THE AI WORKSHOP EXPERIENCE · DAY 1

Build Authority Beyond Your Website

A step-by-step guide for high school senior photographers who want to be the name AI recommends

Sean Brown · Senior Photography Education

START HERE

Why Authority Is the New SEO

When a parent asks ChatGPT or Claude "who's the best senior photographer near me?", AI doesn't hand them ten links. It hands them a shortlist of two or three names, and it backs each one up with proof.

50%
of consumers already use AI-powered search.

5–10%
of the sources AI search references are a brand's own website. The rest comes from everywhere else.

Source: McKinsey & Company, "New front door to the internet: Winning in the age of AI search," October 2025.

That second number is why this guide exists. A beautiful website isn't enough if nobody else online is vouching for you. Authority comes from four pillars.

The Four Pillars

PILLAR 01
Treat Reviews Like a System
Ask every client, make it one click, reply to every review.

PILLAR 02
Complete Your Google Profile
Right category, services, fresh photos and regular posts.

PILLAR 03
Earn Mentions From Others
Publications, vendors, schools, podcasts and directories.

PILLAR 04
Say It Plainly
State your specialization, experience and awards so AI doesn't have to guess.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Do Step Zero first so you have a baseline. Then work through the pillars in order. Each one lists the exact steps, the prompts to use with Claude or ChatGPT, and the rules to follow. At the end you'll find a 30-day plan and a monthly tracker.

STEP ZERO · BASELINE

Find Out Where You Stand

You can't improve what you haven't measured. This takes about 30 minutes.

1 Run the AI visibility test

Open ChatGPT, Claude, Perplexity and Google's AI Mode in a private/incognito window. Ask each one:

- "Who are the best senior photographers in **[City, State]**?"
- "Who is the best senior photographer near **[High School]**?"
- "Which senior photographers in **[City]** have the best reviews?"

Screenshot every answer. Note whether you're named, in what position, and what reasons and sources AI gives for each photographer it recommends.

2 Note who gets named instead of you

For every photographer AI recommends, write down the proof it cites: review count and rating, awards, publications, specialization. That's the bar you're working to meet or beat.

3 Fill in your Authority Scorecard

Use the table below. Be honest. Blank spaces are your to-do list.

AUTHORITY SIGNAL	WHERE I AM TODAY	THE TOP-NAMED COMPETITOR
Google review count, rating & reviews in the last 90 days		
Google Business Profile complete? (category, services, photos, posts)		
Awards & recognition		
Publications, features & third-party mentions		
Specialization stated clearly on homepage?		
Years in business / seniors photographed stated?		
Named in AI search? (which tools, what position)		

PILLAR 01

Treat Reviews Like a System

AI quotes your reviews directly. Rating, volume, recency and what clients actually say all matter. A review system beats hoping clients remember.

SETUP: 1 HOUR · ONGOING: 5 MINUTES PER CLIENT

1

Get your one-click review link

In your Google Business Profile, find the **Ask for reviews** option and copy the short link it gives you. Save it somewhere you can paste in seconds: a phone text replacement shortcut (for example, typing “rvw” expands to the link), your CRM, and your email templates.

2

Choose your ask moment

Ask when excitement is highest. For most senior photographers, that’s right after the reveal or ordering appointment, or the moment the gallery is delivered. Put it in your workflow as a fixed step so it happens with every single client, not just the ones you remember.

3

Ask in person first, then send the link

A personal ask converts far better than an automated one. Say it out loud at the end of the reveal (“Would you be willing to leave a quick Google review? I’ll text you the link right now”), then text the link before they leave. Both the senior and the parent had their own experience, so it’s fine to invite both.

4

Follow up twice, then stop

If they haven’t left one, send a friendly reminder after 3 days and one final nudge after about a week. After that, let it go.

5

Help them be specific, without scripting

Specific reviews carry more weight with AI and with parents. You can suggest *topics* (“anything you loved about the experience, the locations, how you felt during the session”) but never give them words to copy.

6

Reply to every review within 48 hours

Thank them by first name and mention something real about their session (the location, the outfit change, the laugh you got). Keep it natural. Don’t stuff keywords into your replies.

7

Show your reviews on your website

Create a testimonials section on your homepage and a dedicated reviews page. Include the senior's first name, school and a photo from their session (with permission). State your totals plainly: "5.0 stars from **[#]** Google reviews."

8

Track it monthly

Log your review count, rating and reviews added this month in the tracker at the back of this guide. Aim for steady new reviews every month rather than big bursts.

PILLAR 01 · TOOLS

Review Request Templates

Customize these so they sound like you. The point is to make asking easy, not robotic.

TEXT · SAME DAY

Hi **[Name]**! I had the BEST time with you **[today / at your session]**. If you have two minutes, a quick Google review would mean the world to me and helps other seniors find me: **[review link]**. Thank you!!

TEXT · 3-DAY REMINDER

Hey **[Name]**, just a friendly reminder in case the link got buried: **[review link]**. No pressure at all, and thank you again for trusting me with your senior photos!

REPLY TO A REVIEW

Thank you so much, **[Name]**! **[One real detail, e.g., "That sunset at the river was unreal"]**. I loved every minute of your session and can't wait to see those prints on your wall. Congrats on your senior year!

COPY THIS PROMPT

I'm a high school senior portrait photographer. Write me:
1. A short, warm text asking a client for a Google review right after their reveal
2. A friendly 3-day reminder text
3. Five different templates for replying to 5-star reviews that leave room for one personal detail about the session

My voice: **[describe it, or paste a caption or text you've written]**
My review link: **[paste link]**

Rules: keep each text under 300 characters. Don't offer any incentive. Don't tell the client what to write in the review.

THE RULES (DON'T SKIP THESE)

- **Never offer an incentive** for a review, like a discount, free print or giveaway entry. Google prohibits it, and the FTC's rules on reviews make it risky.
- **Never "review gate."** Don't send only happy clients to Google and steer unhappy ones elsewhere. Google prohibits selectively asking for positive reviews. Ask everyone.
- **Never buy reviews or write them for clients.** Fake reviews can get your profile suspended.
- **Don't ask for Yelp reviews.** Yelp's policy discourages businesses from asking for them. Focus your asks on Google.
- **Handle a negative review calmly.** Reply once, briefly and professionally, and offer to talk offline. Parents read how you respond.

PILLAR 02

Complete Your Google Business Profile

Your Google profile is one of the first places AI looks to confirm who you are, what you do, where you work and what clients say about you.

SETUP: 2 HOURS · ONGOING: 20 MINUTES PER WEEK

1

Claim and verify your profile

Search your business name on Google or go to business.google.com. If you haven't claimed it, follow the verification steps. You can't edit anything until it's verified.

2

Set your categories

Your **primary category** matters most. Choose the closest match, usually **Photographer** (or **Portrait Studio** if you work from a studio). Add relevant secondary categories, but only ones that truly describe your business.

3

Set your location or service area

Have a studio clients visit? Show your address. Work on location only? Hide your address and list the cities and areas you serve as your service area.

4

Write a description that says it plainly

You get up to 750 characters. Lead with your specialization and location, then your proof: years in business, seniors photographed, awards, what the experience includes. Use the prompt on the next page.

5

List every service

Add your senior session(s) with a clear description and starting price if you share pricing publicly. Add related services you offer, like senior rep or model team programs.

6

Add photos every week

Upload a steady stream of real, recent work: portraits from different locations and schools, behind-the-scenes shots, your reveal space, you with clients. Fresh photos show an active, real business.

7

Post every week

Share updates: a recent session, a location spotlight, booking windows for next year's seniors, a new blog post. Repurpose content you're already creating (Day 1, Section Two).

8

Fill in everything else

Hours, phone, website, booking or inquiry link, and any attributes that apply. Make sure your business name, phone and website match your website *exactly*.

PILLAR 02 · TOOLS

Write Your Profile With AI

COPY THIS PROMPT

I'm a high school senior portrait photographer in **[City, State]**, serving **[list cities / schools]**.

Here are my facts: **[years in business, number of seniors photographed, awards and recognition, review count and rating, what's included in the experience (planning, hair & makeup, locations, reveal, products), what makes me different]**

Write:
1. A Google Business Profile description under 750 characters. Open with what I do and where. Then my proof. End with a simple invitation to inquire. No hype words like "best" or "#1". Let the facts do the work.
2. A short description (under 300 characters) for each of my services: **[list services]**
3. Four weekly Google Business posts (under 1,000 characters each) based on these ideas: **[a recent session, a favorite location, booking dates, a blog post]**

Use only the facts I've provided. If something's missing, ask me.

Your Weekly Google Profile Routine

WHEN	TASK	TIME
Monday	Upload 3–5 new photos from recent sessions	5 min
Wednesday	Publish one post (repurpose this week's Instagram or blog content)	10 min
Friday	Reply to any new reviews; check your info is still accurate	5 min
Monthly	Update services, pricing and booking windows; log your review numbers	15 min

DON'T STOP AT GOOGLE

AI tools pull from more than one directory. Claim and complete your listings on **Bing Places**, **Apple Business Connect**, **Yelp** and your **Facebook business page**. Use the exact same business name, phone number, website and description everywhere. Consistency is an authority signal on its own.

Consistency Checklist

LISTING	CLAIMED?	NAME / PHONE / URL MATCH?	DESCRIPTION UPDATED?
Google Business Profile			
Bing Places			
Apple Business Connect			
Yelp			
Facebook business page			
Instagram bio			

PILLAR 03

Earn Mentions From Others

Third-party proof is what makes AI confident. When publications, vendors, schools and podcasts mention you, AI has independent reasons to recommend you.

SETUP: 2 HOURS · ONGOING: 1–2 OUTREACH HOURS PER MONTH

Where Senior Photographers Can Earn Mentions

Industry Recognition

Enter respected senior photography competitions and publications, and apply for features. Awards are some of the strongest proof AI cites.

Vendor Partners

Hair and makeup artists, clothing boutiques, jewelry shops and local businesses you shoot at. Offer to feature them and ask to be listed on their site.

Schools & Activities

Sponsor yearbooks, booster clubs, sports programs and senior events where you're listed on their website or program.

Local Media & Community

Local "best of" awards, community blogs, local magazines and chamber of commerce directories.

Podcasts & Guest Content

Local business podcasts, parenting blogs and photography education shows. Share what you know about senior year and photos.

Directories

Photography directories and local business listings that link back to your website with your exact business name.

1

Build a target list of 20

Use the research prompt on the next page to find real opportunities in your area. Pick the 20 most relevant and put them in a simple spreadsheet: name, type, contact, status.

2

Prepare your media kit

A short bio in three lengths (one line, one paragraph, full), a professional headshot, 5–10 of your best images, and a list of your credentials. Keep it in one shareable folder.

3

Lead with value in your outreach

Don’t ask for a mention. Offer something: a styled feature of their boutique, images they can use, a guest article on “what to wear for senior photos,” or sponsorship of their event.

4

Ask for a link with your exact business name

When they feature or list you, ask them to use your exact business name and link to your website. That consistency helps AI connect the mention to you.

5

Log it on your Awards & Press page

Every mention, award and feature goes on a dedicated page on your website, with links. Add new ones as they happen.

6

Aim for one or two new mentions a month

Authority compounds. A steady rhythm over a year beats a burst of effort you can’t sustain.

RESEARCH PROMPT · USE WITH WEB SEARCH ON

I'm a high school senior portrait photographer in **[City, State]**. I want to earn mentions and links from other trusted websites so AI search tools recommend me.

Find 20 real opportunities near me, including: senior photography competitions and publications, local "best of" awards, local magazines and blogs, podcasts that interview local business owners, school and booster sponsorship opportunities at **[list schools]**, and vendors that serve seniors (hair and makeup artists, boutiques, jewelry shops).

For each one, give me: the name, the link, why it's a fit, and how to get involved. Only include opportunities you can verify, and cite your source.

OUTREACH PROMPT

Write a short, friendly outreach email to **[business / organization name]**, a **[type, e.g., local clothing boutique]**.

I'm **[your name]**, a senior portrait photographer in **[City]**. I'd like to offer **[the value, e.g., a free styled shoot featuring their clothing, with images they can use]**. In return, I'd love to be featured or listed on their website with a link to mine.

Keep it under 150 words, lead with what's in it for them, and sound like a real person, not a template.

PILLAR 04

Say It Plainly

AI can only recommend you for what it can find. If your specialization, experience and awards aren't stated clearly, AI has to guess, and it usually won't.

SETUP: 2–3 HOURS · UPDATE: EVERY YEAR

1

Write your authority statement

First fill in the Facts Inventory on the next page (only things that are true and that you could back up). Then write one or two sentences that pack in your specialization, location and proof. Use this formula, then refine it with the prompt:

> **[Studio name]** is a **[City]**-based senior portrait photographer who has photographed **[#]** high school seniors since **[year]**. **[Award or recognition]**. **[Rating]** stars from **[#]** Google reviews.

2

Put it where AI (and parents) look first

Your homepage intro, your About page, your website footer, your Google Business description and your Instagram bio. Same facts, everywhere.

3

Build an Awards & Press page

List every award, feature, publication and recognition with dates and links. This is one page AI can use to verify your authority at a glance.

4

Rewrite your About page around proof

Keep your personality, but make sure it clearly states that you specialize in seniors, how long you've done it, how many seniors you've photographed, what the experience includes and what you've been recognized for.

5

Add the facts to your schema markup

Include your awards, service areas and social profiles in your website's schema (see the Schema prompt in the Day 1 VIP training). It tells AI these facts in its own language.

WHY "PLAINLY" MATTERS

"Capturing your story with passion" tells AI nothing. "Kansas City senior photographer, 8 years, 600+ seniors, 5.0 stars from 120 reviews" tells it everything.

PILLAR 04 · TOOLS

Your Facts Inventory

FACT	YOUR ANSWER
Studio name (exactly as it appears everywhere)	
City and service areas	
High schools you photograph most	
Year you started photographing seniors	
Approximate number of seniors photographed	
Awards, recognition & publications	
Google rating & review count	
What the experience includes	
What makes you different (from your market gap analysis)	

COPY THIS PROMPT

Here are the facts about my senior portrait photography business:
[paste your completed Facts Inventory]

Write:
1. Three versions of a one-to-two sentence authority statement for my homepage
2. A 150-word About page introduction in first person that keeps my personality but clearly states my specialization, experience, recognition and what the experience includes
3. A one-line Instagram bio under 150 characters
4. A short website footer line

My voice: **[describe it or paste a sample]**

Rules: use only these facts. Don't call me "the best" or "#1" unless it's an actual award title. Let the facts prove it.

PUT IT INTO ACTION

Your 30-Day Authority Plan

Work through this over the next month. By day 30, AI will have far more reasons to recommend you.

WEEK	FOCUS	TASKS
Week 1	Baseline & reviews	☐ Run the AI visibility test and screenshot results ☐ Complete your Authority Scorecard ☐ Get your review link and save your templates ☐ Add the review ask to your workflow ☐ Invite recent clients from this season to leave a review
Week 2	Google profile & listings	☐ Set categories, service area and services ☐ Write and publish your new description ☐ Upload 15–20 photos and publish your first post ☐ Claim Bing Places, Apple Business Connect, Yelp and Facebook
Week 3	Say it plainly	☐ Complete your Facts Inventory ☐ Write your authority statement and update your homepage ☐ Rewrite your About page ☐ Launch your Awards & Press page
Week 4	Earn mentions	☐ Build your list of 20 opportunities ☐ Put together your media kit ☐ Send your first 5 outreach emails ☐ Re-run the AI visibility test and compare to Week 1

KEEP IT GOING

Monthly Authority Tracker

Authority is built over months, not days. Fill in one row on the first of every month.

MONTH	TOTAL REVIEWS	RATING	NEW REVIEWS	NEW MENTIONS	NAMED IN AI? (WHERE)

Monthly Maintenance Checklist

- [ ] Every client from this month was asked for a review
- [ ] Every new review has a reply
- [ ] Google profile has fresh photos and at least four posts this month
- [ ] At least one new outreach or mention opportunity pursued
- [ ] Awards & Press page updated with anything new
- [ ] AI visibility test re-run and screenshots saved

Being the best isn't enough anymore. You have to make it easy for AI to prove it.