

# Winning the AI-Overview SERP while search behavior shifted underneath us

How a privacy-first mobile communications app turned a volatile, AI-disrupted first quarter into a measurable recovery — growing AI citations by a third and swinging revenue from decline to double-digit growth in the most recent period.

**+33.7%**

AI Overview citations, period over period

**+27%**

Revenue, most recent 28-day period

**#1**

Top AI-Overview position won on the core branded query

CLIENT

Anonymized

SECTOR

Privacy /  
Comms  
App

DISCIPLINE

Technical  
SEO • AEO

WINDOW

H1 2026  
(6 mo.)

# A quarter that started in the red — and ended trending green

Entering 2026, the Client was losing organic clicks as Google reshaped the SERP and AI Overviews began absorbing branded traffic. A focused program of content refresh, answer-engine optimization, and E-E-A-T hardening reversed the trajectory. Ninety-day figures still carry the early-year damage; the most recent 28-day period shows the turnaround has landed.

## +33.7%

AI CITATIONS

24,934 → 33,326 per period

## +27%

REVENUE • L28D

Reversed from -14% over 90 days

## +19%

KEY EVENTS • L28D

Signups & downloads

## +10.1%

CITED PAGES

1,492 → 1,642 unique URLs

## The challenge

What the data looked like at the start of the window.

- **SERP volatility & shifting intent.** The first half of Q1 brought heavy ranking turbulence and changing user behavior that drained clicks from head terms.
- **AI Overviews entered branded SERPs.** New AI answer surfaces appeared on the Client's own branded queries, initially absorbing clicks that used to land on the site.
- **Outdated information was circulating.** Stale, third-party content about the Client's products was being surfaced and cited, eroding top-of-funnel branded pages.
- **Authority was slipping.** Referring-domain growth lagged the competitive set — a structural ranking risk left unaddressed.

## The response, in one line

Treat the AI Overview not as a threat but as **the new #1 position** — then rebuild the content and trust signals that answer engines and users both reward.

## Reading the numbers

- **L28D vs P28D** = last 28 days vs the prior 28 — the freshest read on whether fixes are working.
- **L90D vs P90D** = last 90 days vs prior 90 — still weighed down by the early-year losses.
- Where the two disagree, the shorter window shows the current direction of travel.

**The through-line:** almost every metric that is negative over 90 days is flat-to-positive over the most recent 28 — engagement, transactions, revenue, and the priority landing pages all inflected upward as refreshed content gained visibility.

# Four moves that reversed the slide

The program targeted the two things that had changed at once — how Google was surfacing answers, and how current the Client's content was — while shoring up the trust signals underneath.

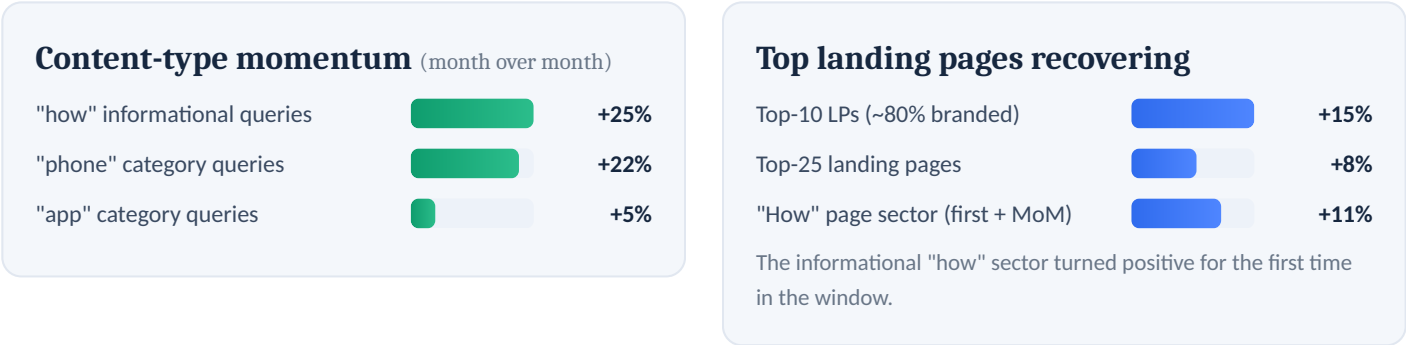
- 1

**Optimize for the answer engine, not around it**  
Restructured priority content to be citation-ready for AI Overviews — clear intent matching, extractable answers, and schema (Article, FAQ, HowTo) — so the Client could be the source the AI surface quotes rather than the site it replaces.
- 2

**Refresh out-of-date content & ship net-new feature pages**  
Systematically corrected the stale information circulating about the Client's products and published content for newly launched features, directly targeting the branded and generic queries that had decayed.
- 3

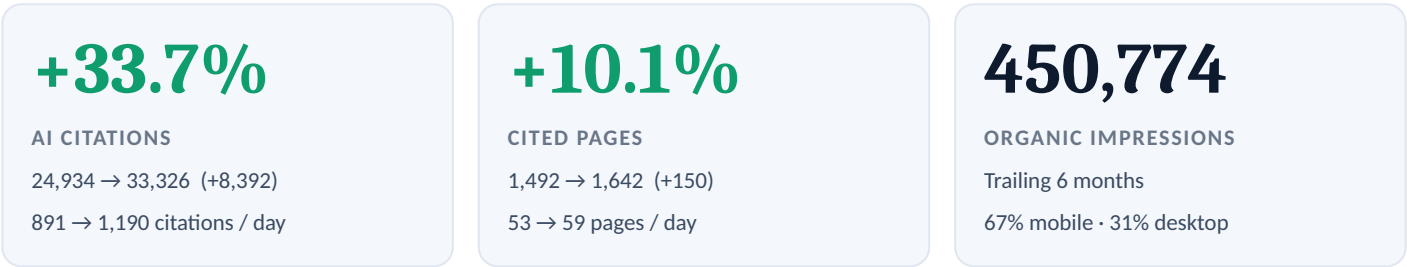
**Harden E-E-A-T on the pages that matter most**  
Strengthened experience, expertise, authority and trust signals across the top landing pages — the cluster driving ~80% branded traffic — to defend rankings during SERP reshuffles.
- 4

**Engineer for engagement & conversion**  
Paired the visibility work with on-page recommendations — faster pages, related-content funnels, clearer CTAs, exit-intent capture and lower-friction conversion paths — to convert recovered traffic into key events and revenue.



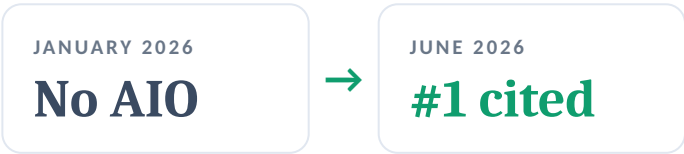
# A third more AI citations — and the top spot on the core query

Measured across two even 28-day windows with incomplete days excluded, the Client's presence inside Google's AI Overview surfaces grew sharply on both volume and breadth.



## Won the branded AI Overview

On the Client's most valuable ambiguous branded query, an AI Overview appeared during the six-month window. Rather than lose the click, the Client was **granted the top position** inside it — converting a new SERP feature from a threat into owned real estate.



## Where the citations come from

42,316 citations across 398 grounding queries. Two topics drive ~63% of all AI citations — a concentration to defend and extend.



**Why it matters:** as answer engines mediate more discovery, being the *cited source* — not just a blue link — becomes the durable form of visibility. Growing citations and cited pages together means the Client is being trusted across more queries and more of its content, not just spiking on one lucky answer.

Method: two equal 28-day ranges, period over period; incomplete days excluded. Impressions are a current-period Search Console snapshot; a prior-period comparison was not available in this export.

# Pages that were down 60–78% are now sharply positive

The clearest proof the fixes are working: the priority pages hit hardest earlier in the year posted the strongest gains in the most recent 28 days as refreshed content re-entered the index.

## Priority landing pages

| Page                             | LAST 90 DAYS VS PRIOR |      | LAST 28 DAYS VS PRIOR |       |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|------|-----------------------|-------|
|                                  | Clicks                | CTR  | Clicks                | CTR   |
| /competitor-alternative          | -60%                  | +21% | +150%                 | +148% |
| /how-to-send-text-without-number | -32%                  | -20% | +56%                  | +37%  |
| /how-to-mask-phone-number        | -78%                  | -28% | +31%                  | +38%  |
| /home                            | -13%                  | +21% | +20%                  | -10%  |
| /free-sms-verification           | -51%                  | -7%  | +5%                   | +2%   |

Every priority page moved from negative 90-day clicks to positive 28-day clicks. The lone soft spot — /home CTR — reflects paid-search and AI-Overview cannibalization of the branded SERP, not a content problem.

## Query performance — the non-branded upside

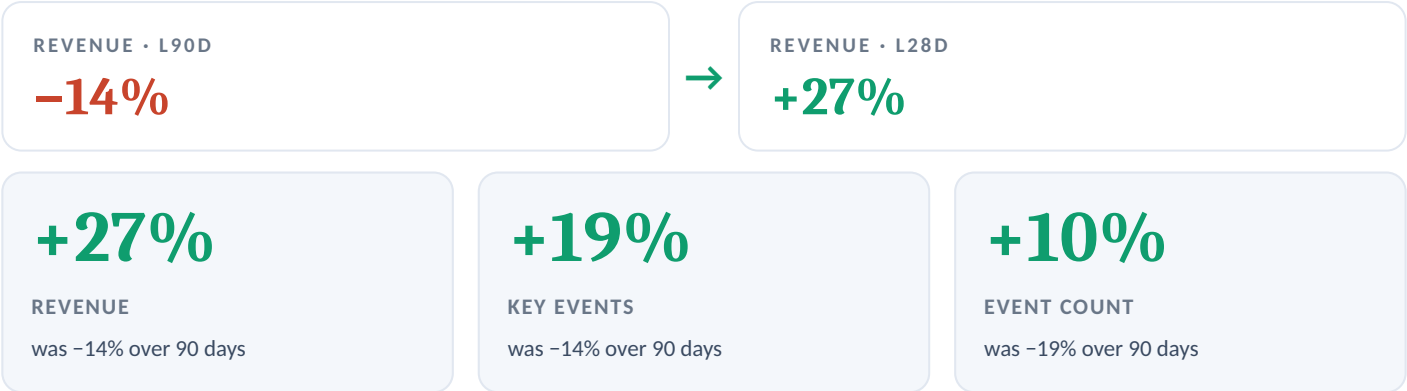
| Query                                         | LAST 28 DAYS VS PRIOR |      | LAST 90 DAYS VS PRIOR |       |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------|-----------------------|-------|
|                                               | Clicks                | CTR  | Clicks                | CTR   |
| temporary phone number <span>generic</span>   | +19%                  | +24% | +149%                 | +14%  |
| [brand] app download <span>high-intent</span> | +7%                   | +17% | +29%                  | +20%  |
| [brand] sim                                   | -19%                  | -6%  | +49%                  | -5%   |
| [brand] · [brand] phone · [brand] app         | down                  | down | down                  | mixed |

**The strategic read:** generic, non-branded demand — *temporary phone number* up +149% over 90 days — and high-intent *download* queries are climbing as visibility improves. Head branded terms are softer because the AI Overview now answers them directly; the Client captures that value as the *cited* source instead of the clicked one. That is the correct trade in an AI-Overview SERP.

# Behavior and revenue swung from decline to growth

Recovered visibility only counts if it converts. Across ranking-signal engagement metrics and hard transactional outcomes, the 90-day declines flattened or reversed in the most recent 28 days — with revenue posting the largest swing.

## Revenue & transactions — the headline swing



## Engagement ranking signals — stabilized and rising

| Ranking signal                                               | Last 90 days | Last 28 days | Reading                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Average time engaged<br>Dwell time — how long visitors stay  | -5%          | +14%         | Refreshed content is holding attention longer.        |
| Engaged sessions<br>Sessions >10s, a conversion, or 2+ views | -10%         | +8%          | More visits now clear the quality bar.                |
| Engagement rate<br>Share of meaningful interactions          | -29%         | -0.5%        | Freefall arrested — essentially flat, and inflecting. |

**Bottom line:** the same optimizations that lifted visibility also lifted *behavior* — longer dwell, more engaged sessions, more key events — and that flowed straight through to a **+27% revenue** swing in the most recent period. Visibility, engagement and revenue moved together, which is the signature of durable, compounding gains rather than a one-off spike.

# Where the next gains are — and what carried the recovery

The recovery is real but not finished. One structural gap remains the clearest lever for the next phase of growth, alongside room to extend the AI-citation lead.

## The open opportunity

-  **Referring-domain authority**  
 Link acquisition trails the competitive set — a direct ranking factor. A competitor that lost authority in a site migration has still overtaken the Client, underscoring how much upside sits in a focused link-building program.
-  **Aspirational AI topics**  
 Beyond the two topics driving ~63% of citations, several high-value themes show little to no presence — net-new content to broaden the citation base and reduce concentration risk.
-  **Defend the branded AIO**  
 The top AI-Overview position on the core query is won but must be actively maintained as competitors and answer surfaces evolve.

## What carried the recovery

-  **Treating the AI Overview as position #1**  
 Winning the citation instead of mourning the click turned a SERP threat into owned visibility and +33.7% citation growth.
-  **Refresh beats rebuild**  
 Correcting stale content and covering new features recovered the exact pages and queries that had decayed — fast.
-  **Read the short window for direction**  
 The 28-day view exposed the turnaround that the 90-day averages still masked — and prevented over-correcting on lagging data.
-  **Visibility tied to conversion**  
 Pairing discovery work with engagement and conversion fixes is what turned recovered traffic into +27% revenue.

## The one-sentence case

Faced with an AI-disrupted SERP and outdated content dragging down its brand, the Client grew AI-Overview citations by **33.7%**, won the **top AI-Overview slot** on its core query, and converted the recovery into a **+27% revenue** swing in a single period.

*All figures sourced from Google Search Console, GA4, and AI-citation tracking over H1 2026. Client identity, branded query terms, and competitor names have been anonymized. "L28D/L90D" denote the last 28 / 90 days versus the immediately preceding equal period.*