

The Complete Playbook for Winning AI Search in 2026

How real-time market intelligence helps your dealership show up when shoppers use tools like ChatGPT and Gemini

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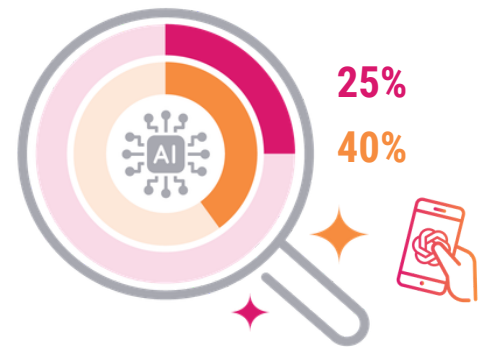


The Battle for Visibility Has Moved Beyond Search Engines

Car shoppers are now asking full questions about the make, model and dealerships they're interested in and expecting a direct answer from AI tools and AI-powered search results.

A recent CarEdge survey found that **25% of car buyers in 2025 used AI tools** to research vehicles, compare dealers, and make purchase decisions. **Among future buyers, that number rises to 40%.**

As more shoppers use AI tools during research, these answer experiences play a larger role in the buying journey.



What Dealers Are Up Against Now

There's another shift happening alongside AI search: Traditional SEO can't keep up with how fast the market is moving.

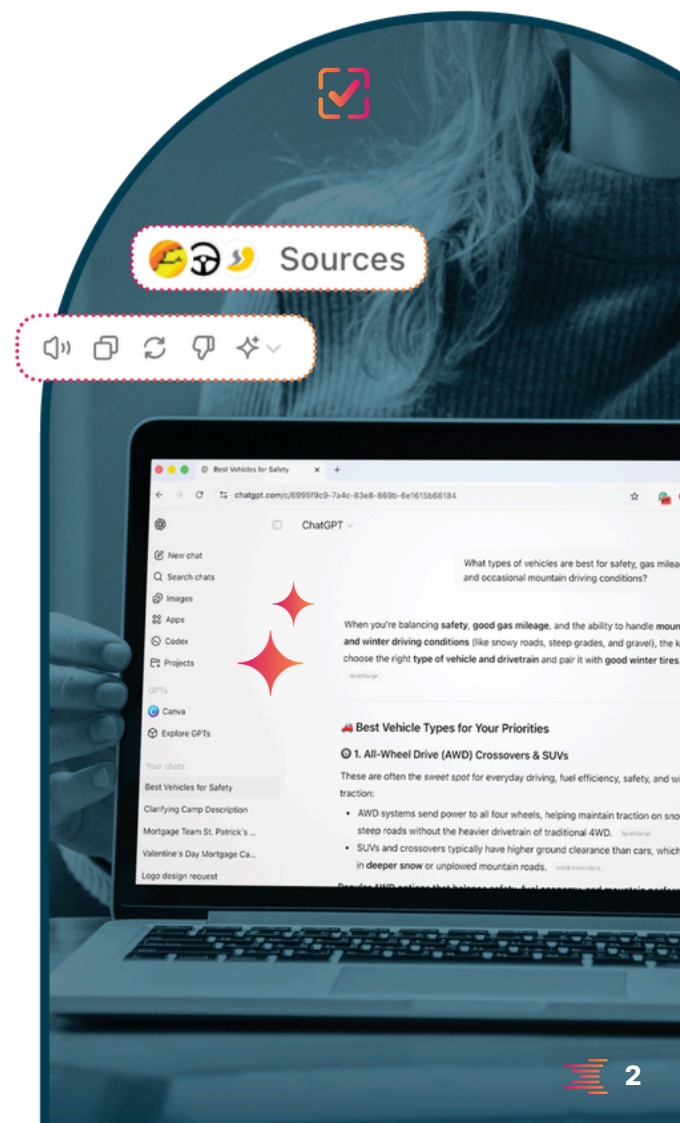
To show up in AI answers and generative results, dealerships need content and strategy that reflect real-time market conditions—what buyers are looking for right now, what your current inventory supports, and what your competitors are doing today.

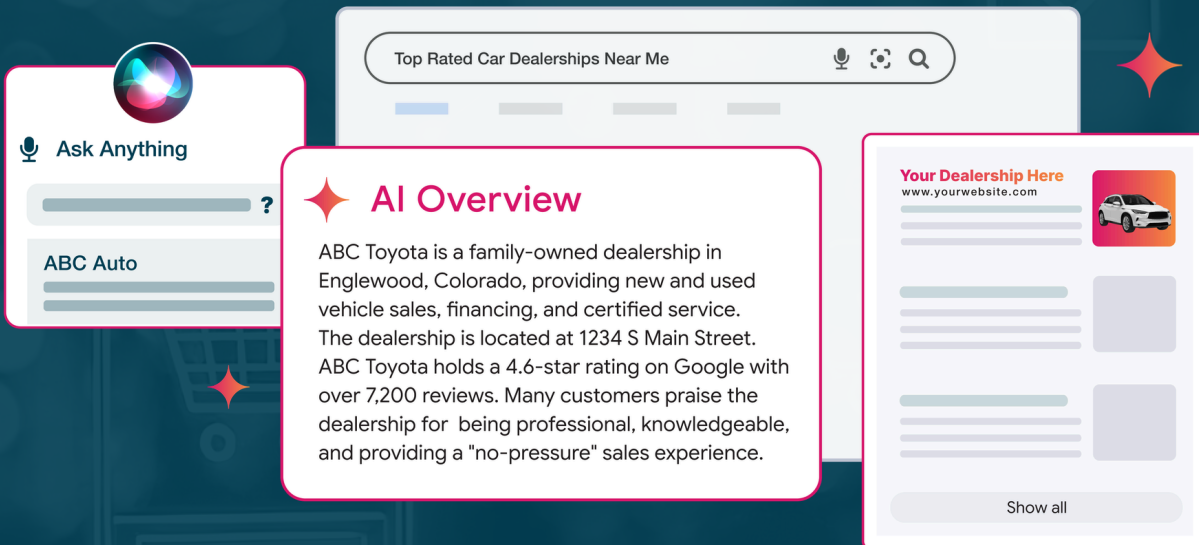
Good News: Your SEO Still Matters

Despite the buzz around AI search, **your existing SEO investments are not wasted.** AI search builds on traditional ranking signals and adds new layers rather than replacing everything you've built.

The shift now is making your content easy for AI systems to understand, extract, and cite, so your dealership shows up where shoppers ask questions and decide who to contact early in the buying journey.

Dealers who build visibility in AI answers now are better positioned as adoption continues to grow.





What SEO, AEO, and GEO Mean for Automotive Dealers

AI answers and AI-generated summaries present a new challenge in the way dealerships show up when shoppers search. These experiences are often ad-free, and paid placements do not appear inside all of them. That means visibility in AI answers is earned through strong SEO, AEO, and GEO, not bought through bidding.

DEALER CHEATSHEET

SEO

Search Engine Optimization is the foundation for traditional search/visibility and helps your website get found first

AEO

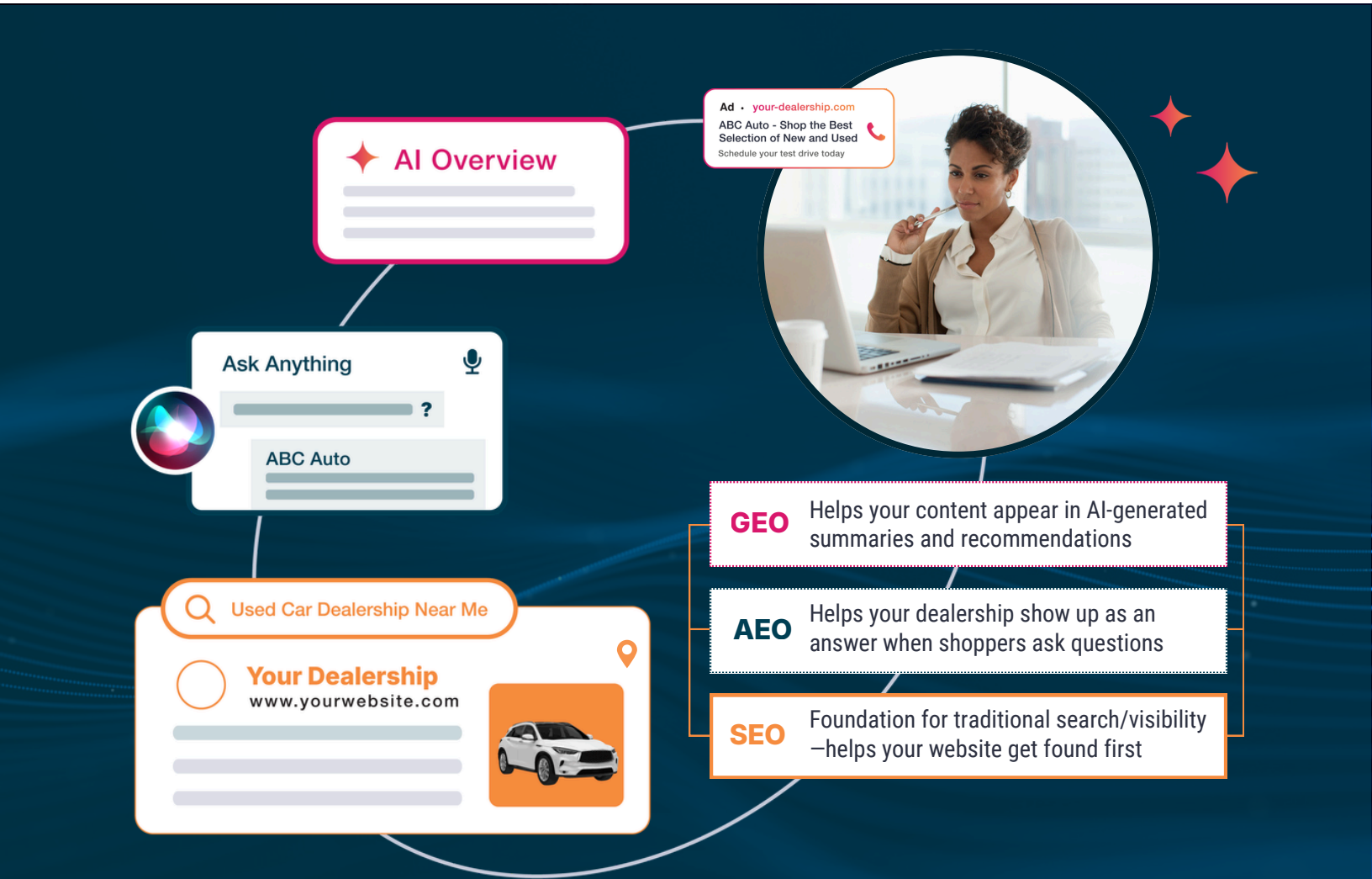
Answer Engine Optimization helps your dealership show up as an answer when shoppers ask questions

GEO

Generative Engine Optimization helps your content get included in AI-generated summaries and recommendations

SEO gets you discovered. AEO and GEO help you get included in the answers shoppers are seeing first.

	WHAT IT IS	WHERE IT SHOWS UP	WHAT IT HELPS DEALERS DO	WHAT'S CRITICAL TO SUCCESS
SEO Search Engine Optimization	Optimizing website content and technical structure to rank organically in traditional search engines.	Organic listings on Google and Bing (blue links, map pack, image results, VDP pages).	• Drive high-intent traffic • Increase VDP views • Generate leads without paying per click • Build long-term digital equity	• Technical site health (speed, crawlability) • Local optimization (GBP, NAP consistency) • Optimized inventory pages • Backlinks + authority • Ongoing content aligned to demand
AEO Answer Engine Optimization	Structuring content so search engines extract and display it as a direct answer to a question.	Featured snippets, People Also Ask, and voice answers in Google and Bing; voice assistants like Google Assistant and Siri).	• Capture zero-click searches • Own informational queries (financing, EV credits, maintenance) • Build authority early in the buyer journey	• Clear Q+A formatting • Concise, structured answers • Schema markup (FAQ, HowTo, Product) • Strong domain authority • Align with conversational search queries
GEO Generative Engine Optimization	Optimizing brand presence so AI platforms mention, summarize, or recommend your dealership in AI-generated responses.	AI chat and generative search platforms like Perplexity, Gemini, Grok, and AI-powered search experiences.	• Be recommended in AI-driven car buying conversations • Influence dealership comparisons • Appear in "best dealer near me" AI summaries • Future-proof visibility as search shifts to AI-first	• Strong 3rd-party reputation signals • Consistent entity identity (brand, location, services) • Structured, machine-readable data • Broad digital footprint (beyond website) • High review volume + sentiment



Your SEO Strategy Starts with Real-Time Market Data

Right now, your dealership is probably making SEO decisions from tools like Google Analytics, rank trackers, and keyword reports.

But those tools can't tell you what's changing in your market right now. **Without visibility into market changes as they happen, you're always one step behind.**

At Catalyst IQ, we pull live data from your market to build SEO, AEO, and GEO strategies that align with real-time demand:



Where you stand against your real competitors

Measure your inventory and sales against the dealers you compete with.



The models worth pushing right now

Find the vehicles with the most sales and search opportunity based on your inventory, local demand, and how you perform against the market.



How your market actually searches

Pull the real locations and phrases shoppers in your area use, from your city and nearby towns to local shortcuts.



Where AI already names you

Check how often AI is recommending you across major AI search tools like OpenAI, Grok, Gemini, Claude, and Perplexity.

Is AI Recommending Your Dealership?

Catalyst IQ's SEO/AEO Intelligence tool reveals whether your dealership is recommended, how you compare to local competitors, and where you can improve.

EACH WEEK, YOU'LL SEE:

- ✓ The questions shoppers are asking
- ✓ How much AI trusts your dealership
- ✓ Whether AI has accurate info about your business

The New First Step in the Car-Buying Journey

AI is where the buying journey now begins, and it's a critical moment for high-intent shoppers.

When You're Recommended:

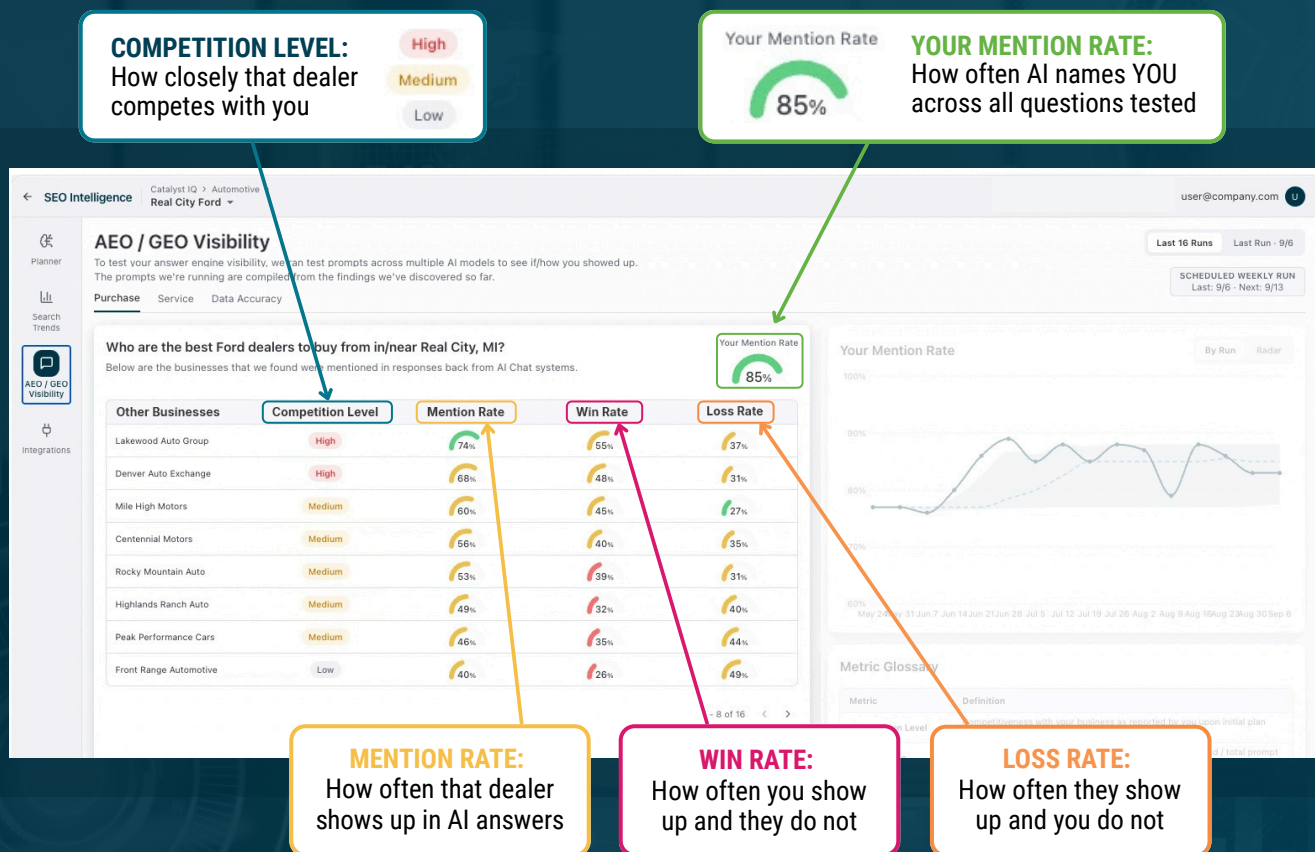
You're in front of a high-intent shopper before they ever click a search result.

VS

When You're Left Off:

A competitor may win the opportunity before you even know it existed.

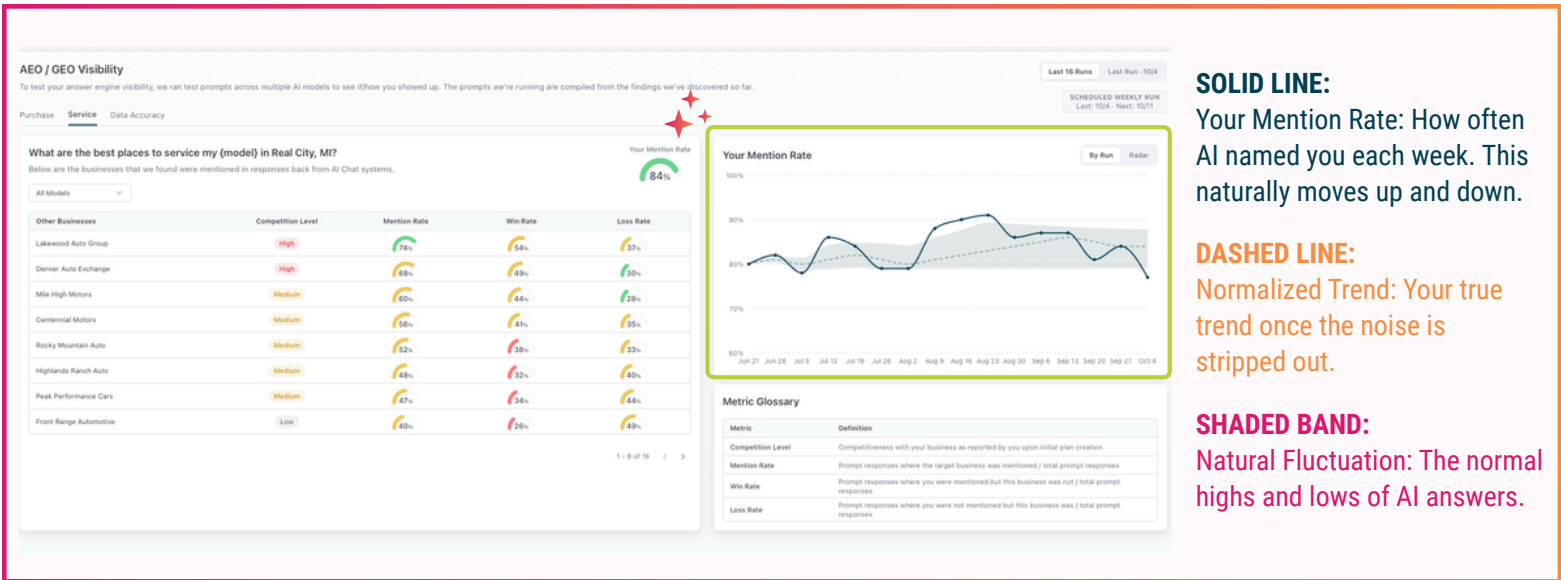
Catalyst IQ tracks AI recommendations for you and your closest competitors each week. You'll see which real high-intent buyer questions your dealership is showing up for in popular AI engines, and the ones where you need to gain more visibility.



Tracking Where AI Recommends Your Dealership

AI now shapes where people buy a car and where owners go for service and repairs. When shoppers ask AI for a recommendation, the dealerships it names are the ones most likely to win the visit.

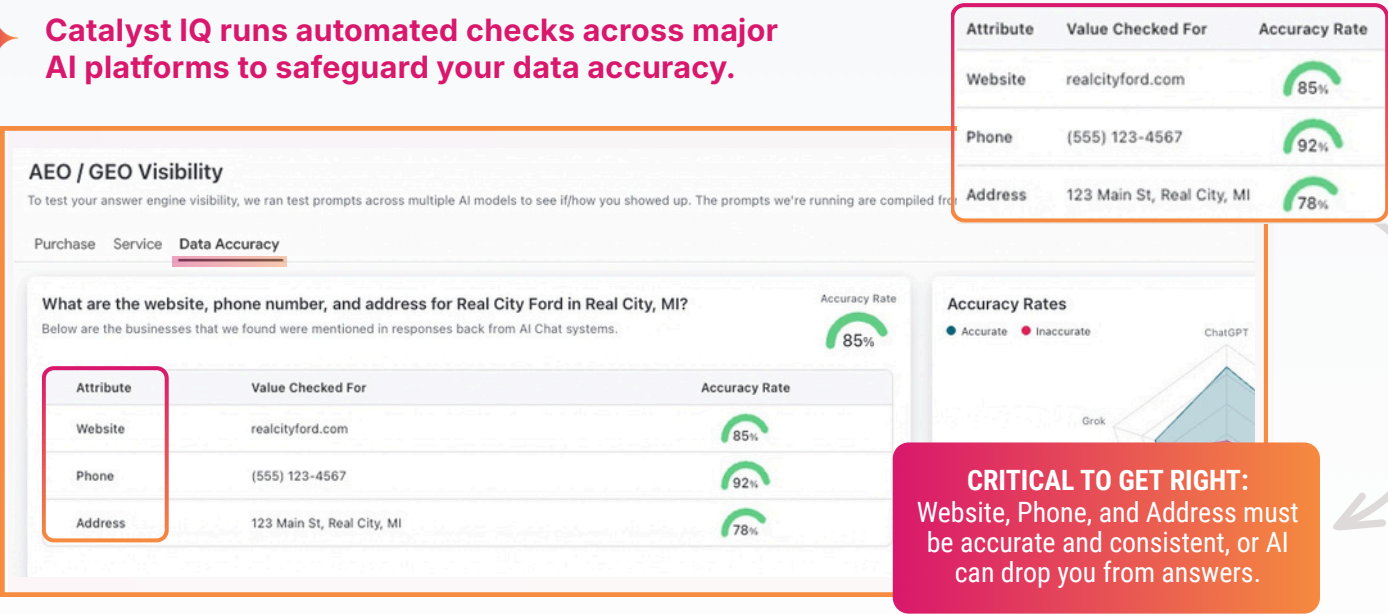
✦ **Catalyst IQ tracks how often AI recommends you when shoppers ask high-intent questions like “best dealership near me.” It filters out the normal week-to-week swings and shows your true trend. If you're trending down, that's your cue to act.**



Business Data Accuracy & AI Trust

AI engines only recommend businesses they trust. If your dealership's address, phone number, or website details are inconsistent across online databases, AI engines lose confidence in recommending your business.

✦ **Catalyst IQ runs automated checks across major AI platforms to safeguard your data accuracy.**



How Catalyst IQ's SEO/AEO Tool Works

The SEO Intelligence Loop

Plan, publish, track, and re-optimize as your market moves.



CATALYST IQ • SEO CASE STUDIES

Real Dealers, Real Results

Measured over 90 days vs. the prior 90 days.



CDJR Dealer

ANSWER ENGINE MENTION RATE

63% → 87%

- ↑ **9.8%** Overall Organic Clicks
- ↑ **8.0%** Sales & Research Clicks
- ↑ **19.0%** Clicks, Primary Geo Target
- ↑ **48.4%** Clicks, Tertiary Geo Target

Toyota Dealer

ANSWER ENGINE MENTION RATE

~60% → 91%

- ↑ **23%** Used Inventory Impressions
- ↑ **6.6%** Sales & Research Impressions
- ↑ **14%** Service & Fixed-ops Impressions
- ↑ **5.1** Finance & Lease Terms Up 5.1 spots

The only automotive SEO solution based on real-time market intelligence.

Ready to Start Showing Up in AI Search Results Now?

Showing up in AI-driven search requires prioritization, consistency, and the ability to adjust as market conditions change.

Set Your Dealership Up for Search Success

Catalyst IQ offers an SEO/AEO/GEO solution built for AI-driven search visibility. It's the only automotive SEO solution that adapts in real time to shopper demand, inventory trends, and competitive dynamics—helping dealerships show up where buyers are getting answers while keeping organic strategy aligned to current market conditions.

SEO/AEO/GEO That Empowers Dealers



Market-driven planning

Our solution prioritizes high-impact segments and locations using real-time market signals. That helps your team focus effort where it's most likely to influence visibility and early consideration.



Content aligned to real market opportunity

We use our MarketAI data to align content planning with current buyer demand, live inventory realities, and local competitive conditions. The result is content that matches what shoppers are looking for right now in your market.

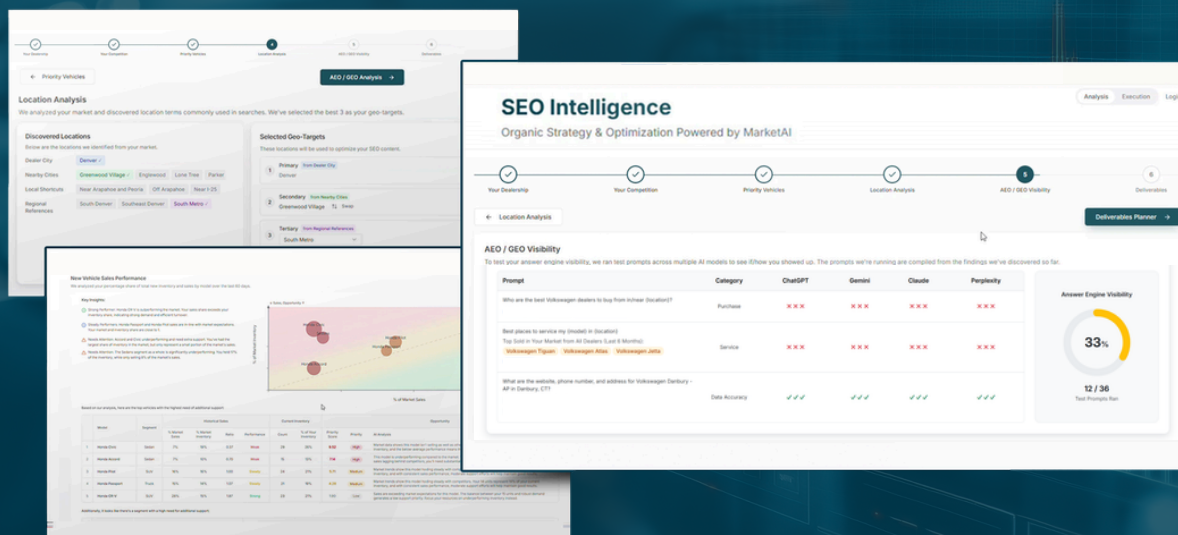


Continuous plan updates as market conditions shift

Markets move quickly. Demand changes by model and geography, and competitors adjust pricing and messaging. Our solution updates priorities and recommendations as conditions change, helping your organic presence stay aligned to current opportunity over time.

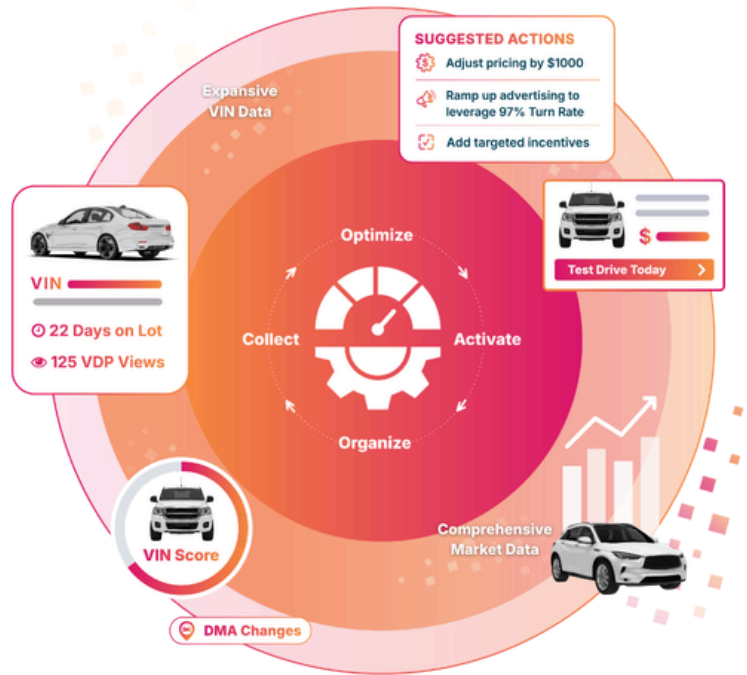
Want a DIY starting point for showing up in AI search results?

DOWNLOAD OUR STEP-BY-STEP CHECKLIST



Powered by MarketAI® Intelligence

Every Catalyst IQ solution is powered by MarketAI®, the real-time market and inventory intelligence layer that connects data, strategy, and execution across your dealership's digital ecosystem.



The Catalyst IQ Marketing Ecosystem: Every strategy in our ecosystem is guided by the same real-time market signals. That alignment helps dealerships stay visible, consistent, and competitive as shopper behavior evolves.

The Catalyst IQ Ecosystem Supports:

Website Development + SEO / AEO / GEO

Mobile-first websites combined with AI-driven SEO, Answer Engine Optimization, and Generative Engine Optimization help dealerships stay visible across traditional search, AI answers, and generative results. Strategy and optimization are guided by real-time market and shopper data.

Digital Advertising

VIN-specific, cross-channel advertising campaigns across Search, Display, Social, Video, PMAX, and CTV adapt in real time to market conditions, inventory movement, and shopper behavior.

Engage (Lead Capture and Nurture)

Our lead capture/engagement tool turns anonymous website traffic into identifiable shoppers, providing clearer attribution and helping dealers prioritize buyers who are most likely to convert.



See Where Your Dealership Shows Up Today

If you want a clear picture of how your dealership appears across search and AI-driven answers, a Catalyst IQ demo is an easy place to start.

IN ABOUT 20 MINUTES, YOU'LL SEE:

- ✦ Where you're showing up in AI search results
- ✦ How you're doing compared to the competition
- ✦ Which segments, locations, and strategies matter most in your market right now

Request a demo to get a clear, prioritized view of your dealership's visibility.

BOOK YOUR DEMO NOW

About Us

Catalyst IQ is redefining automotive marketing intelligence.

Powered by MarketAI®, Catalyst IQ delivers real-time, actionable insights that help dealers see the market as it shifts, understand their position, and activate strategies to move inventory and grow their business.

MarketAI is designed to support decision-making when precision matters.

MarketAI turns real-time market data into crystal clear strategies and automated ad execution. By surfacing early indicators of inventory risk, demand strength, and pricing pressure, MarketAI provides clarity, speed, and control for every marketing decision so you can outperform the market and drive measurable results.