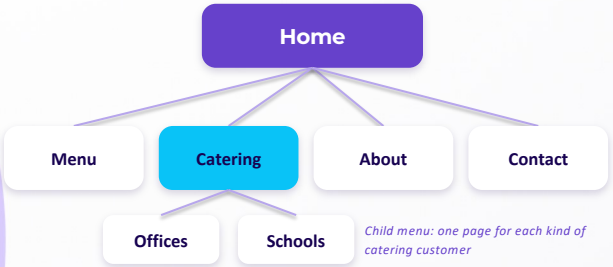
Topic clarity
Whether each page has one clear subject

Authority
Reviews, mentions and links from others

User experience
Whether visitors can easily find and use the information they need

Site Structure and Navigation





If your site is hard for people to understand, it will be hard to rank.

- **One clear page per main service or product**
  Don't combine everything into one long page.
- **Organize pages in a logical order**
  Home, then Catering, then Office breakfast trays.
- **Keep the top menu short and clear**
  Your key services and your contact page.
- **Link related pages to each other**
  Help people and Google see how pages connect.
- **Use your location where it fits**
  Mention your city or neighborhood on key pages.

Site Structure: Defined URLs

If a URL makes sense to a person, it usually makes sense to Google.

https:// www. **maplelanebakeshop.com** /catering/office-breakfast

PROTOCOL
A secure connection

SUBDOMAIN
Usually www

DOMAIN
Your brand

PATH
What the page is about

Topic Clarity: One Page, One Job

Each Page Must Contain:

- **Main headline (H1)**
  One clear main headline describing the page.
- **Clear H2/H3 headings**
  Use short, descriptive headings to organize the content.
- **Short paragraphs**
  Make it easily scannable with short sentences that make clear statements.
- **Image descriptions**
  Add descriptive alt text to meaningful images.
- **Internal links**
  Connect related pages so visitors and search engines can find them. Avoid orphan pages.

HOW YOUR PAGE SHOWS UP IN GOOGLE



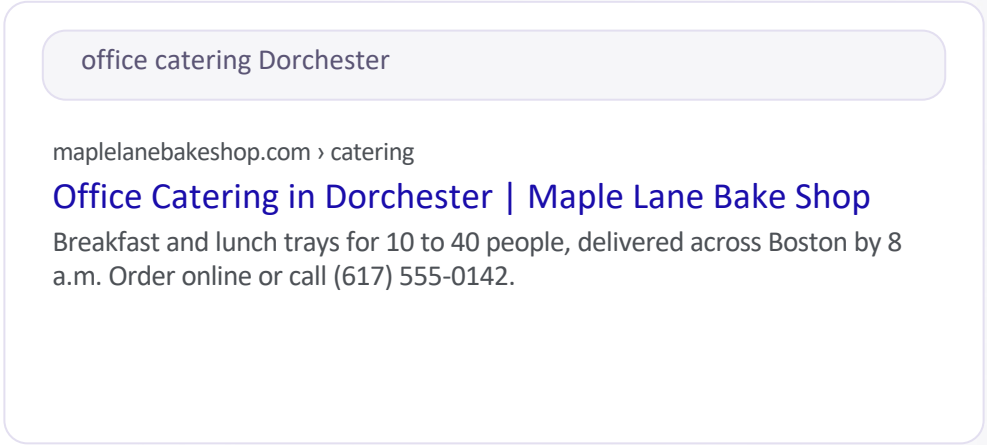
Office Breakfast | Maple Lane Bake Shop
maplelanebakeshop.com › catering › office-breakfast

Office Catering in Dorchester | Maple Lane

Fresh pastry trays, bagels and coffee delivered to Boston offices. Order by 2 pm for next-day delivery. Request a quote online.

1. **URL:** Short and descriptive
2. **SEO title: words customers search, about 60 characters**
3. **Meta description: your pitch, about 155 characters**

Meta tags: SEO Titles and Meta Descriptions



WHERE TO EDIT THEM

In the SEO settings of each page, on any builder or CMS. Google may rewrite them if they do not match the page.

Meta title (title tag)

The clickable headline in Google and the browser tab. About 60 characters: service, place, business name.

Meta description

The short summary under the title. About 155 characters that earn the click.

Meta tags

Short text in your page settings that tells Google what the page is about. Visitors do not see them on the page.

Accessibility For All

Web Accessibility Guidelines: WCAG 2.2

1 in 4 adults in the US live with some kind of disability



- **Descriptive alternative text**
  Describe meaningful images so people using screen readers can understand them.
- **Contrast**
  Enough contrast between text and background. WCAG AA: generally 4.5:1 for normal text.
- **Readable text**
  Use readable text that can be resized without losing content or functionality.
- **Videos**
  Provide captions for prerecorded videos, and transcripts where appropriate.
- **Links**
  Use descriptive link text, such as “View our catering menu” instead of “Click here.”
- **Forms**
  Give form fields clear labels and helpful error messages.

LIVE DEMO: Check Website Accessibility with WAVE

Find issues that may make your website difficult for people to use.

wave.webaim.org

WAVE helps identify potential accessibility problems. Automated tools cannot detect every issue.

1. Visit wave.webaim.org
A free tool from WebAIM. No account needed.

2. Enter a website URL
Use your own site, or a sample site.

3. Review errors and contrast issues
WAVE flags possible errors and hard-to-read text.

4. Examine headings, links and image descriptions
Check the H1, H2 and H3 order, link text and alt text.

5. Identify one improvement to make
Pick one fix you can make this week.

Performance: Site Speed

Faster pages keep visitors, and Core Web Vitals are part of how Google looks at page experience. They measure three things.

Largest Contentful Paint (LCP)

How fast the main content appears. Target: 2.5 seconds or less.

Interaction to Next Paint (INP)

How fast the page responds to a tap or click. Target: 200 milliseconds or less.

Cumulative Layout Shift (CLS)

Whether things jump around while loading. Target: 0.1 or less.

Performance: Site Speed

Faster pages keep visitors and support search performance.

Main content target: 2.5 seconds or less.



- **Use small images and file sizes**
  Compress and properly size images; use modern formats such as WebP or AVIF.
- **Lazy-load below-the-fold images and video**
  Prioritize what people see first on your page.
- **Use reliable hosting and HTTPS**
  Choose dependable hosting, keep HTTPS on, and check your speed.
- **Avoid unnecessary plugins and add-ons**
  More tools usually mean more problems.
- **Keep your site updated**
  Updates improve speed, security and stability.
- **Fix broken links and errors**
  Broken pages frustrate people and search engines.

Authority: Beyond your website

People, search engines and AI all trust businesses that others talk about.

Reviews

Ask happy customers, and reply to every review.

Local partners

Neighborhood associations, chambers, suppliers.

Local press and blogs

Community news, event listings, features.

Active social profiles

Share real work consistently.

Indexing and crawlability

Crawling: Google finds your pages.

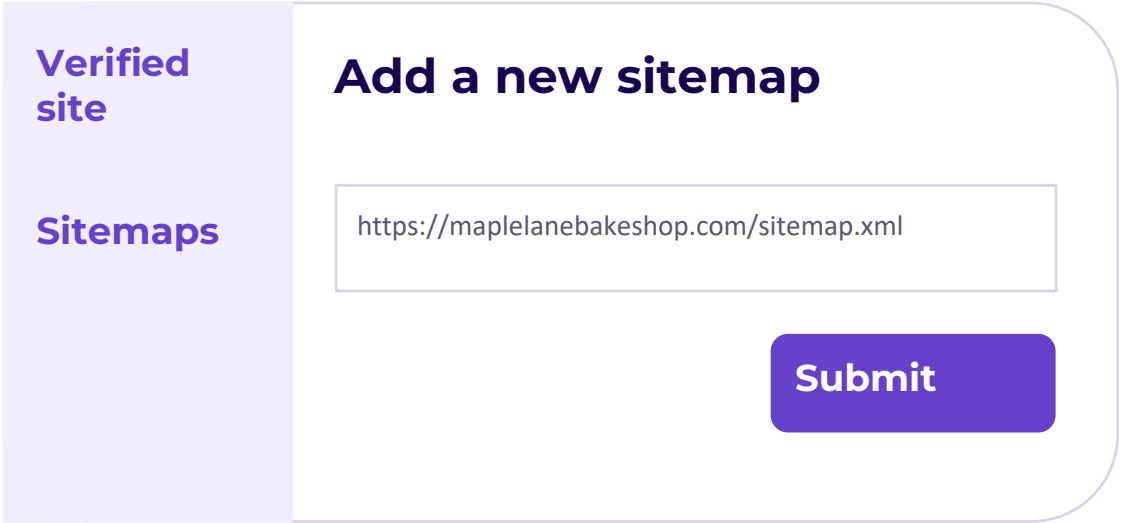
Indexing: Google stores them so they can show up in search.



- **Check that your site allows indexing**
  Some platforms hide new sites from search by default.
- **Create and submit a sitemap**
  It lists your pages so search engines find them faster.
- **Link every page from somewhere**
  Search engines find pages by following links.
- **Avoid duplicate or near-identical pages**
  Too many similar pages confuse search engines.
- **Use one version of each page URL**
  Multiple versions of a page can hurt indexing.

Search Console: submit your sitemap

Free from Google. It tells Google where your pages are, and shows which searches bring people to you.



1 Add your site in Search Console

2 Verify you own it

3 Sitemaps: paste the address, Submit

Then Bing: at bing.com/webmasters, choose Import from Google Search Console. Your site and sitemap come over in one click.

New or updated page? Ask Google and Bing to look

Don’t wait for the next visit.

Tell search engines about important new pages.

There is a daily limit and no promised timing, so save it for pages that matter.

Google: URL Inspection

Paste the page address, then click Request indexing.

Bing: URL Submission

Submit a few key page addresses in Bing Webmaster Tools.

IndexNow

Many builders and plugins tell Bing automatically when you publish.

Check it worked

Re-inspect the page in a few days, or search site:yourdomain.com.

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Search Console and sitemaps

Question Break 1

Put your questions in the Q&A section.

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03

Localization: win your area

You don’t need to win the internet. You need to win your neighborhood.

Local SEO: show up where your customers are

You don’t need to win the whole internet.

You need to win your area.

Local SEO focuses on one city, neighborhood or service area, and uses the place names and language your customers use.

Google Business Profile
Your listing on Google Search and Maps

Neighborhood pages
e.g. “Office catering in Dorchester and the Seaport”

Consistent details
Same name, address and phone number everywhere

Reviews
Recent reviews that mention what you do

How Google Chooses Local Businesses

Google mainly considers three factors when ranking businesses in local search and Maps.

1. Relevance

How closely your business matches what someone is searching for.

Example: Maple Lane lists bakery and office catering services.

2. Distance

How close your business is to the person searching, or the location in their search.

Example: A Dorchester searcher may see nearby bakeries.

3. Prominence

How well-known and established your business is, online and offline.

Example: Customer reviews, local mentions, and links.

The takeaway

You can't control how far away a customer is, but you can improve your business information, relevance, and reputation.

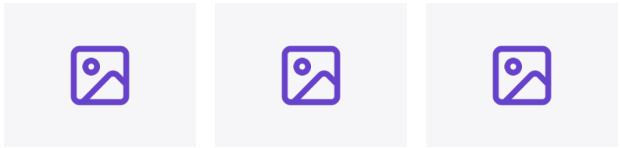
Google Business Profile

Maple Lane Bake Shop

4.8 ★★★★★ (126) · Bakery

Open · Closes 6 PM · Dorchester

Website | Directions | Call



Services: office catering, local delivery, custom cakes

Free at **business.google.com**

COMPLETE EVERY SECTION

- **Pick the right primary category**
  It is the strongest signal for what you do.
- **Keep hours current, including holidays**
  Wrong hours are the fastest way to lose trust.
- **Add real photos regularly**
  Your space, your team, your work.
- **List your services and products**
  Catering belongs here, in customers' words.
- **Ask for reviews and reply to every one**
  Replies show you are active and care.
- **Post updates and offers**
  New menus, seasonal items, events.

Set Up Your Google Business Profile

Free, and often the first thing customers see.

Start at business.google.com.

If a listing for your business already exists, claim it. Never create a second one.

1. Claim or create
Search your business name, then claim it or add it.

2. Verify
Google may ask for a video, a phone or text code, an email or a postcard.

3. Complete it
Category, hours, service area, phone, website and real photos.

4. Keep it active
Reply to reviews, update holiday hours, add posts.

Quick poll

Be honest. This one is just for you.

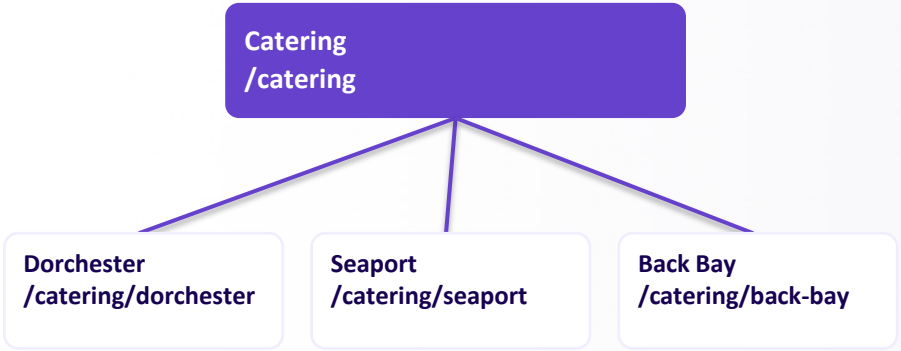
Is your Google Business Profile claimed and up to date?

- **A** Yes, fully up to date
- **B** Claimed, but out of date
- **C** Not claimed yet
- **D** Not sure

Localized Pages

Create one page for each area you really serve

Start with one strong page. Add an area page only when that area has its own real details.



Each area page answers that area's questions: delivery times, nearby clients, parking or drop-off, local photos and reviews.

Each local page needs

✓ Real delivery details for that area

✓ Local clients, reviews or photos

✓ Directions, parking or drop-off notes

✓ Its own words, written for that area

✗ **Avoid near-identical location pages. Create pages for areas you genuinely serve, with useful information specific to each location.**

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04

The shift to AI and AEO

Being found is no longer enough. You need to be chosen.

Answer Engine Optimization

SEO helps you get found. AEO helps you get chosen.

AEO is the practice of making your business information easy for AI-powered search tools to find, understand and use in their answers.

These tools include Google’s AI Overviews, ChatGPT, Perplexity and Microsoft Copilot.

Why SEO alone is no longer enough

Zero-click searches

More people get their answer on the results page without visiting a website.

AI summaries

Google and AI tools summarize answers from the sources they trust.

More places to be found

Search visibility now includes traditional results, Maps and AI-powered answers.

8% of visits included a click on a regular result when an AI summary appeared

15% when no AI summary appeared

Source: Pew Research Center, 2025. Browsing data from 900 U.S. adults, March 2025. Shows a difference, not a cause.

From keywords to questions

Match how your customers actually search, in Google and in AI tools.

Traditional SEO

Short keyword phrases

- office catering Dorchester
- pastry trays Boston
- breakfast catering near me

AEO

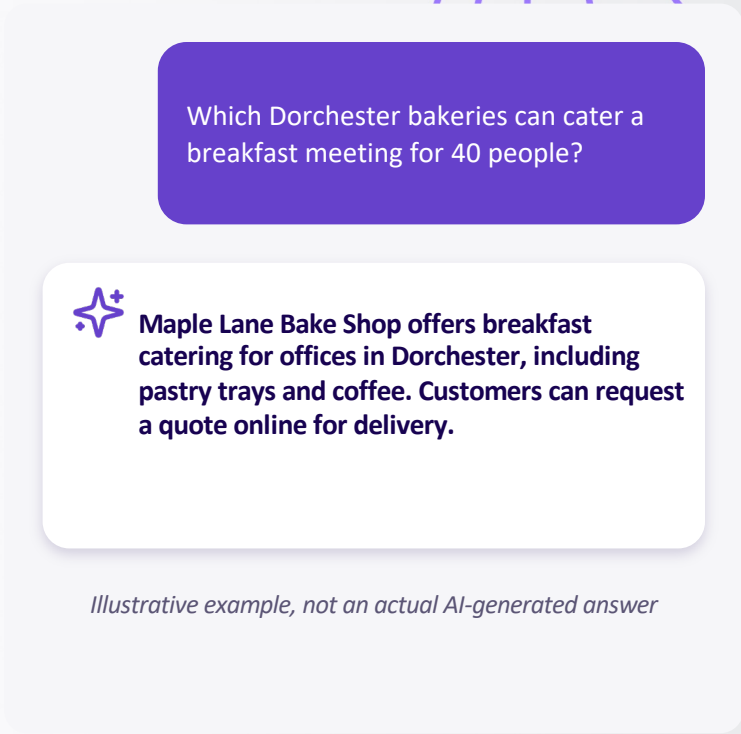
Full, natural questions

- *What should I order for a breakfast meeting of 40 people?*
- *Which Dorchester bakeries deliver before 8 a.m.?*
- *How far ahead should I order catering?*

What is AEO?

Clear, accurate, useful information gives AI tools more to work with.

- Answer real customer questions clearly.
- Organize information with useful headings.
- Include accurate details about services, pricing and locations.
- Demonstrate real experience and credibility.



Illustrative example, not an actual AI-generated answer

Help AI Understand and Trust Your Business

Clear answers

Explain what you offer, who it’s for, and how customers can get started.

Organized information

Use descriptive headings, lists and well-structured pages.

Real expertise

Share your experience, examples, photos and what makes your business different.

Consistent business information

Keep your website, Google listing and other business profiles accurate and consistent.

You cannot guarantee an AI recommendation, but you can make your business easier to understand and verify.

Tips For Better AEO

Build an FAQ page from real customer questions.

Use conversational language and full sentence structure for clarity.

Make “who, what, where” unmistakable.

Use descriptive headings, lists and well-structured pages.

Add structured data (schema)

Code that labels your name, address, hours and services. Most builders and SEO plugins can add it.

Add page-specific FAQs

To enhance AI’s ability to read your pages and return natural language answers.

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05

Content that wins

Relevance beats volume, every time

Find the words your customers actually use

BROAD

“bakery”

Huge competition, unclear intent

LOCAL

“bakery Dorchester”

Nearby people, still browsing

SPECIFIC

“office breakfast catering Dorchester”

Fewer searches, ready to buy

Small businesses win on specific, local phrases. Fewer people search them, but those people are ready to act.

FREE WAYS TO FIND THEM

Google autocomplete
Start typing and note the suggestions

People Also Ask
The questions Google shows under results

Your customers
Words from calls, emails and reviews

Search Console
The searches that already find you

Follow the questions customers already ask

Questions people search for can help you improve your website content.



People also ask

- How much food do I need for a meeting of 40? +
- How far ahead should I order catering? +
  - Do caterers bring plates and napkins? +
  - Can I order gluten-free trays? +

Shaded: new questions that appear after one click

The answers in that box come from other websites. Write your own, with your real menu, prices and terms.

Turn them into content

1 Collect

Write down 10 to 15 questions as you click.

2 Keep the real ones

Keep what your own customers also ask you.

3 Answer them

Add an FAQ section, or a new page for a big question.

Content that wins answers real questions

High-performing content is quality not quantity.

One great page that answers the question your customers really ask beats ten blog posts nobody needs.

1. **Target one specific question**
   Who is asking, and what do they need to decide?
2. **State the answer early**
   The first two sentences should answer it.
3. **Expand only where it helps**
   Details, options, prices, next steps.
4. **Show real expertise**
   Your experience, your numbers, your examples.

Putting it together: one page, one question

THE REAL QUESTION

“What should I order for a breakfast meeting of 40 people?”

Asked by office managers in Google, in ChatGPT and on the phone.

PAGE TITLE (SEO)

Office Breakfast Catering for Meetings | Maple Lane

HEADLINE (H1)

Breakfast catering for your next meeting

FIRST PARAGRAPH: THE ANSWER

For 40 people, plan on about 60 pastries, 2 gallons of coffee and fruit for half the group. We deliver it set up and ready when you order by 2 pm the day before.

QUESTION-BASED HEADINGS

How much food do I need? · What’s on a tray? · How does delivery work?

NEXT STEPS

Request a catering quote · See the catering menu

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Content, customer questions and AI search

Question Break 2

Put your questions in the Q&A section.

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06

What to do now

Build authority and grab the quick wins

What SEO is | How search works | Local | AI & AEO | Content | **Next steps**

Your Local SEO Action Plan: Start This Month

One focus each week. Track each step on your take-home Local SEO Action Plan.

Maple Lane: Week 1, fixes its Google hours and photos. Week 3, asks five office clients for reviews.

Week 1: Get your listing right

Claim or update your Google Business Profile. Check category, hours, phone, website and photos.

Week 2: Improve your website

Review your homepage and top service page: titles, headings and local service details.

Week 3: Build trust and answer questions

Ask customers for honest reviews and answer one common question on your site.

Week 4: Measure and improve

Review Search Console, submit a sitemap if needed, and pick one thing to improve.

Keep going: next up, Session 3

You are building it right and getting found. Next: turning visitors into customers.

DONE

SESSION 1

Websites 101

Build the foundation

Plan, build and launch a website that works for your business.

TODAY

SESSION 2

SEO & Localization

Get found

Show up when nearby customers search for what you do.

UP NEXT

SESSION 3

Web Conversion Optimization

Turn visitors into customers

Make your site clear, easy to use and effective.

Office hours: one-on-one help for your business

Questions about your own business after the workshop? Book a time with us.

HOW IT WORKS

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Questions?

Unmute, raise your hand or drop your question in the chat.

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LinkedIn /company/responsab · Instagram @responsab
Facebook /Responsab · X @Responsab



Ralph Francois
CEO / Tech Lead
ralph@responsab.com



Alaina Tucker
Marketing Director
alaina@responsab.com