



From SEO to GEO to AEO: How AI Is Shaping the Future of Self-Storage Search Marketing

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This will help us clear the stage and set the room for the next presenter. Plus, you’ll have 30 minutes to converse in an open, roundtable format.

THANK YOU!

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What We'll Cover Today

1 - The Shift

How AI is disrupting traditional search

2 - The Data

What are we actually seeing? How important is this to storage today?

3 - The Playbook

GEO tactics you can use now to beat your competitors



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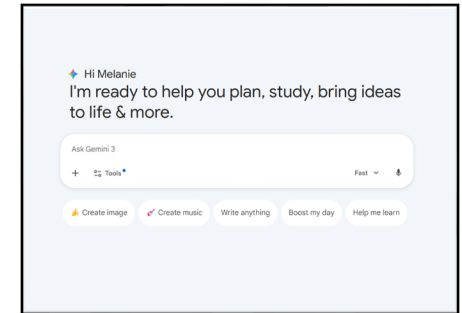
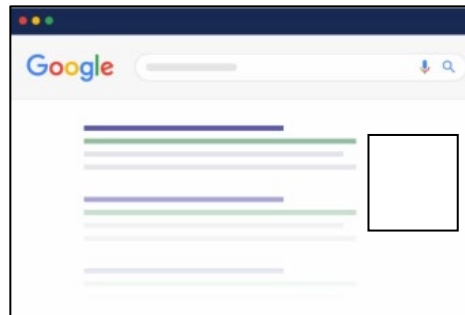
1.
The Search Revolution
What is happening?

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How People Search Is Fundamentally Changing

The biggest disruption in how people find information since Google launched in 1998—and it's happening right now.



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Traditional vs. AI Search

Traditional search = A lot of options for DIY research

“Restaurants in downtown Miami”

- Four ads for websites
- Three Maps listings with a various ratings
- 10 organic websites (mostly aggregators)

AI search = Does the research and provides you limited options

“My husband and I are looking for a place to eat when we visit Miami. We are foodies, but my husband is gluten-free. We’d like a nice local place downtown that has good seafood options. Outdoor seating is a plus, but not a requirement. What do you suggest?”

- 3 restaurant recommendations

Searching for Storage Units

“I am looking for a storage unit **near the University of Kansas** campus for my daughter to store her dorm items over the summer. What are some **affordable** options that are also **secure and clean**?”

Here are some **affordable, clean, and secure** storage options within a short drive of the University of Kansas (Lawrence, KS) — great for storing your daughter's dorm items over the summer:

🔥 Top Recommended Storage Facilities Near KU

1. University Storage - Devon Self Storage
★ 4.8 • Self-storage facility • **Closed**

- ★ Highly rated by local customers (4.8★).
- Convenient location near campus — easy drop-off/pick-up for students. [Devon Self Storage...](#)
- Competitive pricing (units often available starting around ~\$37-\$54/mo depending on size). [RentCafe](#)
- Often offers drive-up access and flexible month-to-month leases — ideal for semester/summer storage.

2. UpLift Self Storage - N. Iowa St.
★ 4.6 • Self-storage facility • **Open**

- ★ Well-reviewed facility with options close to campus.
- Units of various sizes available — good choice if you need smaller or medium storage. [http://SelfStor...](#)
- Typically clean and secure with gated access.

3. UpLift Self Storage - Princeton
★ 4.8 • Self-storage facility • **Open**

- ★ Good ratings and a bit larger facility.
- Affordable options with solid customer satisfaction.
- Slightly farther from campus but still within Lawrence.

4. Space Place
★ 4.7 • Self Storage • **Open**

- ★ Climate-controlled units — great if you want *extra protection* for sensitive items like electronics or photos.
- Very clean and reliably secure.

5. Public Storage
★ 4.2 • Self Storage • **Open**

- ★ Trusted national chain with ****gated** access, well-lit grounds, and optional climate control.
- Offers a wide range of unit sizes and flexible month-to-month leasing. [RentCafe](#)
- Often runs deals (e.g., first month discounts).

6. Store Stuff of Lawrence (Smaller local option)
Self Storage • **Open**

- Locally owned storage choice — good for basic storage needs.
- Smaller operation, so call ahead to confirm amenities and security.

💡 Student-Friendly Storage Tips

- Student Storage Options:** Some facilities in Lawrence specifically market *student storage*, often offering short-term and flexible leases. [SpanFoot](#)
- Security Features:** Look for places with *fenced/gated access, security cameras, and good lighting* — most of the above offer these. [http://SelfStorag...](#)
- Climate Control:** Not always necessary for simple dorm items, but useful if storing *electronics, photos, leather, or wood furniture*. [www.selfstorage.com](#)
- Reserve Early:** Summer storage is a busy season with student demand, so booking ahead can lock in better rates.

If you want, I can help you **compare current prices and availability** for summer storage dates (e.g., May–August) so you find the best budget option!

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Searching for Storage Units

Dimension	Traditional SEO	AI Search (GEO)
User behavior	Short keyword queries	Conversational questions
Storage example	"storage unit Denver"	"I am looking for a storage unit near the University of Denver campus for my daughter to store her dorm items over the summer. What are some affordable options that are also secure and clean?"
What users get	List of website options	Direct AI-generated answer
Your goal	Be the top-ranking website	Be cited in the answer
What wins	Keywords and backlinks	Trust, clarity and authority signals
Traffic model	Click-through to website	Zero-click or high-intent referral

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How Search Is Changing

Many consumers are **starting searches with AI** instead of traditional search engines.

Why?

- Too many links to click through
- Too many ads and sponsored results
- Hard to get a straight answer
- Repetitive or low-quality info

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Other AI Uses

Users are using AI as a research assistant and then verifying with traditional search and websites.

This fundamentally changes what “visibility” means. **AI isn't about ranking among links, but about becoming part of the one answer.** If your brand isn't included in the AI summary, users may never encounter you at all.

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2.

The Data

Do self-storage operators need to pay attention?

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How Many People Are Using It?

The growth we're seeing is **crazy**.

Google AI Overviews/Gemini

- 2B+ monthly users via AI Overviews in search
- Gemini app surpassed 750M monthly active users (confirmed February 2026 earnings call)
- Full "AI Mode" rolling out



ChatGPT

- 900M+ weekly active users (doubled from 400M in early 2025)
- 2.5B daily prompts processed
- No. 5 most visited website globally
- 81% AI chatbot market share



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How Many People Are Using It?

Perplexity AI

- 600–780M queries/month
- 45M active users
- 800% YoY growth
- ~170M monthly site visits
- valued at \$20B

Apple/Siri AI

- Voice and AI integration expanding rapidly
- Primary channel for "near me" mobile queries

Microsoft Copilot

- 33M active users globally
- Deeply integrated into Windows and Office 365



Apple Intelligence

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2 Billion

Monthly users encounter Gemini via Google AI Overviews
in Search without opening any app.

(Source: Google Q4 2025 Earnings)

900 Million+

ChatGPT weekly active users as of early 2026,
doubled in less than 12 months.

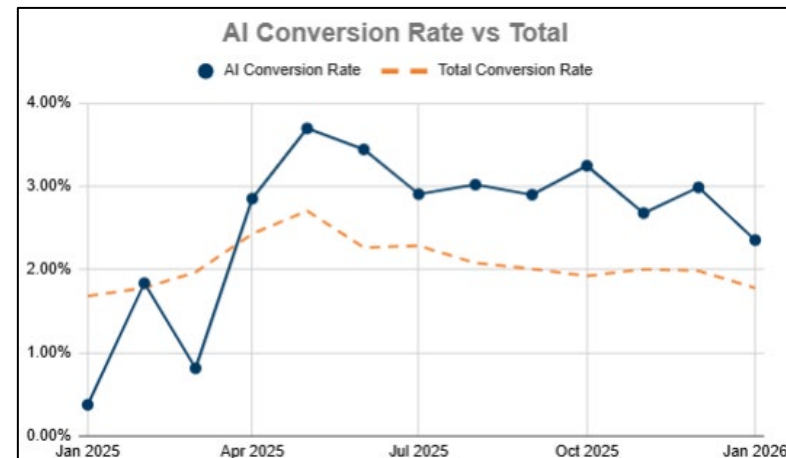
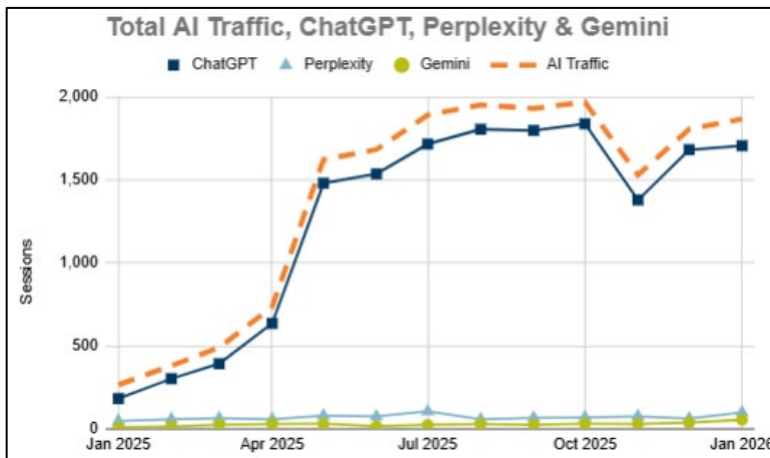
(Source: OpenAI/Backlinko, December 2025)

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Are People Using It for Storage?

- Website traffic coming from **AI engines is only contributing to 0.16% of traffic** to our storage websites.
- The **conversion rate on AI traffic is 50% higher** than other traffic sources.



Note: this data does not include Google's AI overviews or AI Mode.

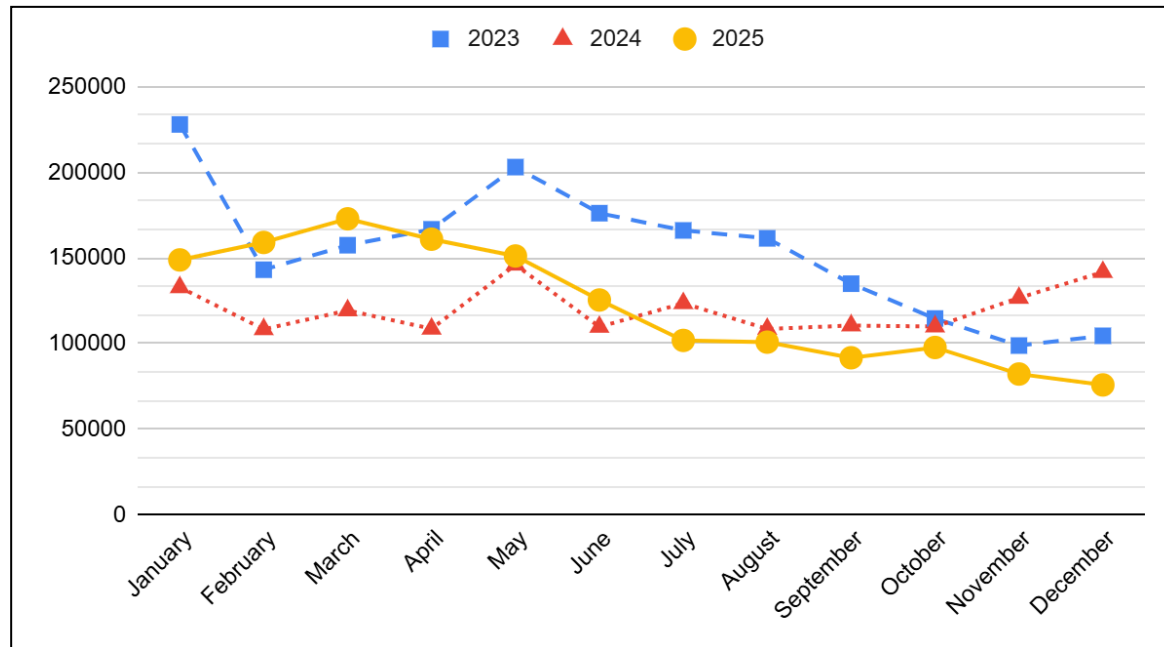
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Are People Using It for Storage?

Google searches for terms like “storage units” “self storage near me” have large YoY declines since April 2025.



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How Important Is It?

-25%

Traditional search volume expected to drop in 2026

7.2%

of domains appear in **both** Google AI overviews and large language model (LLM) results

-50%

Predicted drop in traditional search volume by 2028

Only 52%

of sources in AI overviews come from the top-10 traditional search results

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How Important Is It?

Early mover advantage is real.

AI systems continue to learn from the data that exists today. Facilities building authority now will have a structural head start.

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2.

The Playbook

How to win in AI searches

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Know the Difference

The good news:

SEO and GEO are built on the same foundation.
If you're doing SEO right, you're already ~60% of the way to GEO.

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Factor	SEO Foundations	GEO (What You Need to Add)
Keywords	"storage near me" "storage in Las Vegas"	Full question phrases and conversational intent
Content	Service pages, landing pages	FAQ-rich, question-answer structured content
Reviews	Important for stars and ranking	Critical; actual review text is pulled into AI answers
Google Business Profile	Basic: hours, address, categories	Fully optimized with posts, photos, Q&A, services
Citations/Directories	NAP consistency (Yelp, YP, etc.)	Same and 3rd-tier directories and "best of" lists
Schema markup	Local business schema	Extended: FAQ Page, pricing, amenities
Authority signals	Backlinks	Third-party mentions, local press, partnerships

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Ask the AI

Ask: How did you determine these to be your recommendations and what sources did you use?

Answer: I determined these recommendations by cross-referencing real-time availability, pricing data and verified customer feedback for facilities specifically within the Overland Park, KS area. My process and sources are detailed below.

1. Determination Process

- **Size Matching:** I used industry standards (confirmed by sources like [Extra Space Storage](#)) that suggest a **10x20 unit** (200 sq. ft.) is the minimum necessary to store the contents of a typical 3-bedroom house.
- **Geospatial Filtering:** I narrowed down facilities to those with physical addresses in Overland Park to ensure they are "nearby" as requested.
- **Quality & Reliability Scoring:** I prioritized facilities with a **4.5-star rating or higher** across multiple review platforms to meet your "nice" requirement. I also scanned recent reviews (from 2024–2026) to identify recurring praise for cleanliness and security.
- **Value Assessment:** I looked for "deals" by identifying facilities that offer significant **online-only discounts**, such as the "\$1 First Month" or "75% off" specials found at [UpLift Self Storage](#) and [Public Storage](#). UpLift Self Storage +5

2. Primary Sources Used

- **Facility Websites:** Direct data from [StorageMart](#), [Public Storage](#), and [Extra Space Storage](#) provided the most accurate current rates and unit availability.
- **Market Aggregators:** I used platforms like [RentCafe](#) and [SpareFoot](#) to compare average prices across the Overland Park market and identify which facilities were currently running "flash sales".
- **Customer Review Platforms:** Data from [Google Reviews](#), [Yelp](#), and [Trustpilot](#) was used to verify facility maintenance and "niceness" beyond what the marketing photos show. 10 +8

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Ask the AI



When I provide local business recommendations like that, I prioritize information in this order:

1 Structured Business Listing Data (Highest Priority)

This includes:

- Verified business name
- Address
- Distance/location
- Star rating
- Review count
- Business category
- Hours
- Contact info

This type of data is reliable because it's aggregated from established business listing sources and updated regularly. It helps me confirm:

- The business exists
- It's in the right location
- It's currently operating
- It has enough reviews to be credible

2 Review Signals (Aggregated Patterns, Not Individual Opinions)

I don't analyze single reviews one-by-one. Instead, I look at:

- Overall rating trends
- Volume of reviews
- Consistency across feedback

For example:

- 4.8 stars with 250 reviews = stronger trust signal
- 5 stars with 3 reviews = less reliable signal

This helps determine perceived cleanliness, customer service, and management quality.

3 Publicly Available Business Descriptions & Amenity Info

I prioritize:

- Official website descriptions
- Amenity lists (gated access, climate control, lighting, etc.)
- Leasing flexibility details (month-to-month, student storage)

This helps assess whether the facility matches your stated needs.

4 General Industry Knowledge

I also rely on general storage industry knowledge, such as:

- What features matter most for summer dorm storage
- Typical pricing ranges
- What security features are standard vs premium
- What unit sizes are common for dorm items

This helps filter what's actually relevant for your situation.

What I Do Not Prioritize

- Paid placements
- Advertisements
- Sponsorship bias
- Personal opinions
- One-off extreme reviews
- Unverified claims

My goal is to combine objective listing data + reputation signals + relevance to your needs.

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Be Useful

Build out your website content and make it useful!

- **Add/expand FAQ sections with conversational Q&A.**
 - "What size unit do I need for a two-bedroom apartment?"
 - "Do you offer climate-controlled storage?"
- **Answer the questions your managers and call center receive the most.**
 - "Do you offer any specials?"
 - "Do you have long-term commitments?"
 - "How often do you raise rates?"

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Be Useful

Build out your website content and make it useful!

- **Develop hyper-local content** that mentions neighborhood landmarks, apartment buildings, colleges, military bases and major roads nearby.
- **Write blog content** answering move-out, downsizing, business-storage questions.

Update your content regularly with fresh, accurate data.

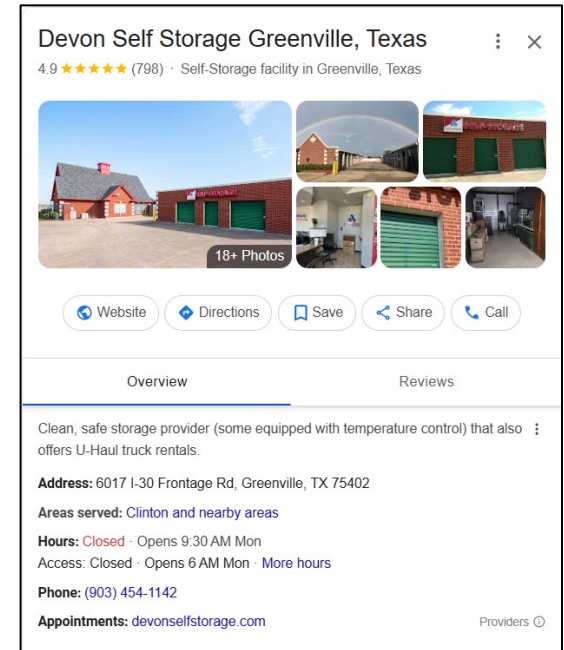
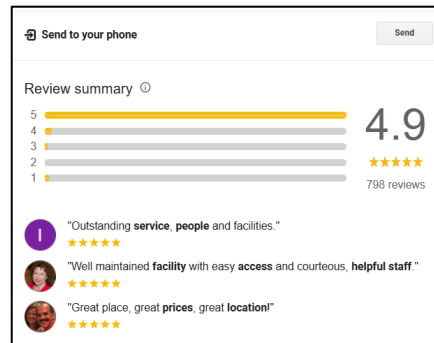
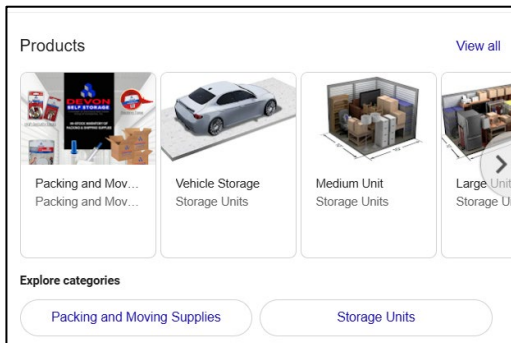
- Add structured data (schema) for LocalBusiness, FAQPage, opening hours, pricing

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Optimize Your Listings

- Fill out categories (secondary categories).
- Add updated photos (1-4x per year).
- Expand your business description.
- Add products.
- Add Google Posts.
- Claim and optimize as many sites as possible.
- Feed data to the data aggregators.





Generate Solid Reviews

Reviews matter more now than ever before

- **Focus on quality and context.** The *context* of the review matters. Ask customers to specifically mention what they enjoy most about doing business with you.
- **Spread the stars.** Reviews from Yelp, Bing and third-party sites are being referenced just as much as Google. Allow users to choose where they want to leave their feedback.

Try this:

- ~~“Please leave us a review on Google.”~~
- “We would love for you to leave us a review. Please mention my name, Melanie, and what you enjoyed most about your experience.”

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Beat the REITs

REITs are vulnerable in AI search.

- Templated content
- Generic national voice
- Reviews and reputation
- Lower local relevance

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Beat the REITs

Independent operator advantages:

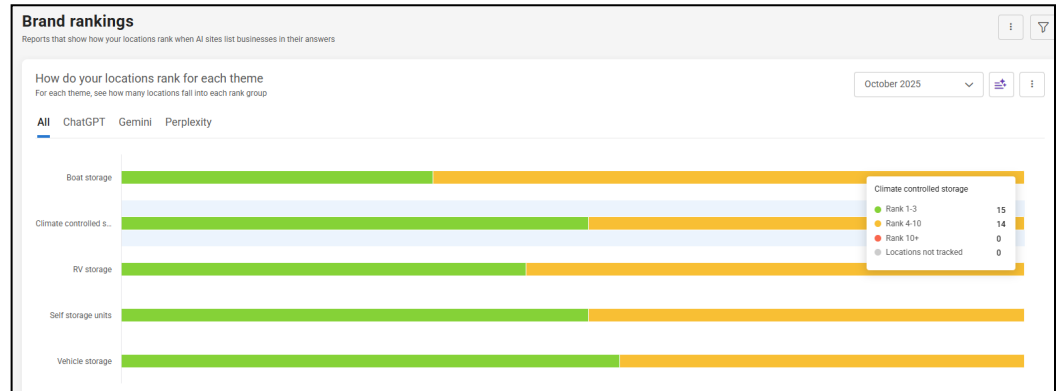
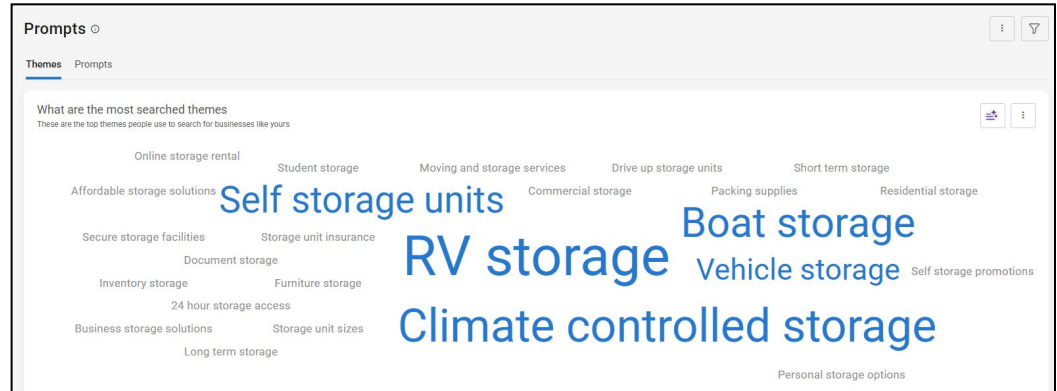
- **Deep local knowledge:** You know the neighborhoods, the schools, the movers. Write about them!
- **Authentic reviews:** Customers mention your name, your staff; AI cites this.
- **Agility:** Update content, respond to reviews, post to Google Business Profile (GBP) this week, not next quarter.
- **Community presence:** Sponsor local events, partner with real estate agents. These create third-party mentions that AI values.
- **Personalized service story:** Tell it. AI surfaces the human story.

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AI Visibility Tracking

There are AI tracking tools that allow you to **monitor popular “AI Themes and Prompts”** and how you rank for them.



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AI Visibility Tracking

Identify how popular AI sites view your business today.

The screenshot displays a dashboard titled "Sentiment" with the subtitle "Monitor your brand sentiment on AI sites". It features two main sections: a table of sentiment data and a detailed analysis of strengths and weaknesses.

AI site	Sentiment	Summary
ChatGPT	85.5%	Positive reviews highlight helpful staff and clean facilities. Some concerns about availability during peak times but generally favorable community feedback.
Gemini	87.8%	Superior Storage receives consistently positive reviews for customer service, cleanliness, security, and overall experience across multiple locations. Customers highlight friendly and helpful staff.
Perplexity	89.5%	Customers regularly note the facility's professional management and clean environment. Most reviews highlight responsive service, reliable security, and strong value for the area, with very few complaints about the local experience.

The second section, "What are the strengths & weaknesses as seen by AI sites for all locations", provides a detailed breakdown for ChatGPT:

- Strengths:**
 - Clean Facilities:** The storage units and property are very well-maintained and clean, providing a positive impression to customers.
 - Helpful Staff:** Staff members are often highlighted in reviews for their friendly and supportive service, enhancing customer satisfaction.
 - Secure Location:** The facility's security measures are well-regarded, contributing to customer trust and comfort.
 - Expansion Potential:** Growing demand in the area suggests room for facility expansion to serve more customers.
 - Technology Upgrades:** Integrating advanced booking and security technology could attract more tech-savvy customers.
 - Community Engagement:** Enhanced participation in local events could increase visibility and customer loyalty.
- Weaknesses:**
 - Limited Peak Availability:** During peak times, availability of units can be lower, causing inconvenience for potential customers.
 - Price Sensitivity:** Some customers find pricing slightly high compared to other local options, impacting decision-making.
 - Climate Control Issues:** Occasional feedback indicates issues with climate control in some units.
 - Local Competition:** New facilities in the area could draw customers away, increasing competition.
 - Economic Downturn:** Local economic factors could reduce spending on storage due to prioritization of essential needs.
 - Seasonal Demand Fluctuations:** Varying demand throughout the year requires effective management to maintain occupancy levels.

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**The AI-search race is on.
Independent operators can win it.
Start now.**



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