

Where Did All the Clicks Go?

AI, Search and the Future of Your Firm's Website

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Grab your phone: two quick questions

YOUR TURN



QUESTION 1

Over the last 18 months, has your website brought in more new-client enquiries, fewer, or about the same?

More · Fewer · Same · No idea

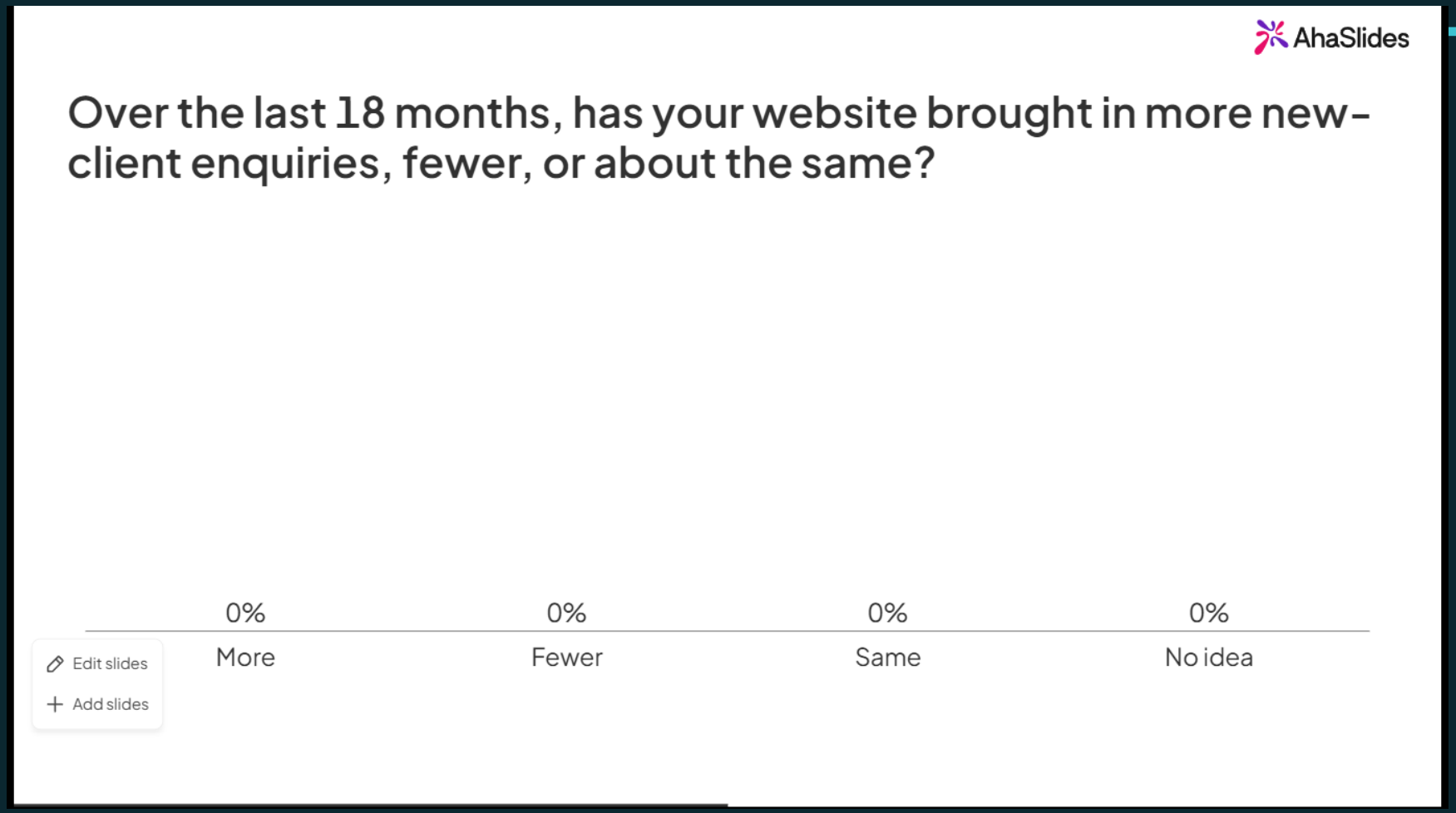
QUESTION 2

Has a client or prospect told you they found you, or checked you out, using ChatGPT or another AI tool?

Yes · Not that I know of · We don't ask

What the room said

Still to vote? Scan here

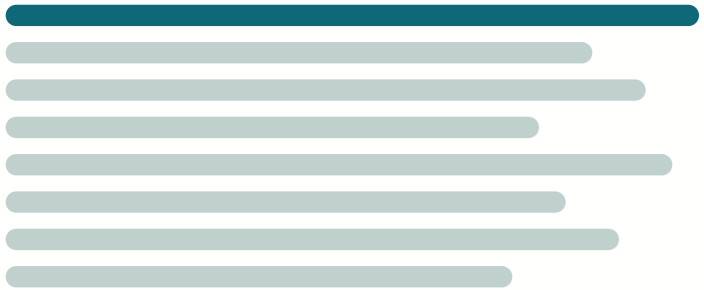


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Google used to hand you a reading list. Now the librarian reads it for you.

BEFORE

A list of ten websites. You pick one and click.



NOW

The answer, written for you, before any link.



Your website is still on the shelf. Fewer people open it.

Three dates that changed search

2024

Google starts showing AI answers above the search results

2025

Rolled out more widely, and Google adds a full "AI Mode"

2026

Answers come from AI first. Links come second.

AI has made the window busier and the door quieter



"IMPRESSIONS" · GOING UP

People walking past your shop window

The number of times your website appeared in Google



"CLICKS" · GOING DOWN

People walking in through the door

The people who clicked through to your website

QS RESEARCH · INDEPENDENT LAW FIRMS, 2025

Law firms saw the pattern first

–42%

Median drop in times shown in Google after September 2025

–19%

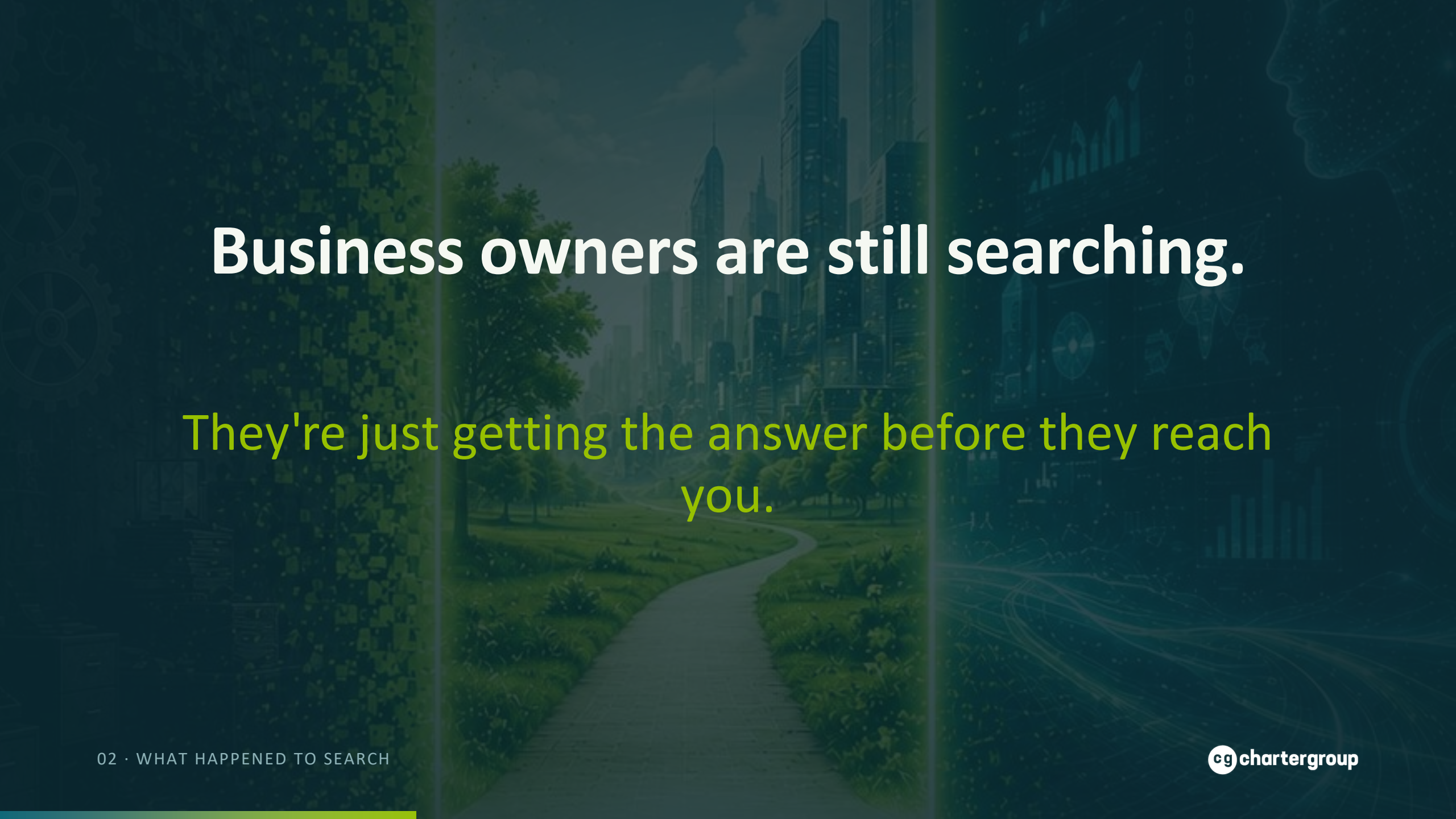
Median drop in people visiting the website

–80%

Lost by some firms, at the worst end

We're seeing the same pattern in accountancy.

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Business owners are still searching.

They're just getting the answer before they reach you.

We looked at nine CharterGroup firms

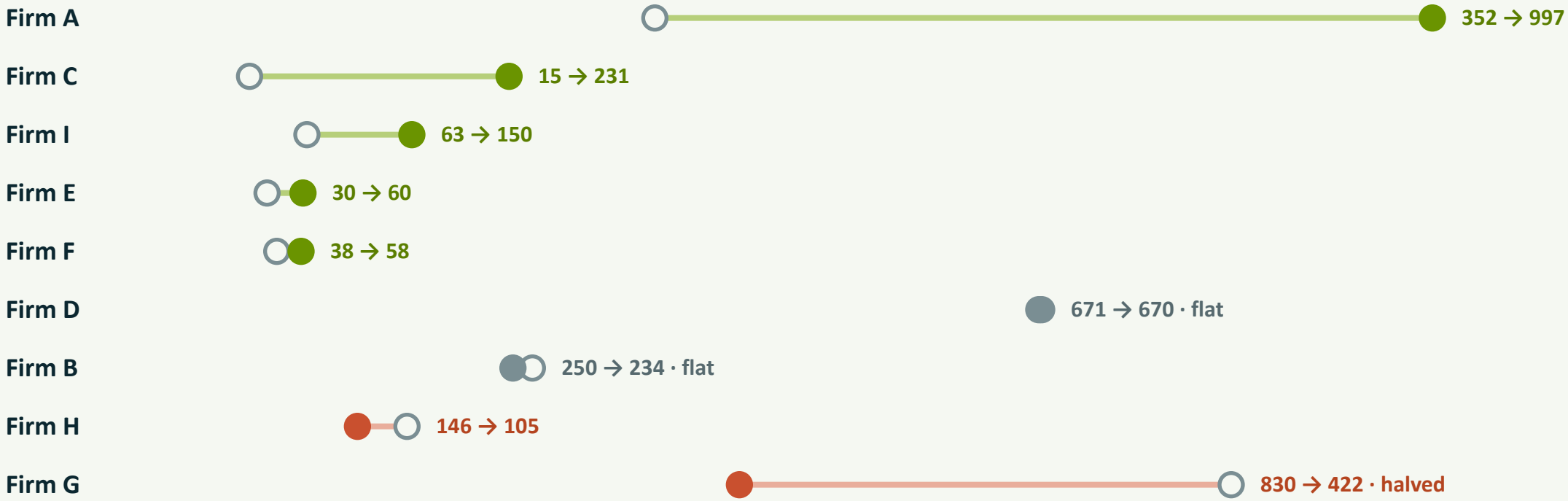
Using the same tools a marketing agency would use. Names removed.



Ahrefs estimates for May to October 2026 · firms anonymised as A to I

Three firms grew sharply. One lost half its visits.

Estimated monthly visits from Google · hollow dot = six months ago · solid dot = now



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What share of these firms' search visitors were businesses looking for an accountant?

GUESS FIRST

Shout out a number. Then we'll reveal it.



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We're attracting readers who'll never become audit clients

99%

of search visits came from personal tax how-to questions

- HMRC deadlines
- Personal allowances
- Asked by individuals and sole traders



Only 2 of 9 firms showed up when someone searched for a firm to hire.

AI mentions nearly halved, and ChatGPT barely knows we exist

ALL NINE FIRMS, ALL AI TOOLS

367 → 196

–47% mentions in AI answers in six months



Grey bar = six months ago · coloured bar = now

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Everyone: Google this on your phone

YOUR TURN

Does my company need an audit?

1 Hands up if you got an **AI answer** at the top

2 Hands up if you'd **click through to an accountant's website** after reading it

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Now search for a firm

YOUR TURN

audit firm in [your town] · or · chartered accountants for a growing business in [your town]

- Did you get an AI summary at the top?
- Was your own firm named in it?
- Was a competitor named?
- Did you only see the map with three firms?

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Same question, three AI tools

We're a £12m-turnover manufacturing company in [town] and our auditor is retiring. Which firms should we consider?

Then ask one tool: "Why did you choose those firms?"

Google AI Overview

[Live answer on the laptop]

ChatGPT

[Live answer on the laptop]

Claude

[Live answer on the laptop]

Three tools, three different shortlists.

Being visible now means being visible to several systems, each looking at different things.

Google AI Overview

ChatGPT

Claude

What made AI recommend a law firm

HELPED

- ✓ Google review score and number of reviews
- ✓ Professional directory listings
- ✓ Accreditations shown on the website
- ✓ Named individuals
- ✓ Everyday and professional wording
- ✓ Being known as a specialist

DIDN'T HELP

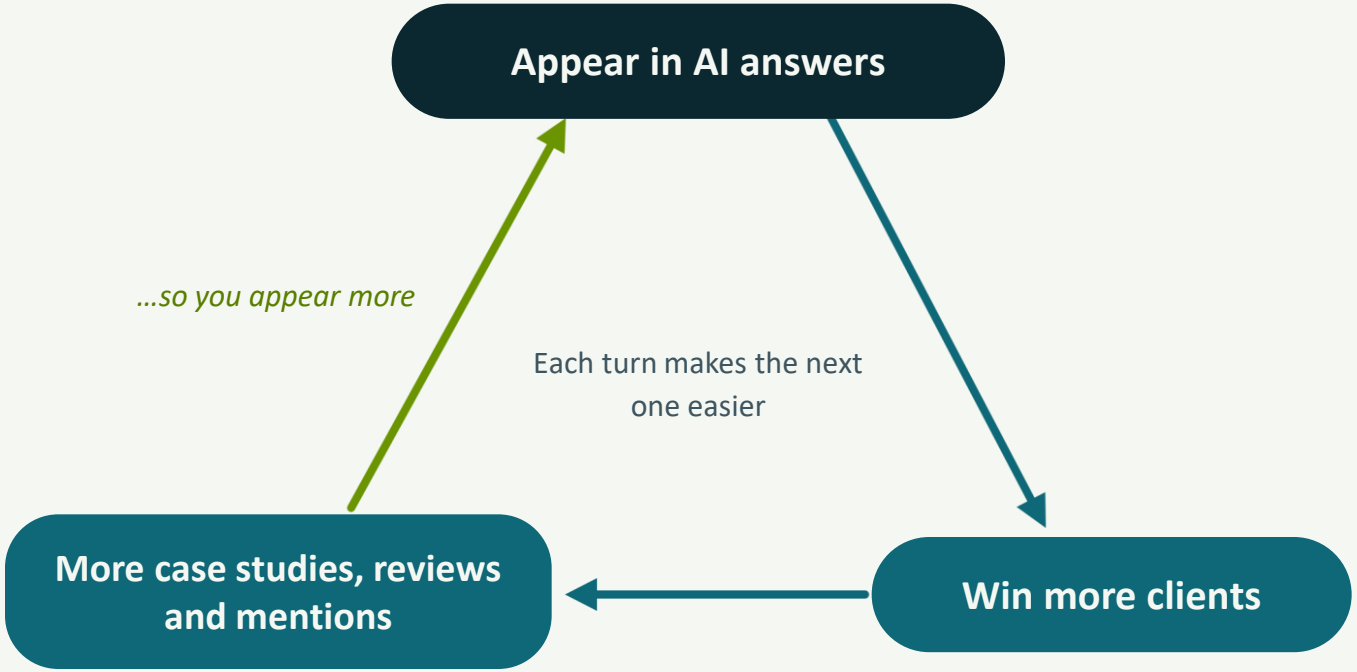
- – Firm age
- – Firm size
- – Paid ads
- – Website design on its own

What that means for accountants

For law firms	For accountants
Google reviews	The same, though business clients review less often
Solicitor directories	ICAEW and ACCA firm directories, the Register of Statutory Auditors, Xero and QuickBooks partner directories
Legal directories	Awards, trade press and local business press
Law Society badges	Audit registration, Practice Assurance, CTA, sector memberships
Named solicitors	Named partners and specialists
Specialism	A clear sector niche: manufacturing, academies, charities

Our best translation, currently being tested

The reputation loop



OUTSIDE THE LOOP

Firms with few reviews or case studies fall further behind over time

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Your 10-minute check

YOUR TURN

Scan the code to open the scorecard on your phone, then check your own firm.

1 Your Google star rating and how many reviews you have

2 On the Register of Statutory Auditors? Does your ICAEW or ACCA listing show services and sectors?

3 What Google's AI says for "audit firm in [your town]"

4 Does your audit or advisory page name a partner and a sector you specialise in?

Today's visitor arrives already pre-sold

Usually an MD or FD who has read the basics and has a shortlist from AI, a referral or LinkedIn. They want three things, fast.

1

Proof

Named partners, sector experience, case studies, audit registration and reviews

2

How it works

How fees are set, the typical timetable, and who they'll actually deal with

3

An easy start

A "book a call with a partner" button or a direct number

The firms AI finds most use both

How an owner-manager asks	How a finance director asks
"Do we need an audit?"	Statutory audit and audit exemption thresholds
"Can we claim money back for developing our product?"	R&D tax relief under the merged scheme
"Help selling the business"	Exit planning, vendor due diligence and Business Asset Disposal Relief
"Sorting out our group's accounts"	Group consolidation and FRS 102 reporting
"We need a finance director but not full-time"	Outsourced FD and management reporting

Which column do your audit and advisory pages use?

What's working to win visits back

A strong Google Business Profile	Services, opening hours and photos all filled in
A steady flow of reviews and case studies	Recent proof from real business clients
Service pages in both kinds of wording	Naming the partner and the sectors you serve
Useful tools AI can't replace	Audit exemption checker, R&D eligibility checker, valuation estimator
Routes that don't depend on search	Referrals from banks, solicitors and IFAs; partners on LinkedIn; network leads

Three questions to ask whoever looks after your website

1. "When an MD asks Google or ChatGPT for an audit firm in our area, do we appear, and how do we know?"

2. "How many Google reviews and case studies have we added in the last 90 days, and what's our process for asking?"

3. "Do our audit and advisory pages use plain English and the professional terms, and do they name the partner and the sectors we serve?"

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Want your firm's numbers?

Scan for a free one-page snapshot of your search visibility and AI mentions, like the network figures you saw today.

Questions?

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