

COMM454 Retail and Digital Marketing
October 30, 2025



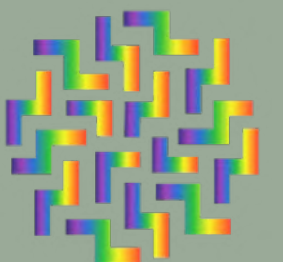
Shopify and Artificial Intelligence



small fidelity services
GROWTH ENABLED | SHOPIFY



GROWTH AUTOMATED.AI



RAHUL SHARMA

About Me

- Born and Raised in Saskatoon
- Grew up on campus - father was a prof
- Mother an artist
- U of S Alumni
- 2 Scholarships:
 - Manjari Sharma Sculpture Award
 - Satya P Sharma Cultural Anthropology Award





Where was I when I was in your shoes?



Ad Guy

- I wanted to make TV ads and tell stories.
- Media was skinny
- Great Copy was a complex story woven in a rubric



"Knock your socks off"

I cared so much - that well.....

We walked the talk.

It was cold as hell.



Graduated in a recession

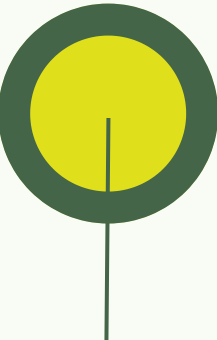
Recruiting was an IRL thing -
Career Days in the Commerce
Reading Room
Small school - recruiting cuts



Perseverance

On Campus 94 - Sales X | Brand X
Hunt in 95
On Campus 95 - Brand
Indonesia
July 1996 - Assistant Brand Manager

Milestones



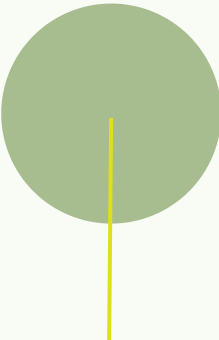
1995

Graduate with \$4K
in debt

Working in retail

Contracts

AIESEC



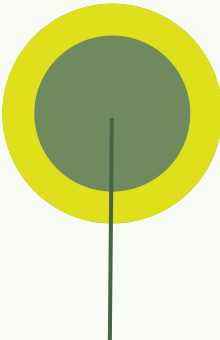
2000

Move to Tech

Search

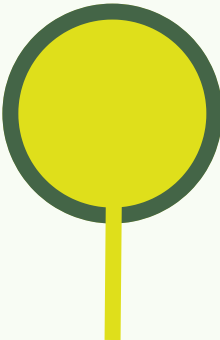
Microsoft - eComm

Xbox



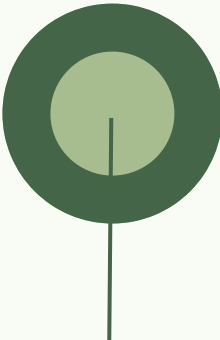
2004

Start
On Demand TV
Services



2007

Run E-Comm,
Regional Sales
Product
Brand
PR
JV



2009

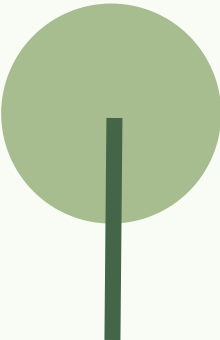
Start my first company

Mobile VAS

Bell calls on Dec 23

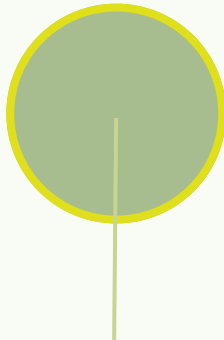
Product Development

Rogers Milestones



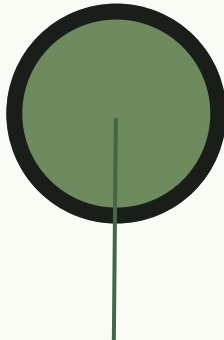
2011

Wireless
GTM



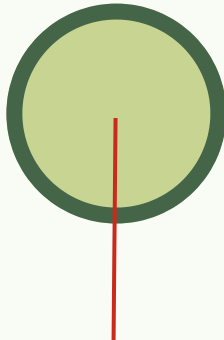
2014

Video Product
Content
SVODs
PPV
JV



2017

Service Experience
Roadmaps
CAPEX | Pinnacle
Product Positioning
Claims
Product Experience
UI/UX
Journeys - Self Install
WiFi
Multi-screen video



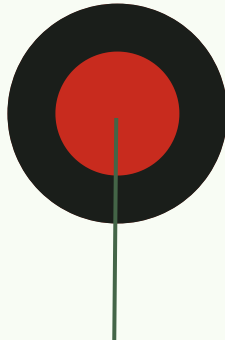
2019

Technical Front Line
Readiness

Development and
Delivery

Dispatch System
Replacement

Essential Services:
Internet Self Install and
Service



2021

End of Cycle

Own UR Career Story

Tuesday, February 11, 2003

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Commerce degree from U of S ticket to marketing jobs

By Murray Lyons

SP Business Editor

Tide detergent, Campbell's Soup, and the X-box game console.

And the common element would be? They're all consumer products that need to be sold, no matter how different the target demographic. That requires marketing expertise.

Just about to turn 30, Rahul Sharma has done marketing work with all three products.

Now the advertising manager for Microsoft's X-box division in Canada, the 1995 University of Saskatchewan commerce graduate was a welcome visitor Monday in the noon and evening classes of his former marketing professor, David Williams.

Sharma says he has been surprised by the number of Saskatchewan people he runs into in the Toronto area. Many, like him, have done well with a U of S commerce degree as their launching points.

His roommate in Toronto, for example, is a U of S grad who now works in Molson's marketing department.

One of the messages he was bringing back to Saskatoon was the value of experience gained in the job world.

"When you're a student, you think you know everything and that you're an expert in marketing, accounting, or finance," he said. "But what you realize when you start working — probably in your first week on your first job — is that you really know nothing and university taught you how to learn."

Sharma says one of the reasons he believes people from Saskatchewan do well with major companies in his field relates to how outgoing people here tend to be.

"I've seen folks from Saskatchewan do really well out east because they tend to have better interpersonal skills," he said. "The same with the Maritime folks.

"As you work more and more, your relationships with people matter."

X-box, the upstart challenger to Sony Playstation 2 that was introduced by Microsoft in late 2001, has only been on the market for 16 months and already has 31 per cent of the market share among new game consoles sold in Canada.



Rahul Sharma discusses a career in marketing with students in a commerce class at the

— SP Photo by [unclear]

"I wouldn't have got my foot in the door at Microsoft if I hadn't done the technology stint at the dot-com."

The target market for X-box is boys and young men ages 12 to 30, although Sharma says the industry knows that a growing number of girls and young women enjoy video games and tries to include them in their advertising message as well.

While some television commercials for X-box are aired on major networks such as Global and CTV, the prime area was on specialty channels such as Space and the Comedy Network.

As well, word-of-mouth advertising is particularly important and Microsoft spent a lot of money on campuses running game tournaments and having game tents available at rock concerts.

Sharma says Canada is one of the major sources of game software development with an estimated 3,000 people employed.

Sharma points out two companies, Bioware, which is releasing a new game this year in conjunction with Microsoft's marketing effort, and Nintendo's Game Cube in sole market.

With some industry estimating that Sony was making its corporate profits on X-box, Sharma pointed out their stake.

"They have a lot to lose losing market share and we're growing," Sharma notes that X-box is among Microsoft businesses that are really the software giant is not the underdog.

"It's exciting. It's all said. "We launch a new game. We went from 11 to over 200 in 13 months."

Announcement



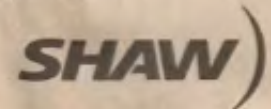
Rahul Sharma

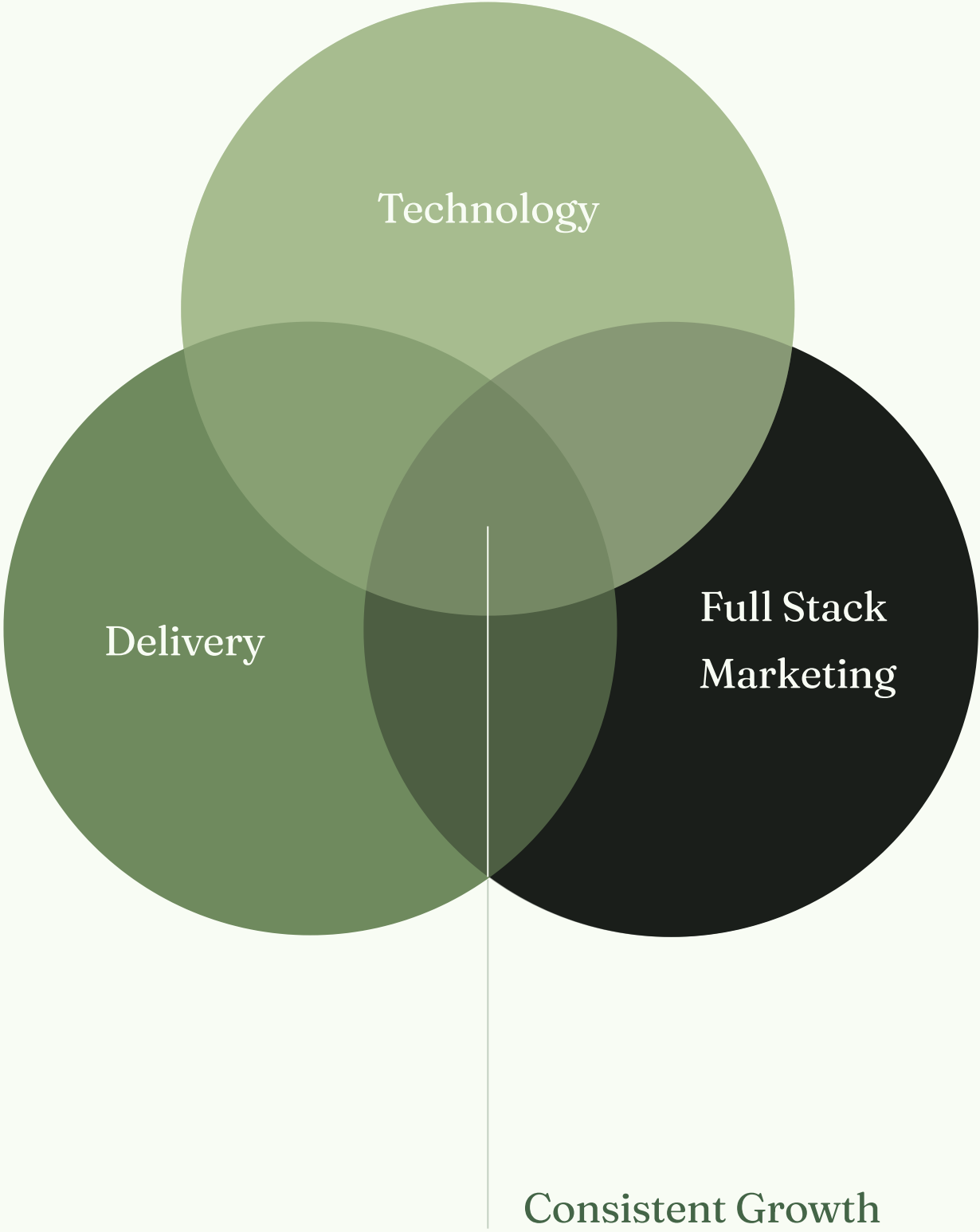
Shaw Communications Inc. is pleased to announce the appointment of Rahul Sharma to the position of Vice President, On Demand Television Services. Working closely with our corporate Sales and Marketing teams, Mr. Sharma will be responsible for overseeing the marketing and development of Shaw's On Demand products — Pay Per View, Video On Demand and Digital Pay Television.

Mr. Sharma joins Shaw with a strong background in marketing and brand/product management. Prior to joining Shaw, Rahul held a number of management positions in Communications, Consumer Marketing and Brand Management.

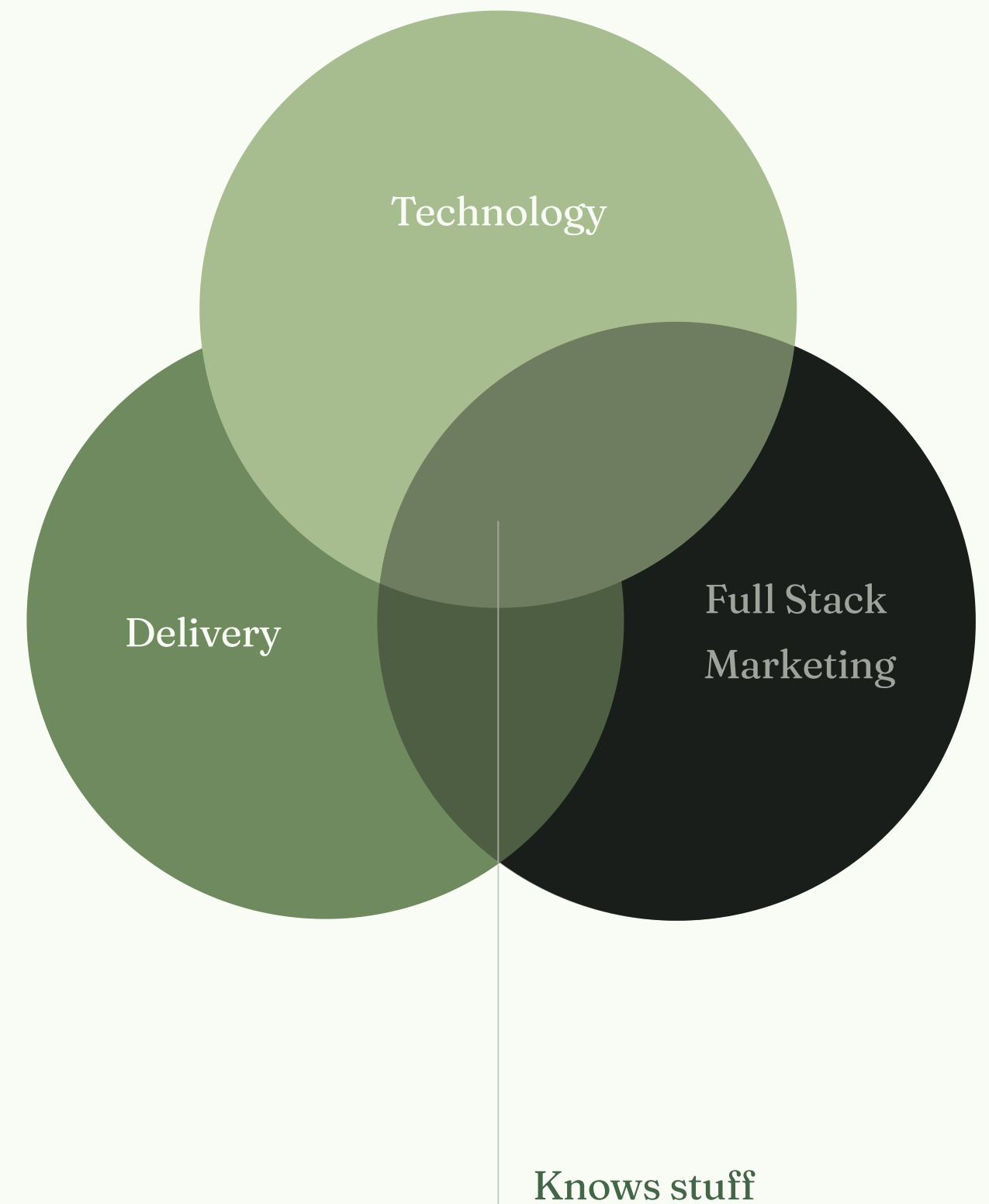
Mr. Sharma's extensive experience in building brands and launching new products along with his broad range of general business and marketing knowledge, complimented by a Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Saskatchewan, will contribute greatly to Shaw's success.

Shaw Communications Inc. is a diversified Canadian communications company whose core business is providing broadband cable television, Internet and satellite direct-to-home ("DTH") services to approximately 2.9 million customers. Shaw is traded on the Toronto and New York stock exchanges (Symbol: TSX - SJR.B, NYSE - SJR).





Tech moves fast



Agenda

A Quick Look: What is Digital Retail Marketing? 01

The Platform: The Story of Shopify 02

The Shift: AI Enters the Retail Space 03

Shopify & AI: A Smarter Way to Sell 04

The Future: From Browsing to Conversation
(Commerce on ChatGPT) 05

Key Takeaways & Q&A 06

What is Digital Retail Marketing?

- **Definition:** The practice of promoting and selling products or services directly to consumers through digital channels.
- **It's More Than Just Ads:** It's the *entire* customer journey, from discovery to purchase and retention.
- **Key Channels:**
 - E-commerce Websites (The "Store")
 - Social Media (Discovery & Engagement)
 - Search Engines (Intent)
 - Email Marketing (Retention)
 - Mobile Apps (Loyalty)
- **The Goal:** Create a seamless, personalized, and convenient shopping experience online.



The Rise of a Giant: What is Shopify?

At its core: Shopify is an all-in-one e-commerce platform that allows anyone to set up an online store and sell their products.

- **Its Mission:** "Make commerce better for everyone."
- **It's an "Ecosystem," not just a tool.** It provides the software (storefront, cart, payments) and hardware (Point-of-Sale systems) to run a business anywhere—online, in-person, and everywhere in-between.
- **Key Stat:** Shopify powers millions of businesses in over 175 countries.

In January of 2023 - I started calling Shopify a Retail Operating System.

Shopify's History: From Snowboards to Global Platform

2004: The "Problem." Tobias Lütke, Daniel Weinand, and Scott Lake wanted to sell snowboards online ("Snowdevil"). They were frustrated with existing e-commerce software.

The "Solution." Lütke, a programmer, built his own platform to sell their snowboards.

2006: The "Pivot." They realized the *software* they built was more valuable than the snowboards. They launched "Shopify" for other entrepreneurs to use.

2015: The "Growth." Shopify goes public (IPO).

Today: A dominant force in e-commerce, empowering independent brands to compete with giants like Amazon.

Why Did Shopify Win? The Ecosystem

Shopify's success isn't just its store builder. It's the entire support system:

- 1. Ease of Use:** Anyone can build a professional store with no coding required.
- 2. App Store:** A massive marketplace of 8,000+ apps (for email, reviews, SEO, etc.) that let merchants customize their store's functionality.
- 3. Shopify Payments:** Integrated payment processing. No need to set up a third-party gateway.
- 4. Scalability:** A store can grow from 1 sale a day to 10,000 sales a day without crashing.
- 5. Multi-Channel:** Sell on your website, social media (Facebook, TikTok), and marketplaces (Amazon, eBay) all from one dashboard.

The AI Revolution in Commerce

Artificial Intelligence is fundamentally changing how we shop and how merchants sell.

- **Before AI:** Manual product descriptions, basic search ("blue shirt"), generic marketing emails.
- **With AI:**
 - **Personalization:** Showing you products you *actually* want to see.
 - **Automation:** Writing product descriptions, editing photos, and managing inventory automatically.
 - **Insights:** Predicting sales trends and customer behavior.
 - **Support:** 24/7 intelligent chatbots that can solve real problems.



Shopify & AI: Enhancing the Platform

Shopify is integrating AI directly into its platform to give "superpowers" to merchants. This is often bundled as "**Shopify Magic.**"

Product Descriptions: Auto-generates compelling product descriptions from just a few keywords.

"Sidekick": An AI assistant for merchants. They can ask questions like, "Show me my top-selling products last month" or "Run a 10% off sale for the weekend."

Image Editing: Automatically removes backgrounds or generates lifestyle photos.

Audience Segmentation: AI helps identify and target specific customer groups for marketing campaigns.

Fraud Detection: AI analyzes transactions to flag and prevent fraudulent orders.

The Next Frontier: Commerce to ChatGPT

This is where it gets really futuristic. It's not just using AI to *run* the store; it's bringing the *store* to the AI.

- **The Old Way:** You go to Google, search for a product, click a link, browse a website, and then buy.
- **The New Way:** You have a conversation with an AI.
- **Shopify's ChatGPT Plugin:**
 1. A user in ChatGPT can say, "I'm looking for a good pair of running shoes for trail running."
 2. The Shopify plugin activates, searching millions of products from its merchants.
 3. ChatGPT responds: "Here are three great options from independent brands on Shopify," with links to buy directly.

This turns AI chat from a simple information tool into a **conversational commerce engine**.

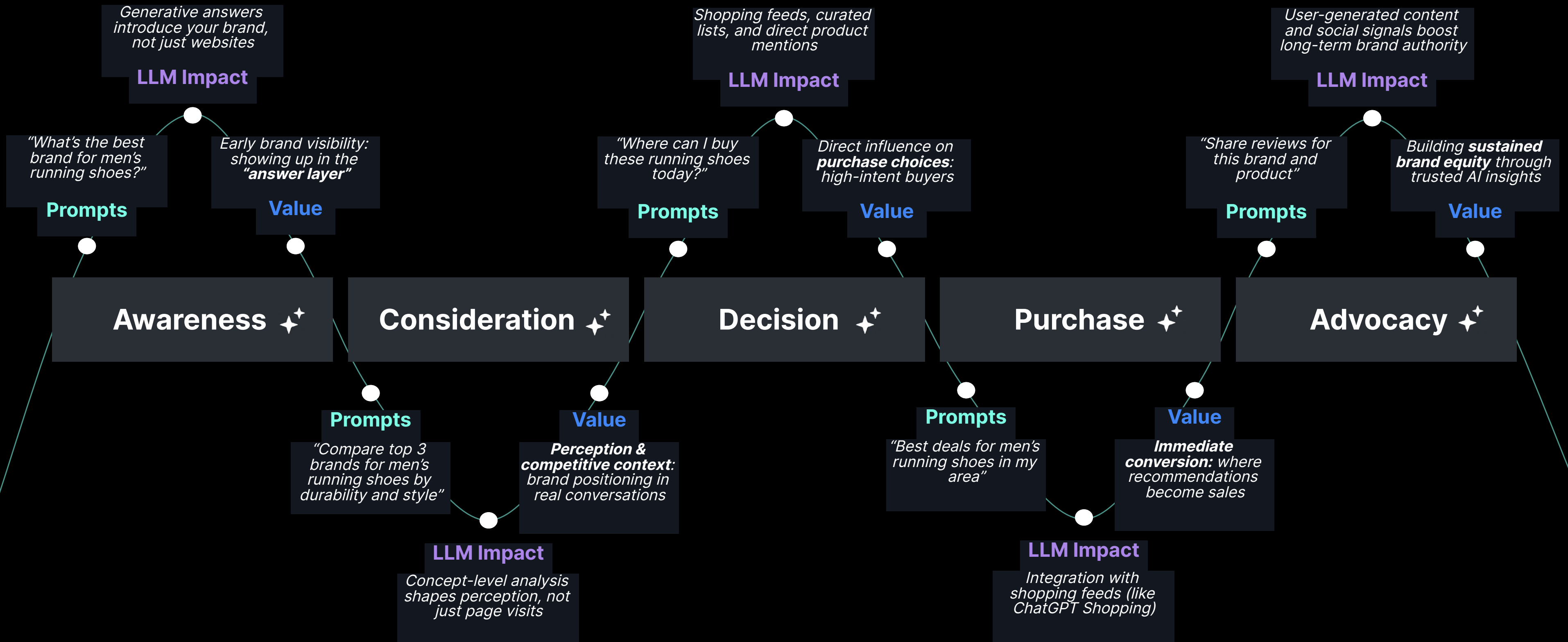
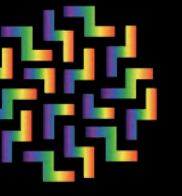
How This Changes Everything (Example)

Demonstration

Chat GPT - free mode - Running Shoes example

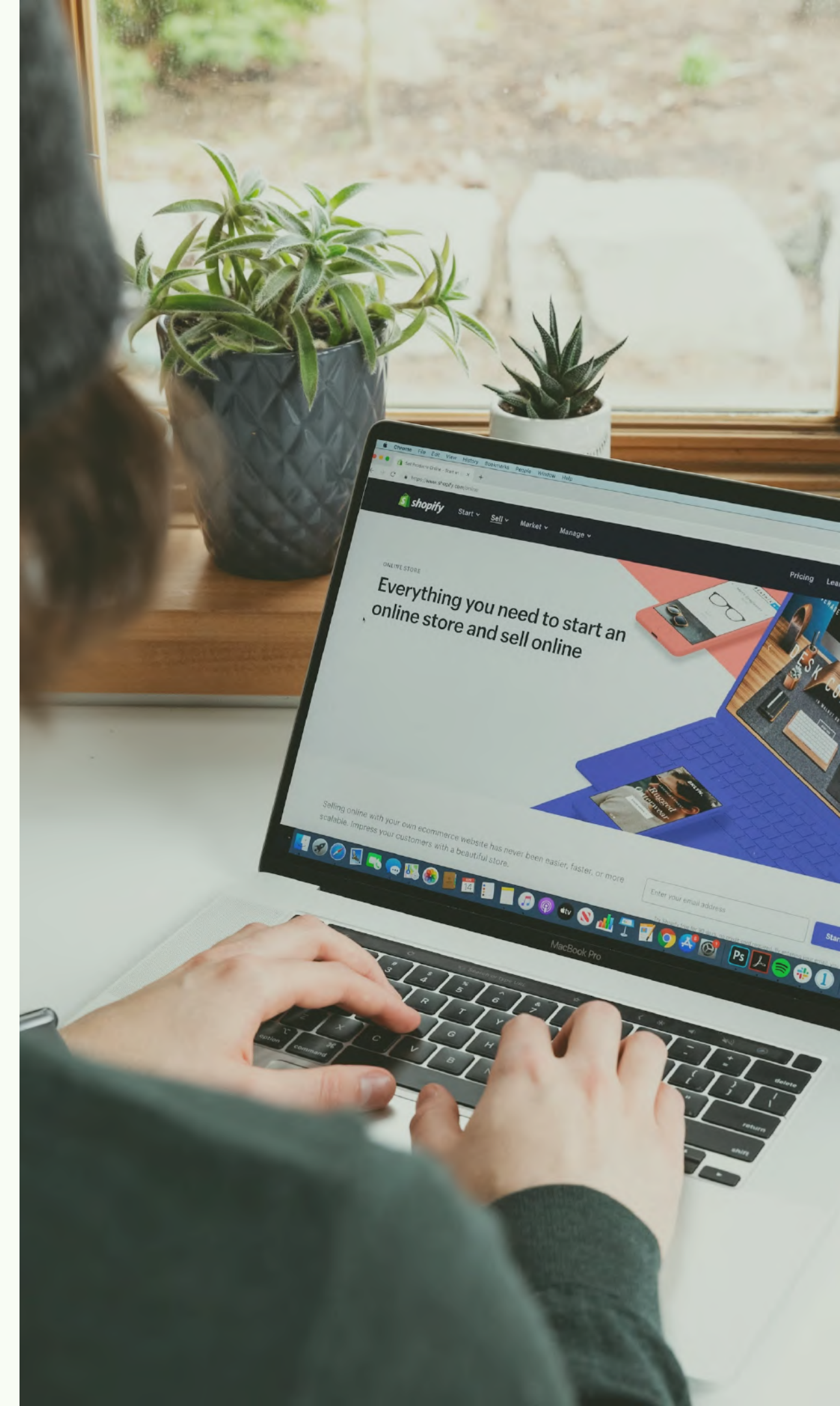
Entered in the 3 prompts from the next slide

AI Search: shaping every buyer decision



Live Demonstration

Shopify	1. Analytics	<i>"what products should i cross sell based on the past two years of sales"</i>
	2. Apps	<i>"demonstration of Yotpo product reviews" - discuss how they collect and drive domain authority 4.4 rating - drives E-E-A-T</i>
	3. Sidekick	<i>"built and coded an audio player" - coded, added audio file - and validated.</i>
Klaviyo	4. Segments	<i>"built a dynamic segment based on browsing behavior" (31)</i>
Retention X	5. Insights, Segments, Ad Orchestration	<i>"showed how software can automate many functions - leveraging order history. Revenue driving insights. Segments and how they orchestrate to Paid SEM platforms like Meta - and how look alike audiences can be built" - first party data</i>
Lovable	6. Build a store with AI	<i>"build me a store for my consulting business" Lovable created a store in 26s</i>





shopify

Key Takeaways & Q&A

- 1: Digital Retail is about the *entire experience*, not just one channel.
- 2: Shopify succeeded by building an *ecosystem* that empowers entrepreneurs.
- 3: AI is the new co-pilot for merchants, automating tasks and providing "superpowers" (Shopify Magic).
- 4: The future of e-commerce is conversational. We will *talk* to AI to shop, and Shopify is building the bridge to make that happen.



Rahul Sharma, B.Comm 1995

"Own UR career story"

"Don't hesitate to start your own business. It's never been easier to be an entrepreneur"

Contact me

Address

Linked In

Small Fidelity Services

Growth Automated

Phone

647 504 5227

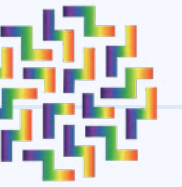
Email

rsharma@smallfidelity.services

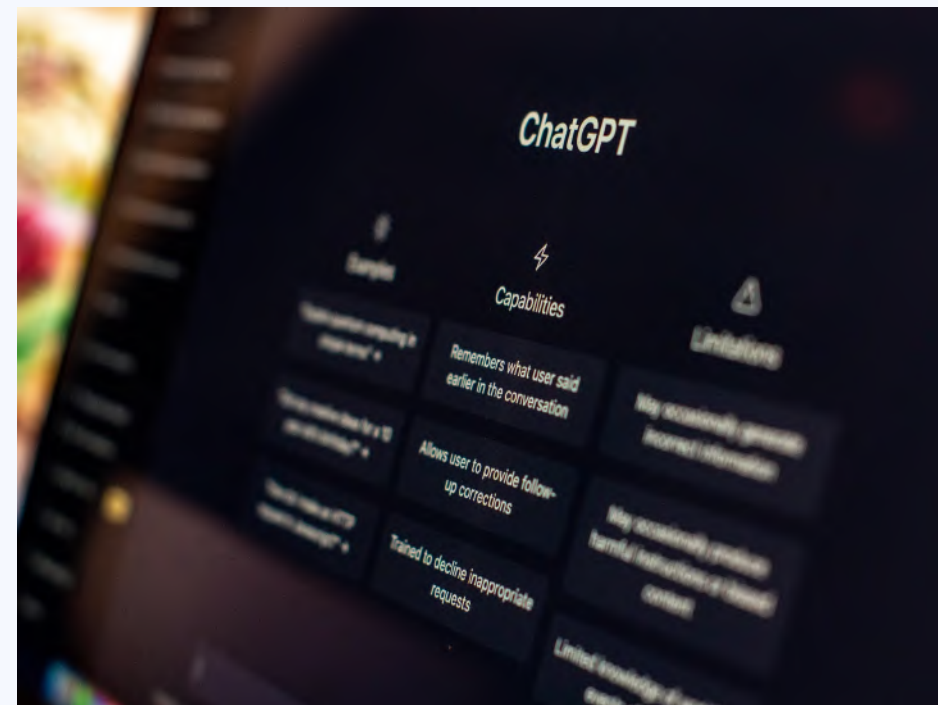


Appendix

these slides were not presented

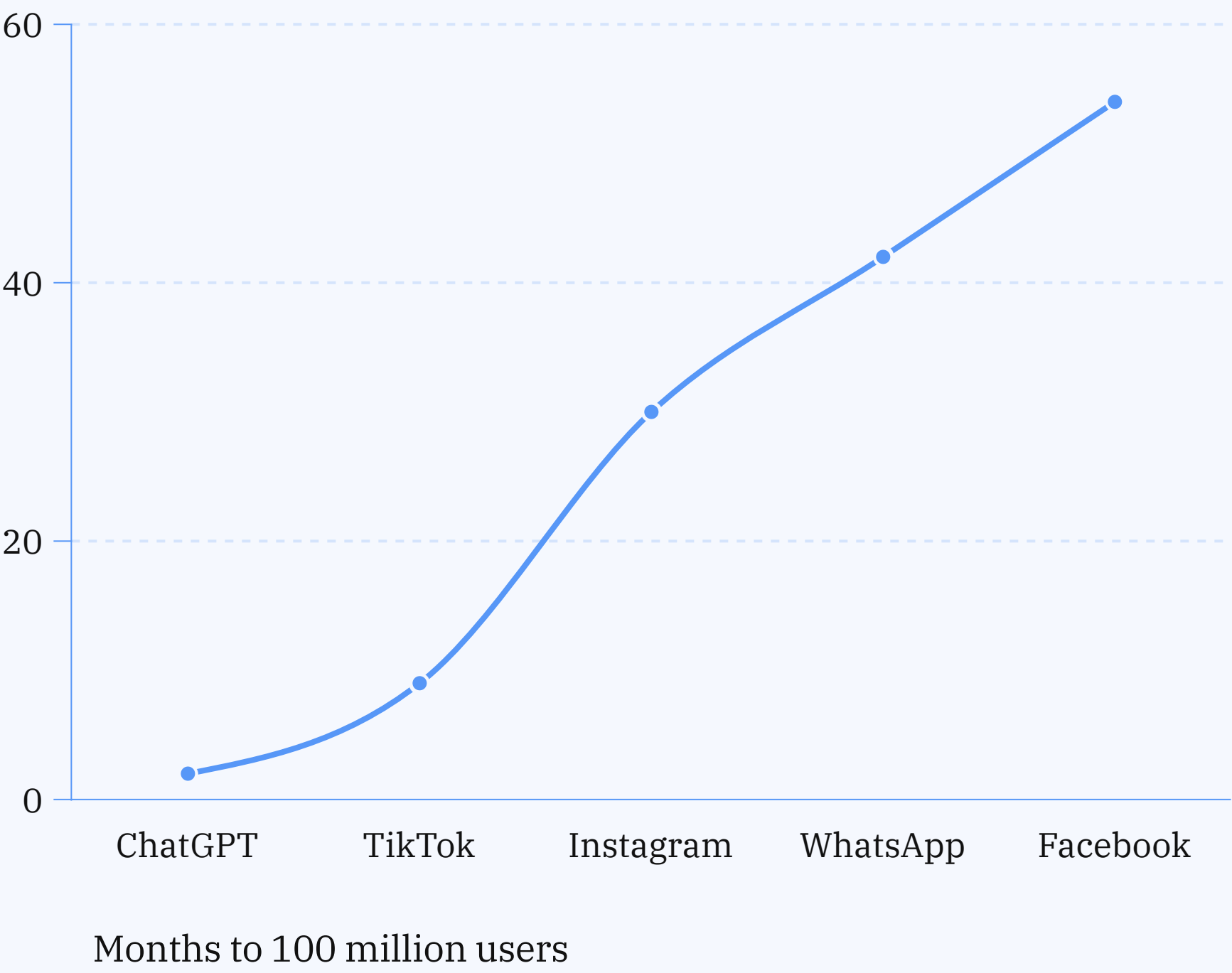


Empower your brand with Answer Engine Optimization for enhanced visibility.

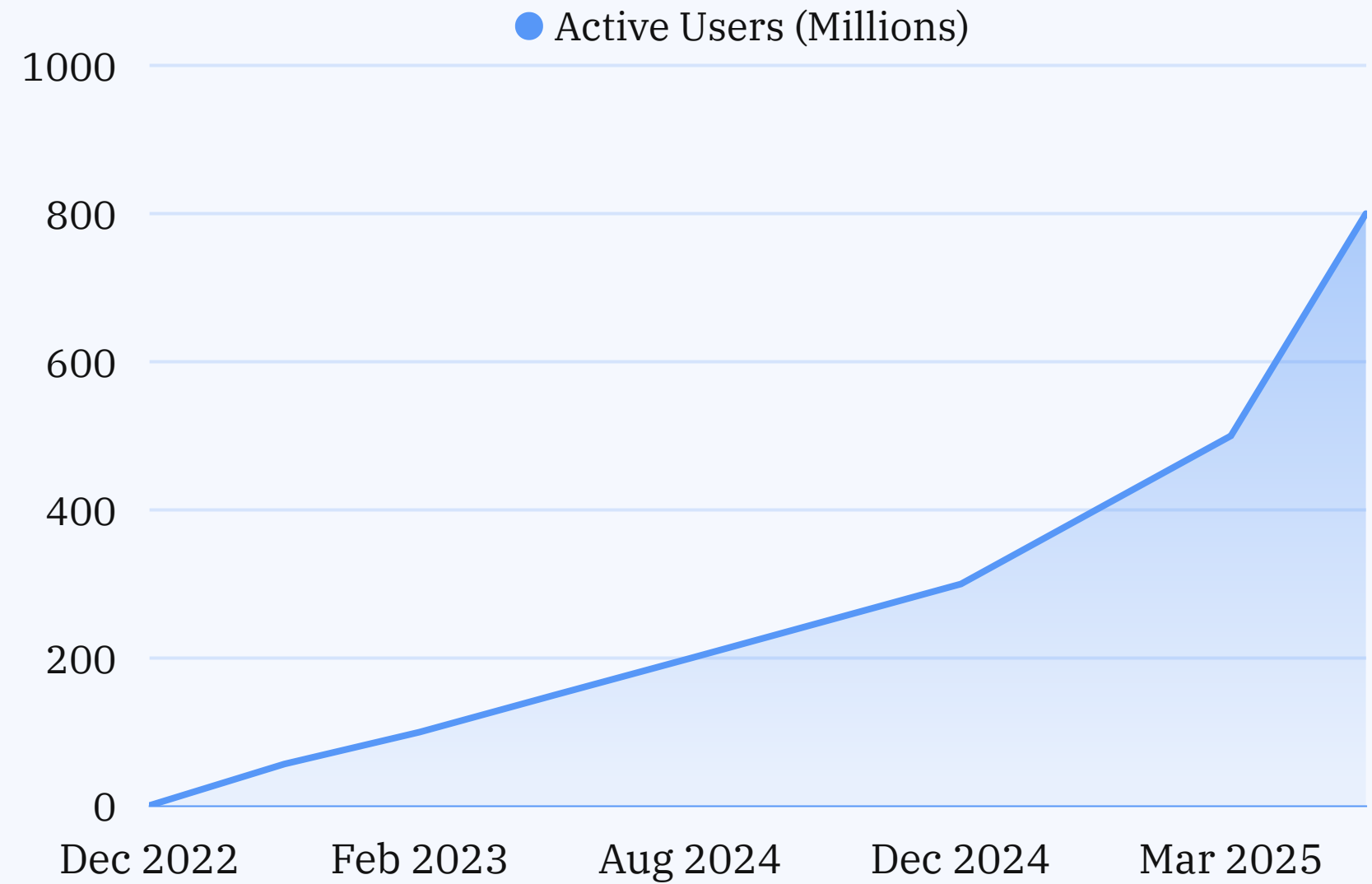




AI Search is the fastest growing technology we have seen.



Chat.GPT weekly search volume

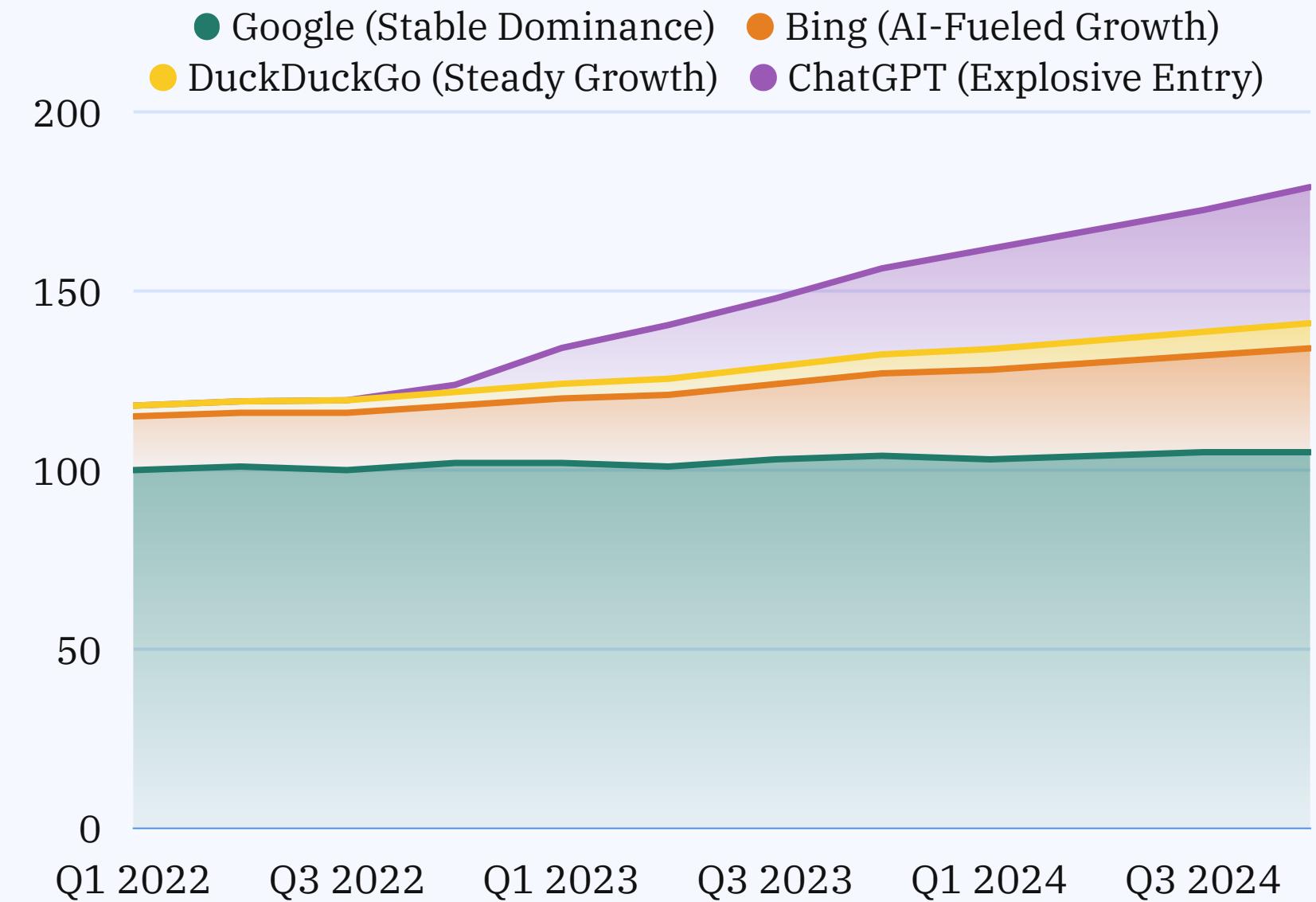


Growth continues to grow in an unprecedented manner

Changes in Search



This chart indexes Google at 100 since 2022. You can see how Google has held its ground while Chat GPT has had an explosive entry



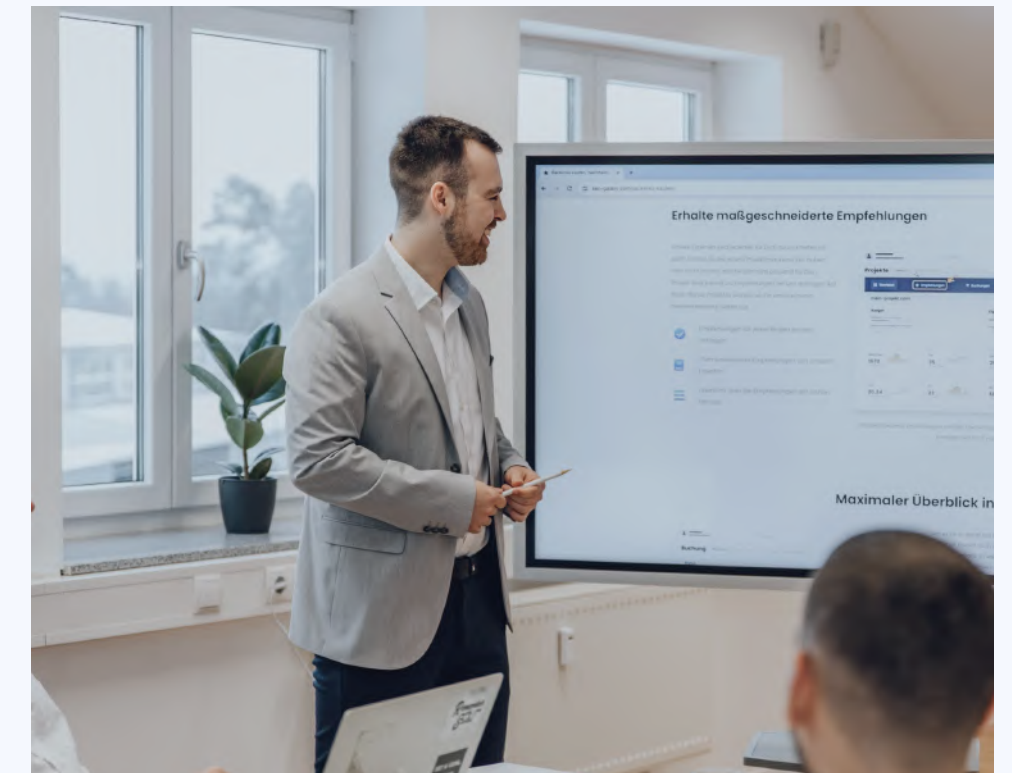


VISIBILITY FOCUS

Strategic Growth

In the world of Answer Engine Optimization, understanding the basics is crucial for achieving brand visibility and growth. By focusing on key elements, brands can enhance their online presence and engage with their audience effectively.

What's different is that the signals that the Answer Engines look for when generating answers are different than what Search Engines look for.





The New Product Shelf is Inside Generative AI

56%

consumers replaced traditional search with
Gen AI tools for product/service
recommendations (Search Engine Land)

1 in 3

The predicted number of US population that
will use AI as a primary search tool by 2027
(Statista)

25-30%

the expected drop in search engine volume
is by 2026 to AI Search (Gartner)

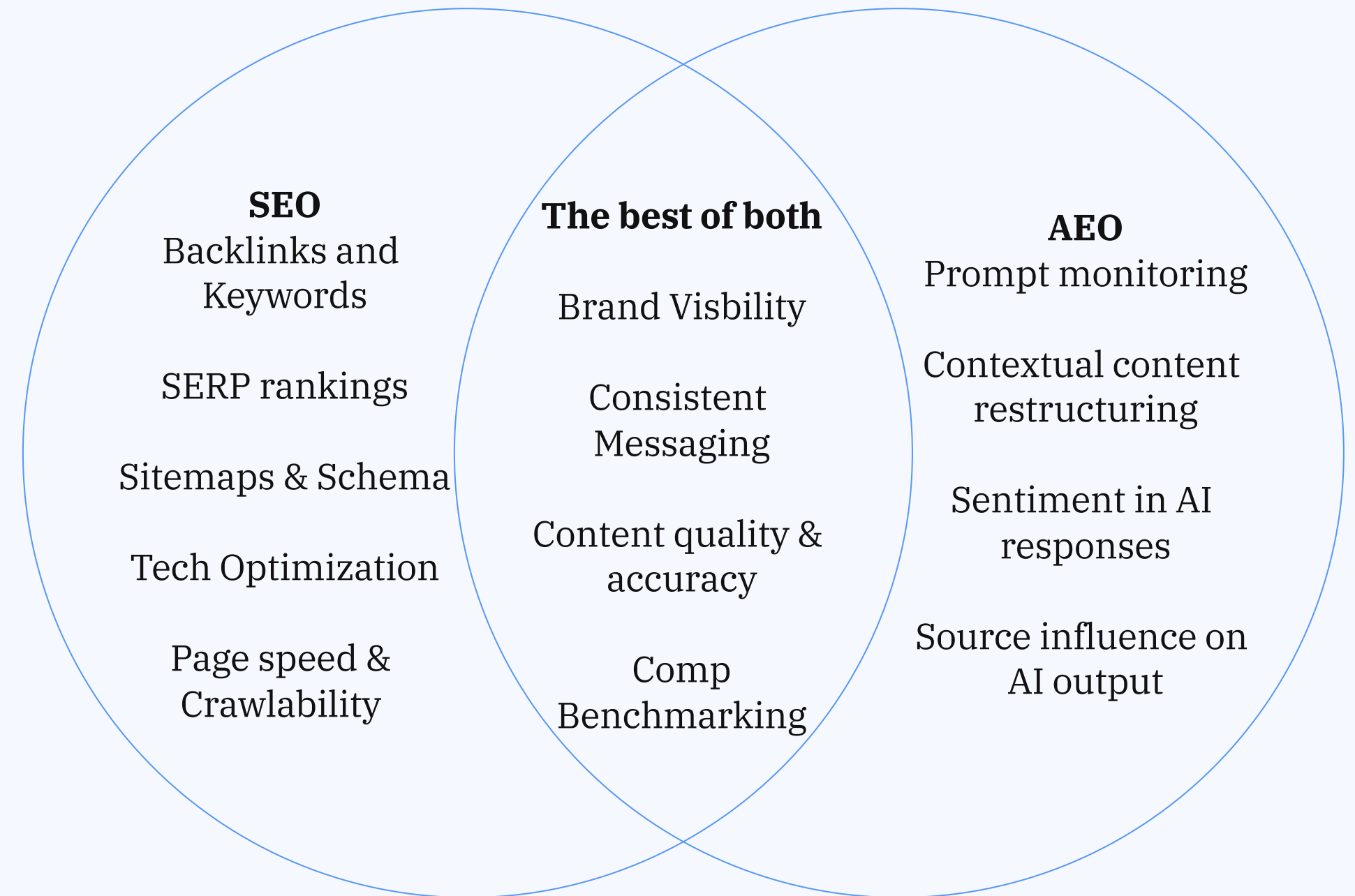
Do you use Chat.GPT?
How has your behaviour changed?



The power of a unified strategy

One brand.
Two ways to be found.

Search is evolving
Your strategy should too.



Introduction

Growth Automated is your dedicated Shopify Revenue Growth Partner. We leverage data-driven strategies, advanced automation, and deep Shopify expertise to unlock your store's full potential, measurably increasing your sales, profitability, and customer lifetime value.

Growth Automated was founded earlier this year. It is a brand that is owned and operated by Small Fidelity Services – which was incorporated in 2022.



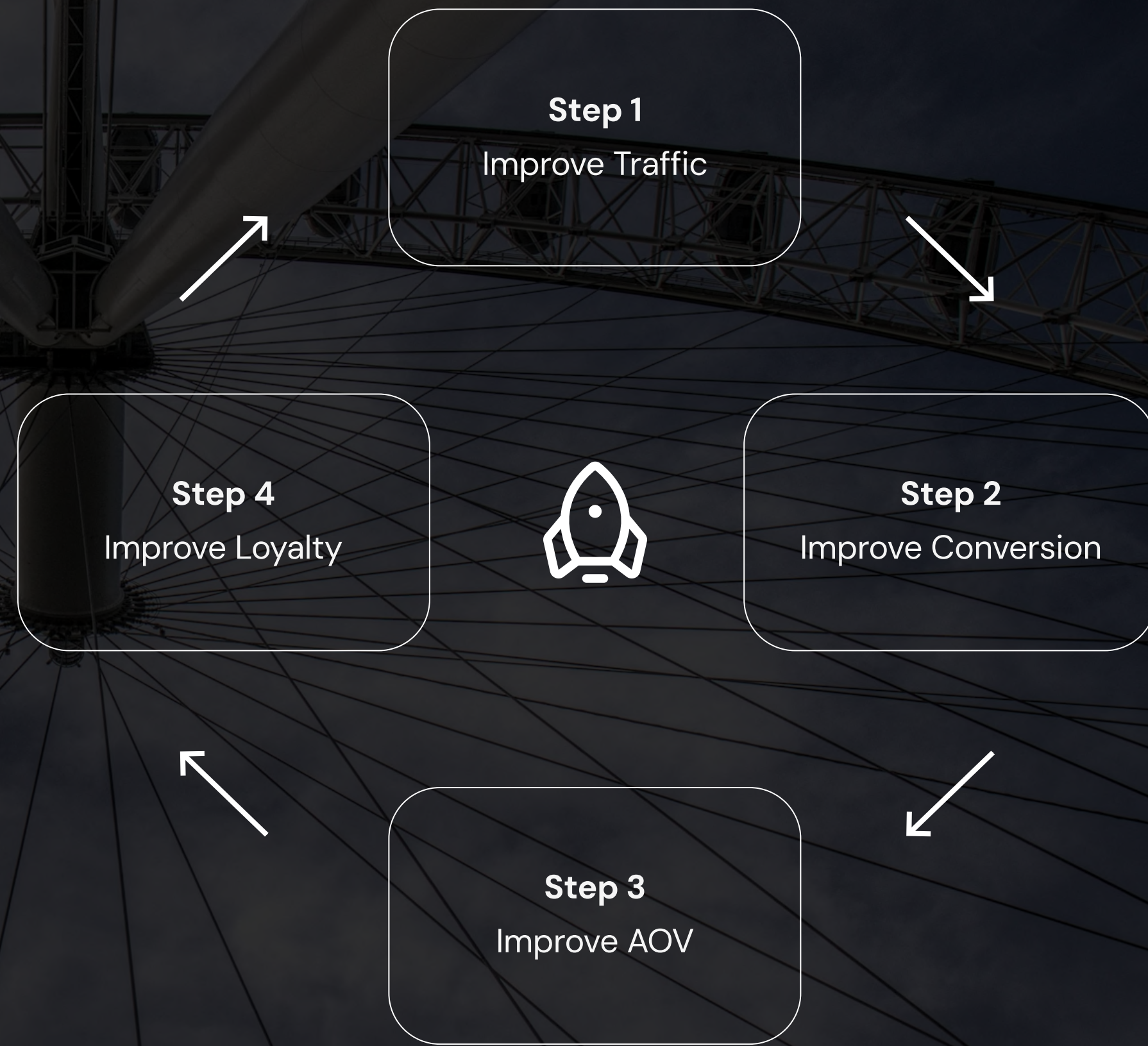
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WHEEL HAS TO MOVE TO GAIN MOMENTUM

Revenue Growth

Getting into a Revenue Growth Cycle requires a lot of planning, coordination, and collaboration.

Once it works – it is easy to get it moving faster.



Select Technology Partners

