



MDP: From Prompts to Profits: Using AI to increase sales

Week 5: AI Search & The Big Picture

Delivered by Evan Mangan for Local Enterprise Office Longford

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Course Overview

This was the fifth and final week of the Digital Marketing Programme delivered by Evan on behalf of Local Enterprise Office Longford. The session brought together the core themes of the programme with a specific focus on how to get found in Google — both in the traditional organic results and in the emerging world of AI-powered search.

Participants were guided through practical, step-by-step approaches to SEO, supported by AI tools like ChatGPT, and then introduced to Google AI Mode and how it is reshaping the search landscape for small businesses.

The session was structured around three major areas: how Google's organic search results work and how to optimise for them; how to use AI tools to accelerate and improve that optimisation process; and what Google AI Mode means for businesses and how to position for it. Evan closed the session with a big-picture overview of AI priorities for small businesses, helping participants understand where to focus their time and attention.

Key Topics Covered

How Google's Organic Search Works

Evan opened by demystifying the Google search results page. He explained that what users see consists of paid (sponsored) results at the top and 10 organic, free results below — the pages Google considers the most relevant from the most trusted sites. Participants were shown that Google sends a spider (a bot) to every website approximately once a week to gather data across around 200 factors, and that this data is then processed by the Google algorithm at the moment of a search.

The key insight Evan emphasised was that Google ranks pages, not websites. The algorithm is entirely focused on delivering the best user experience — meaning the most relevant page, from the most trusted domain, that loads the fastest. This framing helped participants understand the three pillars they need to focus on: page relevance, domain authority, and page speed.

Page Speed

Evan introduced [GTmetrix.com](https://gtmetrix.com) as a free tool for checking how quickly a website loads. He demonstrated a live test on a participant's website (MacBees boutique in Killarney) and explained that participants should focus on two metrics: the overall performance score (aim for 80%+) and LCP (Largest Contentful Paint), which Google wants under 1.2 seconds. MacBees scored an impressive 792 milliseconds. Evan advised participants to test not just their homepage but multiple internal pages to get a true picture of site speed.

Domain Authority

Domain Authority (DA) is a score out of 100 that reflects how much Google trusts a website, and it is driven primarily by backlinks — other websites linking to yours. Evan used Neil Patel's free backlinks tool to demonstrate how to check DA, using Brown Thomas (DA 52) as a benchmark. He explained that for small Irish businesses, a DA of 5–15 is typical, and reaching 20 is excellent. He showed how backlinks from high-authority sites like Fáilte Ireland (DA 85) or the Local Enterprise Office (DA 50) carry significantly more weight than links from social media or spammy directories.

To identify backlink opportunities, Evan recommended checking which sites link to competitors using the Neil Patel tool and then using ChatGPT — ideally within a Level 5 project setup — to research backlink strategies specific to the business. He demonstrated this live using MacBees, where ChatGPT recommended pitching stories to RSVP, Evoke, and VIP Magazine as a digital PR strategy, and even offered to draft a press release and build a media contact database. Evan also addressed the Google Disavow Tool as a way to distance a site from genuinely harmful spam links, while reassuring participants that general spammy directory links are not a concern.

Page Relevance and On-Page SEO

This was the most substantial part of the morning. Evan explained that relevance is the single most important SEO factor and that it is entirely within every participant's control. He made the critical distinction that Google brings up individual pages in response to searches, not websites — meaning participants need dedicated pages for every topic they want to be found for.

He demonstrated how to use ChatGPT to identify the 30 most common search terms for a product or service (using dog sofas and a Cork dental clinic as examples), and showed how the AI groups them by category: core high-intent terms, product feature terms, breed-specific or problem-solution terms, and so on. From there, participants were encouraged to map which terms they want to target and ensure they have dedicated pages for each.

Evan then walked through the optimisation of a page step by step, using prompts from a shared Word document. The process covered: writing an optimised meta title (up to 70 characters, primary keyword first, with AI providing five variations to choose from); writing a compelling meta description (up to 155 characters, focused on key customer benefits); writing an H1 headline that includes the primary search term while resonating with human visitors; writing 500-word body text using AI as a first draft; and tagging images with appropriate alt text.

He also addressed the question of AI-written content, demonstrating [ZeroGPT.com](https://www.zerogpt.com) as a detector and emphasising Google's position: AI assistance is acceptable, but content should be predominantly human-written and fact-checked. Evan suggested that writing in

a recognised style (such as via a writing style instruction in ChatGPT) helps lower the AI score naturally.

Evan applied this SEO review live to the MacBees website, noting practical improvements: moving the brand name to the end of the meta title to lead with keywords; adding a section with descriptive text on the homepage; and ensuring category pages have richer, more targeted meta titles and some body text — using Bateman's Footwear in Cork as a strong example of how e-commerce category pages can carry strategic text.

Google AI Mode and the Future of Search

After the coffee break, Evan provided a rich context for understanding why Google AI Mode is not a minor update but a structural transformation of how search works. He traced the journey from Perplexity (the first AI search engine, launched two and a half years ago) through ChatGPT's built-in web search, through Google's interim AI Overviews, to the full AI Mode now available in Ireland.

The core difference: traditional Google gives you links and asks you to wade through pages yourself. AI Mode reads those pages, synthesises the information, and gives you the answer directly — just like Perplexity and ChatGPT search. Evan explained that Google delayed this transition because its \$200 billion annual ad revenue depends on people clicking through to websites. AI Mode is their answer to falling search market share, and it will become the default way to use Google once they solve the advertising model within it.

How to Get Found in Google AI Mode

Evan demonstrated several live searches in AI Mode, including searches for family-friendly hotels in Killarney, life coaches in Longford, and one-to-one digital marketing coaching. He showed that AI Mode makes recommendations — it names specific businesses and links to specific pages on their websites.

He outlined the three types of pages and three ways a business can benefit from AI Mode:

Product/Service pages — when someone searches for a product or service, you want to be recommended and have your product page linked in the results panel. The page must exist for you to even be in the running.

About/Person pages — when someone searches for a coach, trainer, consultant or professional, AI Mode looks for a dedicated page about that person. Evan showed that his own page ("Are you looking for a Digital Marketing Trainer?") was consistently surfaced and linked to. He stressed that if this page didn't exist, he simply wouldn't be considered.

Blog posts — when people search for information, AI Mode synthesises from articles and blog posts and may link to them in the sources panel. Estate agents, solicitors, financial advisers, and anyone with relevant expertise can benefit here.

Evan then taught participants how to reverse-engineer the AI's recommendation logic. By doing a search in AI Mode and then asking "What criteria did you use to make these recommendations?", businesses can get a clear list of what signals carry weight — years of experience, qualifications, awards, partnerships, reviews, and so on. He shared how he personally used this technique to improve his own page and started appearing in recommendations once the AI could see that information on his website.

He emphasised reviews as one of the most powerful signals. AI Mode looks not just at review scores but at the language used in reviews — if customers consistently describe a hotel as "family-friendly" or "dog-friendly," the AI is far more confident recommending it for those searches. Consistency of description across the website, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Google Business Profile also matters.

AI: The Big Picture

Evan closed the programme with a prioritisation framework to help participants focus their energy. He grouped the AI landscape into four levels of priority:

Essential: Using ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude or Grok at Level 5 (with a project, deep research report, and personalisation) for expert-level business advice. Understanding and positioning for AI search engines.

Very useful: AI image creation tools (Midjourney, OpenArt, Nano Banana) for product photography, B-roll, and marketing visuals.

Will become very useful: AI agents — tools like Claude's skills and Cwork that automate recurring tasks. Evan predicted this will move to essential within 6–9 months.

Nice to have: AI video creation — valuable for product-focused businesses, but the lowest priority given everything else on this list.

Tools & Resources

[GTmetrics.com](https://gtmetrix.com) — Free website speed testing tool. Enter any URL to receive a performance score and LCP (Largest Contentful Paint) time. Create a free account to see specific recommendations. Use to test your homepage and multiple internal pages.

Neil Patel Backlinks Tool — Free (with a Google login, 3 searches per day). Reveals your Domain Authority score, the number of referring domains, and which sites are linking to you. Also shows the DA of competing sites in your target search results.

Google Disavow Tool — A Google Search Console tool that allows you to flag spam links pointing to your site and ask Google to disregard them. Only necessary if you encounter genuinely harmful links.

[ZeroGPT.com](https://zerogpt.com) — A free AI content detection tool. Paste web page text to check what percentage is likely AI-generated. Useful for self-checking content before publishing. Aim for content that reads as predominantly human-written (below 20–30% AI).

ChatGPT / Claude / Gemini — Used throughout the session for generating search term lists, writing meta titles and descriptions, drafting headlines and body text, identifying backlink opportunities, drafting press releases, and asking AI Mode for recommendation criteria. Evan reiterated the five-level usage model from Week 1.

Google AI Mode — Accessed via [Google.com](https://www.google.com) by clicking "AI Mode" in the search bar. Google's full AI search engine, powered by Gemini. Used to search for products, services, and information — and to follow up with "What criteria did you use?" to reverse-engineer recommendation logic.

[Perplexity.ai](https://perplexity.ai) — An independent AI search engine, the original pioneer of AI-powered search. Recommended alongside Google AI Mode for checking recommendation criteria, as different AI engines may weight factors slightly differently.

Action Points for Participants

1. **Test your website speed today** using [GTmetrics.com](https://gtmetrix.com). Check your homepage and at least 3–4 internal pages. If your LCP is over 2.5 seconds, speak to your web designer about fixing it.
2. **Check your domain authority** using the Neil Patel Backlinks Tool. Log in with a Google account (free), enter your URL, and note your score. Then check 2–3 competitors who appear on page 1 for your target search terms and compare their DA to yours.
3. **Scroll through your backlinks** in the Neil Patel tool. Note which sites are linking to you and identify directories or publishers your competitors are listed on that you're not.
4. **Use ChatGPT to generate your 30 most relevant search terms**. Paste in your About page, ask it to act like an SEO expert, and request the 30 most common search terms for your product or service in Ireland, grouped by category. Identify which terms you want to target.
5. **Audit your existing pages and identify gaps**. For each search term you want to be found for, ask: do I have a dedicated page for this? If not, plan to create one. The question is not how many pages you need — it's whether you have a page for every topic you want to rank for.
6. **Optimise one page this week**. Using the prompts from the Word document shared by Siobhan, work through one page: write an AI-suggested meta title, meta description, and headline, then update them in your website's admin area.
7. **Do a search in Google AI Mode** for the product, service, or role you most want to be found for. Note whether you appear in the recommendations and which page is linked.
8. **Ask AI Mode: "What criteria did you use to make these recommendations?"** Make a list of everything it mentions. Then review your About page or product pages and ensure every relevant criterion is clearly addressed — using only information that is factually true about your business.
9. **Review your Google reviews** with fresh eyes. Are customers using the words and phrases you want to be associated with? If not, consider how you might prompt future reviewers to mention specific aspects of your service. Continue actively asking every happy customer for a review.
10. **Set your AI priority for the next 90 days**. Using Evan's framework: first, get your AI tool project running at Level 5 with a deep research report attached. Second, do the AI Mode audit above and start optimising your pages for recommendation. Third, explore AI image tools if you have products that would benefit from better visuals. Everything else can wait.

This was created with the help of one of our AI colleagues 😊