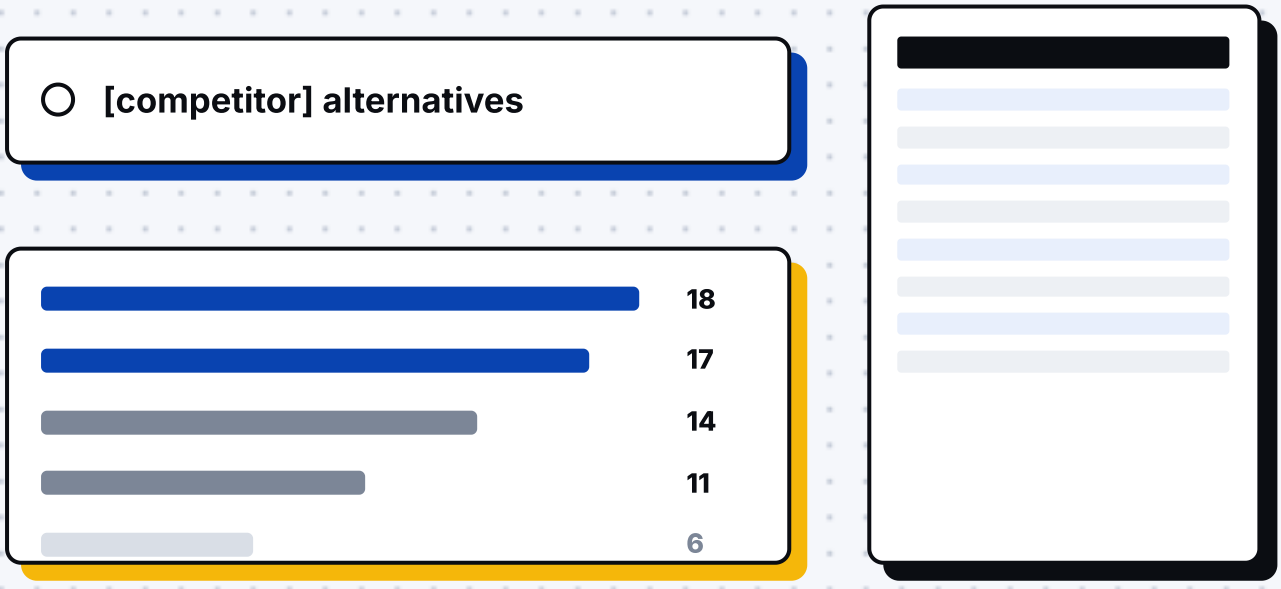
Perceptric

Free guide

The B2B SaaS Keyword Research Guide

Seven steps to find, score and map the searches and AI prompts that bring in demos, with templates you can fill in today.



perceptric.com

2026 edition

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01

CHAPTER 1

Why B2B SaaS keyword research is different

Tiny search volumes can hide large deals, and buyers now ask AI engines as well as Google.

Low volume, high value

Buying groups search in different words

Buyers now search in AI answers too

93%

of US keywords get fewer than 10 searches a month. In B2B SaaS, many of them still lead to deals.

Source: Ahrefs, long-tail keywords, 2026 (almost 93%)

B2B SaaS keywords often have tiny search volumes and large deal values behind them. A process that ranks terms by volume will skip many of the searches that bring you revenue.

13
people involved in a typical B2B buying decision

85%
of software buyers think more of a vendor that an AI chatbot names

4 of 5
vendors that buyers evaluate are on their shortlist from day one

Sources: Forrester, The State of Business Buying, 2024; G2, The Answer Economy, 2026; 6sense, 2025 Buyer Experience Study

Low volume, high value

Most searches for business software are rare, and that's fine. One closed deal from a niche term may pay for a year of content.

> **A term with 40 searches a month can beat a consumer term with 40,000.**
>
> The core idea of this guide

Example with made-up numbers

20 visits
a month to one page on a niche term

→

24 demos
a year when 10% of visitors book one

→

6 deals
at a 25% close rate

→

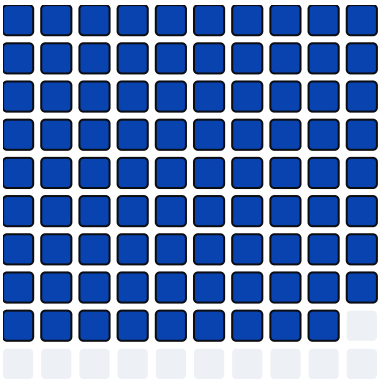
$120,000
a year at $20,000 per contract

Swap in your own visits, demo rate, close rate and contract value before you judge a term by its volume.

Buying groups search in different words

A software purchase involves people from several teams. Forrester found that 89% of purchases involve two or more departments, and each role searches for its own concerns.

Purchases that involve two or more departments



89%

of B2B purchases involve two or more departments, so you need keywords for several roles.

Source: Forrester, The State of Business Buying, 2024

Role	What they care about	What they search
Champion (daily user)	Fixing a slow, manual task	how to automate [task], [category] for [team]
Budget owner	Cost and payback	[product] pricing, [category] ROI
IT and security	Risk and setup effort	[product] SSO, [product] SOC 2
Operations	Fit with current tools	[product] [tool] integration
Executive sponsor	Vendor stability and scale	best [category] for enterprise

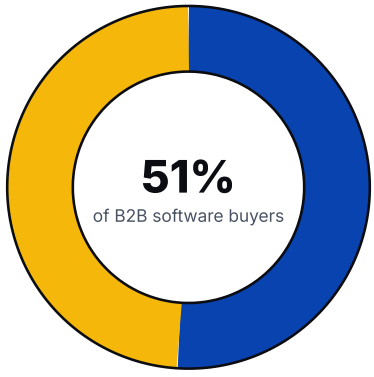
Buyers now search in AI answers too

G2 found that 51% of B2B software buyers start research with an AI chatbot more often than with Google. A year earlier the share was 29%, so your research has to cover prompts as well as keywords.

Shortlists also form early in the journey. Buyers place about four of the five vendors they evaluate on their shortlist on day one, so you need to be visible before anyone fills in a demo form.

> **Do this now**
>
> Write down your average contract value and your demo-to-close rate. You'll use both in Step 6 to score each keyword by what it could earn.

Where buyers start their research



Source: G2, The Answer Economy, 2026

02

STEP 1

Start from your customers

Your best keywords are already in your customers' words.
Collect them first, then check which ones people search.

Five places buyer language lives

How to mine each source

Template: phrase log

Collect the phrases buyers use in calls, tickets and reviews before you open a keyword tool, then use those phrases as the seed list for every later step.

Source	Where to find it	What to pull	Example phrase
Sales calls	Call recorder transcripts, discovery notes	Problems named early in the call, tools they use now	"we reconcile card spend in spreadsheets"
Support tickets	Help desk tags, help center search logs	Setup questions, limits, integrations	"does it sync with NetSuite"
Reviews on G2 and Capterra	Your profile and each main competitor's profile	Reasons for switching, what people like and dislike	"switched because approvals took days"
Win/loss notes	CRM closed-lost reasons, win/loss interviews	Other vendors considered, the deciding factor	"picked them for the Xero sync"
Site search and chat	Analytics, live chat history	Questions asked before sign-up	"pricing for 50 users"

How to mine each source

Phrases to search for in call transcripts

"we use" "we tried" "looking for" "instead of"

1. Pull the last 20 to 30 sales call transcripts and search them for the four phrases above.
2. Export three months of support tickets and group them by tag, since the biggest tags often turn into integration and how-to keywords.
3. Read 30 reviews of your product and 30 for each main competitor, and copy the words people use to describe their problem.
4. Ask sales for the top reasons you win and lose, and list every competitor they name as a "vs" or "alternatives" candidate.
5. Paste every phrase into one sheet with its source and the job title of the person who said it.

Reviews help in AI search too

G2 found that citations from software review sites are the top trust signal buyers look for in AI chatbot answers. Keep your profiles current.
G2, The Answer Economy, 2026

Template: phrase log

Two example rows, then space for your own.

Phrase in the buyer's words	Source	Role	Likely search
"approvals take a week"	G2 review	Finance manager	expense approval software
"we left our old tool over card limits"	Win/loss call	Controller	[old tool] alternatives

Do this now

Book 30 minutes with one sales rep this week. Ask them for the five phrases they hear most often on first calls, and add each one to your phrase log.

03

STEP 2

Map the buying journey and intent

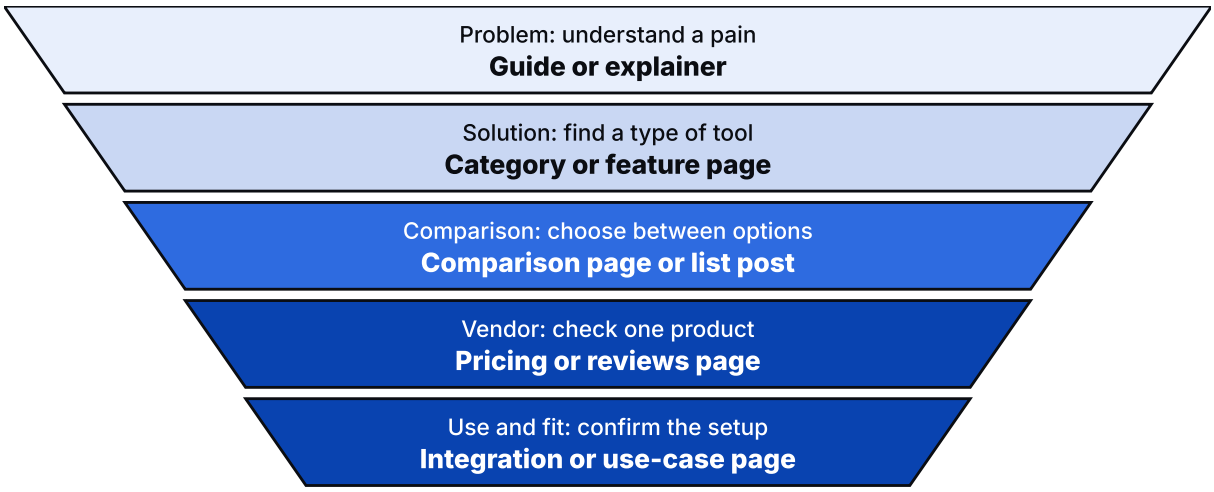
Every search shows how close the person is to buying, and intent tells you which page to build.

Six intent types and the page each needs

Let the results page confirm intent

Sort your phrases by intent before you look at volume. The closer a search sits to a purchase, the closer its page sits to your demo form.

From first question to shortlist: the page each stage needs



Source: Perceptric intent framework

Intent	Stage	What they want	Example search	Page that fits
Problem	Top	Understand a pain	why does month-end close take so long	Guide or explainer
Solution	Middle	Find a type of tool	spend management software	Category or feature page
Comparison	Bottom	Choose between options	[A] vs [B], best [category] for startups	Comparison page or list post
Vendor	Bottom	Check one product	[product] pricing, [product] reviews	Pricing page, reviews page
Use and fit	Bottom	Confirm it fits their setup	[product] Slack integration, [category] for agencies	Integration or use-case page
Customer	After sale	Get value from the product	how to set approval rules in [product]	Help doc

Let the results page confirm intent

Google shows you the intent it has learned for each term. Search the phrase and look at the page types in the top five results before you decide what to build.

01

Mostly list posts
Searchers want options, so plan a fair comparison list.

02

Mostly product or category pages
Searchers want a tool, so plan a landing page.

03

Mostly how-to guides
Searchers want to learn, so plan a guide with your product as one step.

Worksheet: check intent against the live results

One example row, then five of your own.

Phrase	Intent you guessed	Page types in the top five	Page to build
expense approval software	Solution	Product pages and list posts	Feature page

Do this now

Add an "intent" column and a "stage" column to your phrase log. Fill them in for every row using the table above, and check five rows against the live results.

04

STEP 3

Bottom-of-funnel patterns to fill in

Six repeat patterns cover most late-stage searches. Fill them in to build a starter list in about an hour.

Worksheet: six patterns
Where each pattern usually lands
Modifiers that widen each pattern

Bottom-of-funnel searches follow a few repeat patterns. Fill each pattern with your category, competitors and integrations.

Worksheet: six bottom-of-funnel patterns

Pattern	Who searches it	Your versions
[competitor] alternatives	People who use or are testing a rival tool and want other choices. They already know the category and have budget.	
[your product] vs [competitor]	Buyers in late evaluation with two or three names left. Include rival vs rival pairs where you fit as well.	
best [category] for [audience]	Buyers building a shortlist for their size, industry or team. Use the segments sales wins most often.	
[product or category] pricing	Budget owners checking cost before they talk to sales. Add "cost", "plans" and "free" variants for you and each rival.	
[product] [tool] integration	Operations and IT teams confirming the product works with their stack. List the tools customers connect most.	
[category] for [use case]	Champions checking that a tool fits a specific job or industry. Use the use cases sales pitches every week.	

Be fair to competitors

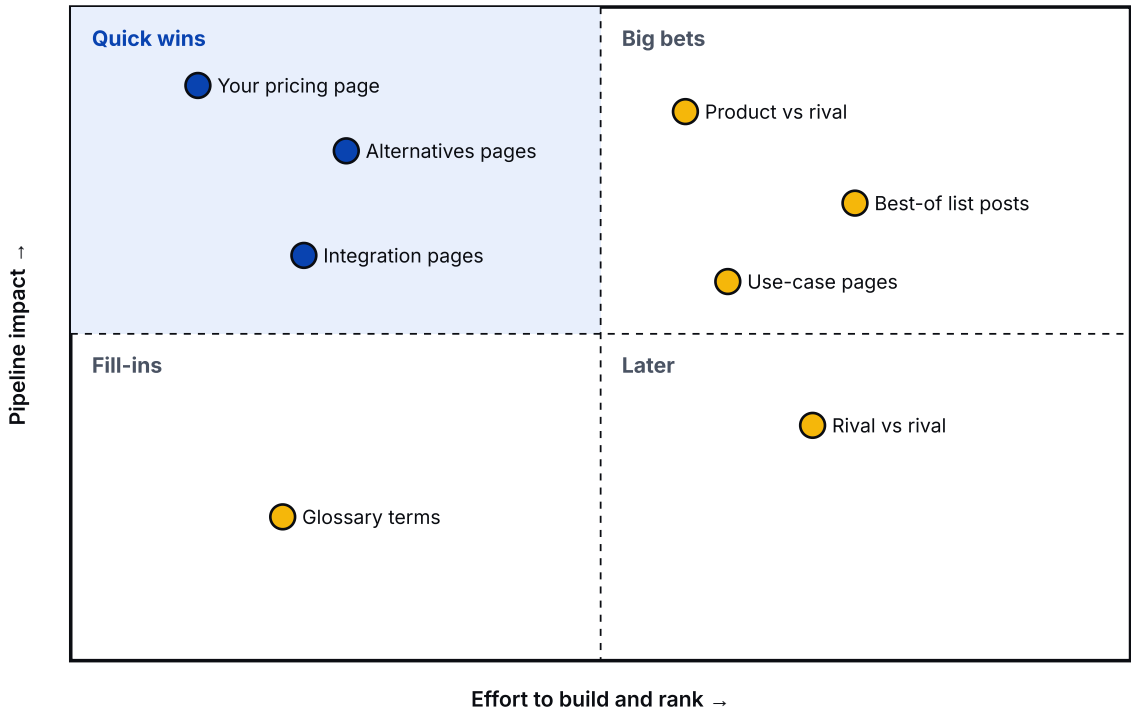
Comparison pages convert when buyers trust them. State where each rival is a good choice, keep pricing current and date every page.

More on this step: perceptric.com/blog/bofu-content.

Modifiers that widen each pattern

Modifier	Example	Who it attracts
Company size	best [category] for small teams	Buyers matching your target segment
Industry	[category] for healthcare	Regulated buyers with specific needs
Feature	[category] with approval workflows	Champions with one must-have
Stack	[category] for [CRM or ERP] users	Teams locked into a main platform
Region or rule	[category] GDPR compliant	Security and legal reviewers

Where each page type usually lands



Source: Perceptric framework, a starting point to adjust for your product

Do this now

Write at least three versions of each pattern in the worksheet. Add every finished phrase to your phrase log with "Bottom" as its stage.

05

STEP 4

Expand the list with tools

Your seed list is small on purpose. Tools add the variants, questions and competitor terms around each seed.

Five tools and what each gives you

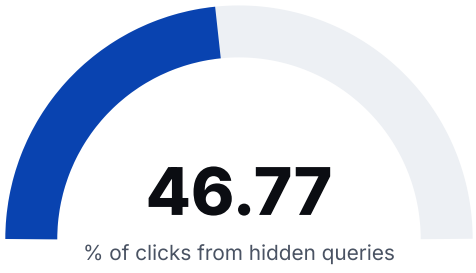
Why zero-volume terms still count

Run your strongest seeds through a few tools. Each one shows a different slice of what buyers type.

Tool	What to do	What you get
Google Search Console	Filter the Performance report by your category and rival names, then look for terms in positions 8 to 20.	Terms you almost rank for today
Ahrefs or Semrush	Check matching terms and questions for each seed, then run a content gap report on a rival's domain.	Volume, difficulty and the terms rivals rank for
People Also Ask	Search each seed and open a few questions so Google shows more of them.	Questions for each page and its FAQ
Reddit	Search Reddit for "[category] recommendations" and read threads in the subreddits your buyers use.	Raw buyer language and the rivals people name
AI answers	Ask AI engines the questions from your sales calls and note the brands and pages they cite.	Prompts, rivals and the sources AI trusts

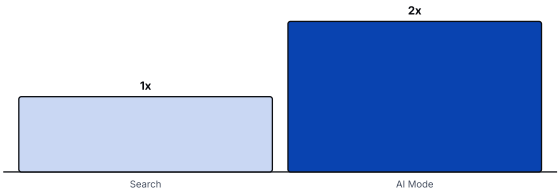
Why zero-volume terms still count

Search Console clicks from anonymized queries



Source: Ahrefs, April 2025 data, 2026

Average query length, AI Mode vs Search



Source: Google, Q1 2025 earnings

Search Console hides queries that few people type, and Ahrefs measured those hidden queries at close to half of all clicks. Keep terms that show zero volume in tools when customers use the phrase in calls or tickets.

About 15% of the searches Google sees each day are new to Google. No tool can list every term your buyers type, so your phrase log stays the main source.

Sources: Ahrefs, anonymized queries in Search Console, 2026; Search Engine Journal, 2025; Google, Q1 2025 earnings, 2025.

Worksheet: seed expansion log

One example row, then space for your ten seeds.

Seed	Tools used	New phrases found	Keep?
expense approval software	Search Console, Reddit	approval workflow for finance teams	Yes

Do this now

Pick your ten strongest seeds and run each one through two of the tools above. Add new phrases to the log, and stop at about 150 rows for a first plan.

06

STEP 5

Judge difficulty and fit

A keyword is worth your time when you can rank for it and the searcher could buy from you.

Difficulty: read the first page

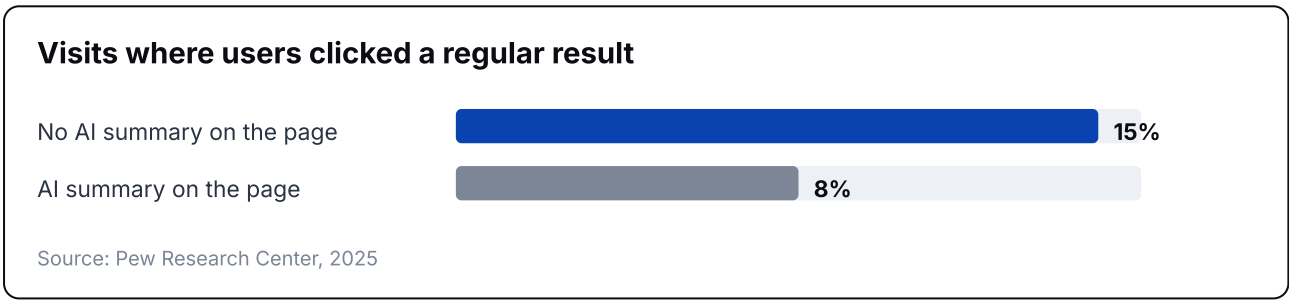
What AI summaries do to clicks

Fit: could this searcher buy?

Check difficulty and fit before you score any term. The live results page tells you more than any tool score.

Difficulty: search each term and tick these checks

- [ ] Count how many of the top ten results come from sites with far more links than yours.
- [ ] Note the page type that ranks and confirm your team can build that type well.
- [ ] Look for forum threads or small sites in the top ten, since they show the term is open.
- [ ] Check whether an AI Overview appears and note which sources it cites.
- [ ] Note any ads at the top, which suggest the term has buying value.



AI summaries change the math for some terms. Pew Research Center found users clicked a regular result on 8% of visits when an AI summary appeared, against 15% without one.

Fit: could this searcher buy?

Strong fit

- The searcher matches your target company size or industry.
- Your product solves the problem in the term without workarounds.
- Sales has closed deals that started from this kind of need.

Weak fit

- The term points to students, job seekers or very small users.
- Your product covers only one part of what the searcher needs.
- The term asks for free tools when you have no free plan.

Do this now

Add a difficulty column and a fit column to your log. Rate difficulty as low, medium or high, and drop any row where fit is weak.

07

STEP 6

Prioritize with a scoring model

A simple score keeps the plan tied to revenue. Rate, weight, sort and work from the top.

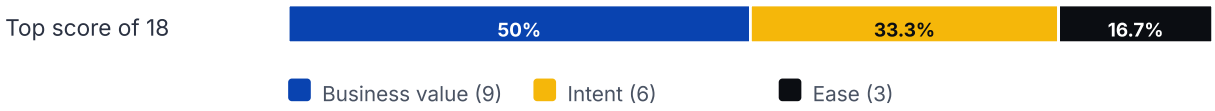
- Three criteria and their weights
- The formula and the three bands
- Example: scored keywords for a fictional product

Rate each keyword from 1 to 3 on business value, intent and ease. Weight the scores, add them up and sort the list.

Criterion	Score 3	Score 2	Score 1	Weight
Business value	Your product is the clear answer for your best buyers	Your product helps, or the buyers are a smaller group	Loose link to your product	**x3**
Intent	Comparing tools or ready to buy	Looking for a type of tool	Learning about a problem	**x2**
Ease	Weak or mixed first page	Some strong sites rank	Only large brands rank	**x1**

Score = (value x 3) + (intent x 2) + (ease x 1). The top score is 18.

How much each criterion counts toward the top score



Source: the scoring model above

15 to 18
Write these pages now

→

11 to 14
Plan them for next quarter

→

10 or less
Keep them in the backlog

Example: scored keywords for a fictional product

Tallybird is a made-up spend management tool for mid-market finance teams. Coinpath is a made-up rival, and the scores below are for illustration only.

Keyword	Value	Intent	Ease	Score	Band
tallybird pricing	3	3	3	18	Now
coinpath alternatives	3	3	2	17	Now
best spend management software for mid-market	3	3	1	16	Now
expense approval software	3	2	1	14	Next
what is spend management	1	1	1	6	Backlog

Worksheet: score your first ten keywords

Keyword	Value x3	Intent x2	Ease x1	Score	Band

Do this now

Score your top 50 rows with the model and sort by score. Share the top 15 with sales and ask which terms match the deals they want more of.

08

STEP 7

Build the keyword map and content plan

One URL for each group of keywords, then a plan that puts those pages in order by score.

Mapping rules

Example keyword map for a fictional product

Turn the map into a plan

A keyword map gives each group of keywords one URL, so your pages never compete with each other. The content plan then puts those pages in order by score.

Mapping rules

- [ ] Give each page one primary keyword, with close variants and questions as secondary terms.
- [ ] Put two terms on one page when the same pages rank for both on Google.
- [ ] Update an existing page before you create a new one for the same term.
- [ ] Link every bottom-of-funnel page to a demo or trial, and link guides to those pages.

Example keyword map for Tallybird (fictional)

This example uses the made-up product from Step 6, with made-up rivals Coinpath and Brightledger. It shows the format, so replace every row with your own terms and scores.

#	Primary keyword	Intent	Page type	URL	Score	Month
1	tallybird pricing	Vendor	Pricing page (update)	/pricing/	18	Month 1
2	coinpath alternatives	Comparison	Alternatives page	/alternatives/coinpath/	17	Month 1
3	tallybird vs coinpath	Comparison	Comparison page	/compare/tallybird-vs-coinpath/	17	Month 1
4	best spend management software for mid-market	Comparison	List post	/blog/best-spend-management-software/	16	Month 1
5	tallybird netsuite integration	Use and fit	Integration page	/integrations/netsuite/	15	Month 2
6	spend management for saas companies	Use and fit	Use-case page	/solutions/saas/	15	Month 2
7	expense approval software	Solution	Feature page	/expense-approvals/	14	Month 3
8	brightledger alternatives	Comparison	Alternatives page	/alternatives/brightledger/	14	Month 3
9	virtual cards for software subscriptions	Solution	Feature page	/virtual-cards/	12	Month 4

#	Primary keyword	Intent	Page type	URL	Score	Month
10	corporate card policy template	Problem	Template and guide	/templates/card-policy/	11	Month 4
11	how to speed up month-end close	Problem	Guide	/blog/faster-month-end-close/	9	Backlog
12	what is spend management	Problem	Guide	/blog/what-is-spend-management/	6	Backlog

Turn the map into a plan

MONTH 1
Update the pricing page, then publish the Coinpath alternatives page, the Coinpath comparison and the best-of list.

MONTH 2
Publish the NetSuite integration page and the SaaS use-case page.

MONTH 3
Publish the expense approvals feature page and the Brightledger alternatives page.

MONTH 4
Publish the virtual cards page and the card policy template.

BACKLOG
Hold the two top-of-funnel guides until the bottom-of-funnel pages are live.

Pick a pace you can keep
Two to four pages a month works for most small teams. Fill each month from the top of the map.

01

Write a short brief
List the primary keyword, secondary terms, questions from your log and the sales proof to include.

02

Track what each page starts
Count demos and trials, along with rankings and AI mentions.

03

Review every quarter
Add new terms from calls and drop pages that no longer fit.

04

Do this now
Map your top 12 keywords in this format. Book the first two pages into next month's calendar with an owner and a due date.

09

CHAPTER 9

AI search prompts, the new keyword type

Prompts are the questions buyers type into ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity and Google's AI Mode. Give them their own list.

Keywords and prompts side by side

Build a prompt set

Which pages AI engines cite

Treat prompts as their own keyword type in your research, with their own tracking. They win you mentions and shortlist spots instead of clicks alone.

	Keyword	Prompt
Shape	A few words	A full question with context; AI Mode queries are twice as long on average
Example	spend management software	"We're a 200-person SaaS company on NetSuite. Which spend tool suits a small finance team?"
What you win	A ranking and a click	A mention, a citation and a place on the shortlist
How you measure	Rank, clicks and conversions	Share of answers that name you and the pages they cite
Where ideas come from	Keyword tools and Search Console	Sales calls, support chats and AI answer tracking

AI search visitors on Ahrefs' own site, one 30-day period



Source: Ahrefs, AI search traffic and conversions, 2025

AI visitors can be few and still matter. On Ahrefs' own site, AI search sent 0.5% of traffic in one 30-day period and 12.1% of sign-ups.

Sources: Google, Q1 2025 earnings; Ahrefs, AI search traffic and conversions, 2025.

Build a prompt set

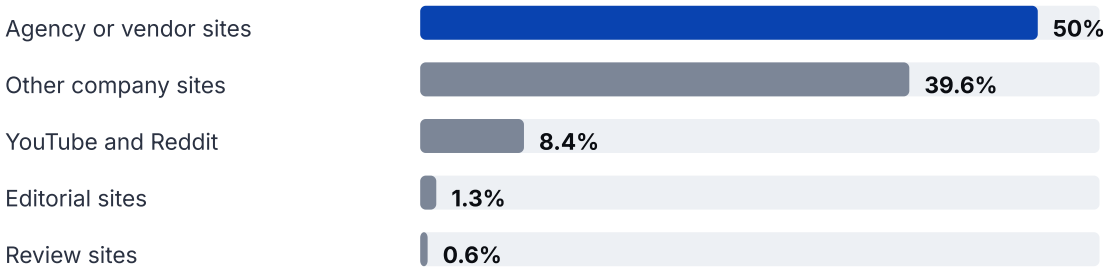
1. Turn each bottom-of-funnel keyword into two or three natural questions that include a role, a company size and a tool stack.
2. Add the questions buyers ask on sales calls, word for word.
3. Run each prompt in the main AI engines and record the brands named and the pages cited.
4. Map each prompt to the page on your site that should answer it, the same way you map keywords.

5 Re-run the set every month, because AI answers change often.

Which pages AI engines cite

We tracked a small sample in Arrowsterr, our AI search platform: 30 answers to 5 prompts about B2B SEO agencies, across 5 AI engines, from August to November 2026.

Share of citations by site type



Source: Arrowsterr, 30 answers, 5 prompts, 5 AI engines, one B2B SEO agency topic, Aug to Nov 2026. A small sample next to larger public studies.

10 of 24

most cited pages in the sample were "best of" list pages

Fair comparison pages on your own site can earn citations for the prompts your buyers ask.

Do this now

Write 20 prompts from your top keywords and sales calls. Run them in two AI engines this week and note where your brand appears and which rival pages are cited.

More on this topic: perceptric.com/blog/b2b-saas-seo.

10

CHAPTER 10

The keyword research checklist

Twenty checks to run each quarter. Tick every box before you hand the plan to writers.

Customer input
Intent and patterns
Expansion and judgment
Scoring and mapping
AI search

Use this list each quarter when you refresh your research. Tick every box before you hand the plan to writers.

Customer input

- [ ] You read at least 20 recent sales call transcripts and logged the buyer phrases.
- [ ] You grouped three months of support tickets by tag.
- [ ] You read reviews of your product and of each main competitor on G2 and Capterra.
- [ ] You listed every competitor named in win/loss notes.

Intent and patterns

- [ ] Every row in your log has an intent and a stage.
- [ ] You checked the live results page for your top 20 terms.
- [ ] You filled in all six bottom-of-funnel patterns for your product.
- [ ] You added keywords for each buying group role, including IT and the budget owner.

Expansion and judgment

- [ ] You pulled near-ranking terms from Search Console.
- [ ] You ran seeds through a keyword tool and a competitor content gap report.
- [ ] You kept low-volume terms that customers use in their own words.
- [ ] You rated difficulty and fit for each shortlisted term and dropped weak-fit rows.

Scoring and mapping

- [ ] Every shortlisted term has a value, intent and ease score.
- [ ] Sales reviewed your top 15 terms.
- [ ] Each keyword group points to one URL in the keyword map.
- [ ] The first two months of pages have owners and due dates.

AI search

- [ ] You wrote at least 20 buyer prompts and mapped each to a page.
- [ ] You recorded which brands and pages AI engines cite for those prompts.
- [ ] Your review profiles are current, since buyers trust AI answers that cite review sites.
- [ ] You scheduled a monthly re-run of your prompt set.

Related reading: SaaS keyword research; B2B keyword research.

ABOUT PERCEPTRIC

Want this done for your product?

Perceptric is an SEO, GEO and content agency for B2B and SaaS companies. We find the searches and AI prompts your buyers use, then build the comparison, integration and use-case pages that turn them into demos.

We track how AI engines talk about your brand with Arrowsterr, the AI search platform we built, so you can see where you appear and what to fix next.

Book a call

perceptric.com/contact

SEO, GEO and content for B2B and SaaS