

CONSTRUCTION SEO

REPORT 2026

**Insights from a Comprehensive Website
Audit of Top US Construction**

EXCLUSIVE RESEARCH BY **alt.cmo**

INTRODUCTION

Three years in, and we're still asking the same question the industry can't seem to put to rest: Does SEO still matter to the largest construction companies? The fact that you're asking in an era dominated by AI headlines tells you something. The answer, backed by another year of data on nearly 900 websites, is an unambiguous YES!

Here's what we know after auditing the websites of the *ENR* Top 400 Contractors and Top 500 Design Firms: the companies leading their markets are also leading in SEO. That correlation isn't a coincidence. SEO isn't separate from business development in construction; it is a key component of their business development and talent acquisition strategies. And AI hasn't disrupted that equation; it's sharpened it.

This is AltCMO's third annual Construction SEO Report; the only benchmark study of its kind built specifically for the A/E/C (Architecture/Engineering/Construction) industry. Last year, we covered both the *ENR* Top 400 Contractors and the *ENR* Top 500 Design Firms in a single report. This year, we're publishing two separate reports so we can go deeper on each. This report focuses on general contractors. If you're from the architecture or engineering side, our 2026 Architecture/Engineering SEO Report is the one to download. (We publish a separate report for trade contractors in the Fall after the *ENR* Top 600 Specialty Contractors list comes out.)

TL;DR: *ENR*'s top lists change year to year; roughly 10% of firms are new to the rankings, but the SEO picture stays consistent. The firms that invest in their digital presence hold their ground. Those that don't are increasingly easy to spot.



METHODOLOGY

To evaluate nearly 900 websites across the 2026 *ENR* Top 400 Contractors and Top 500 Design Firms, we used the same consistent, impartial methodology as in previous years.

Our analysis focused on five measurable SEO performance indicators: domain authority, backlink volume, spam score, and page speed for both desktop and mobile. We established average and median values from that data to serve as this year's industry benchmarks. Use these benchmarks to evaluate your own firm's rankings.

All data was collected using Moz and Google PageSpeed Insights. The scope was intentionally limited to publicly available, quantitative data only. We did not access website backends, use Google Analytics, or conduct qualitative reviews. No "black hat" hacking or SEO tactics of any kind were performed as part of this process.

Data gathering spanned several weeks, but each tool captured a full snapshot of all 400 construction and 500 design websites within a single day. That single-day capture matters: it eliminates the noise from algorithm fluctuations and gives us an apples-to-apples comparison across the entire dataset.

A note on AI visibility: as of this report, Google accounts for more than 90% of all U.S. searches. AI-driven search is growing, but still accounts for only a fraction of the total volume. Also, we don't yet have a scalable, fair method to measure each company's AI presence across 900 sites. We discuss what the data tells us about AI readiness, but the quantitative benchmarks in this report reflect traditional SEO signals, which remain the strongest predictors of AI discoverability anyway.



Why SEO Matters for A/E/C Companies

(Regardless of Their Size)

The construction industry runs on relationships. We know that. But relationships don't happen in a vacuum anymore. They happen after someone has already Googled you, scrolled your project portfolio, and read your LinkedIn page. Search visibility is no longer a marketing initiative layered on top of business development; it is business development.

Referrals still drive the majority of work in construction, but here's what's changed: the referral is no longer the end of the research process; it's the beginning. Gartner reports that B2B buyers complete roughly 90% of their decision-making online before they ever reach out. In construction, that means a developer who got your name from a trusted contact is still going to check your website, read your project case studies, look at your Glassdoor reviews, and compare you to two or three competitors, all before you know they exist. If your online presence doesn't reinforce the referral, you can lose the job before the conversation starts.

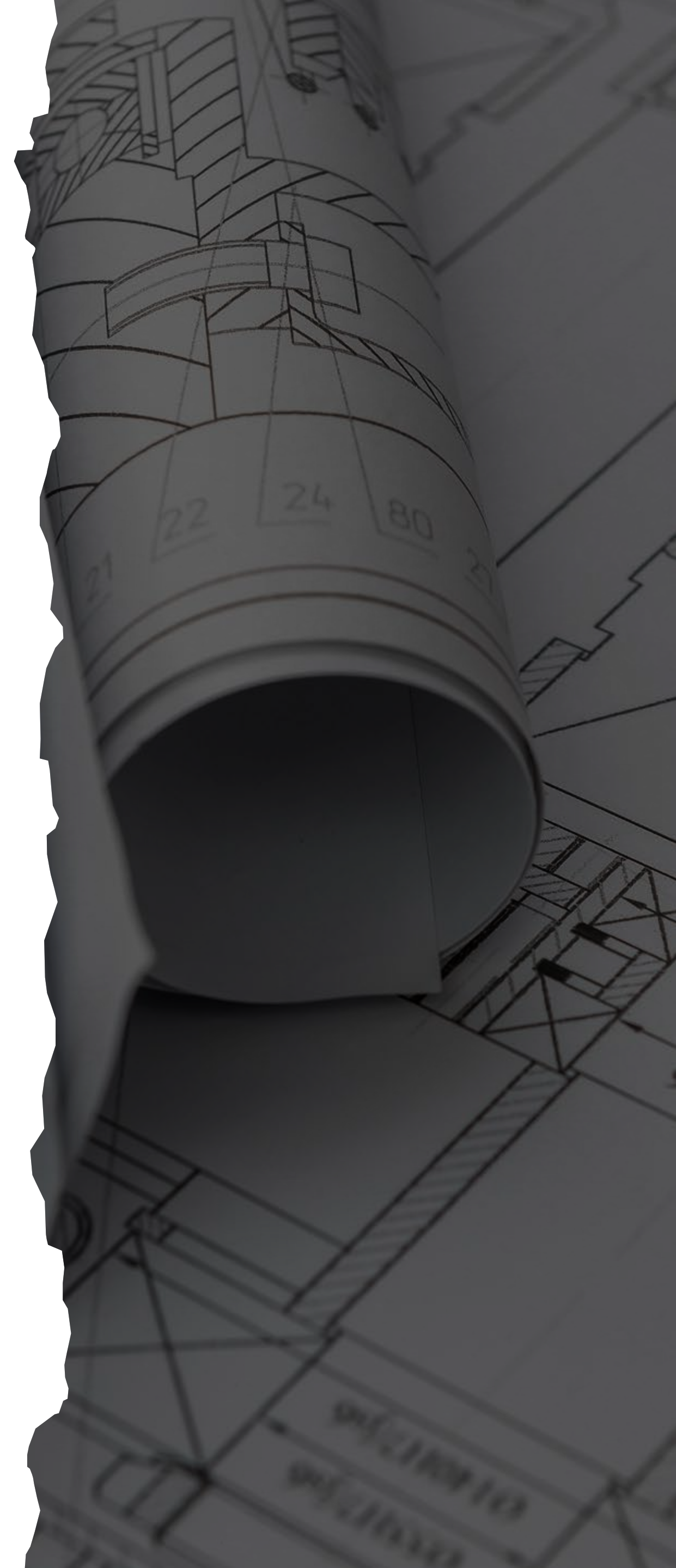
Even worse, what if someone refers you, and they go to a company with a similar name instead of your website, simply because it was easier to find? Your hard-earned offline reputation just gave another business an easy win.

The same dynamic plays out in recruiting. The skilled trades shortage is well-documented, and the competition for project managers, estimators, and field leaders is real. Younger professionals search for employers the same way they search for anything else, online first. A firm that doesn't show up in those searches, or that shows up with an outdated site and no culture content, is starting every recruiting conversation at a disadvantage.

The best candidates aren't passively scrolling job boards. They're using AI tools to research companies in depth, asking ChatGPT which contractors in their region have strong cultures, competitive pay, and project variety. If your firm has no documented expertise, no published content, and no awards on record, you won't make the shortlist. Expertise that exists only in people's heads doesn't get cited.

A strong SEO program doesn't replace relationships in construction; it protects and extends them. It ensures that when someone hears your name, what they find online confirms what they've been told. And for clients and candidates who find you before anyone introduces them, it ensures the introduction happens anyway.

Regardless of how good you are on jobsites, if you're not easily found online, you don't exist.



DOMAIN AUTHORITY

Domain Authority (DA), a metric developed by Moz, estimates how likely a website is to rank in search results. Scores run from 1 to 100, higher is better. For professional services firms in the A/E/C space, a score above 30 is generally considered strong. Think of it as a credit score for your website: it signals to search engines (and now AI tools) whether your site is worth citing.

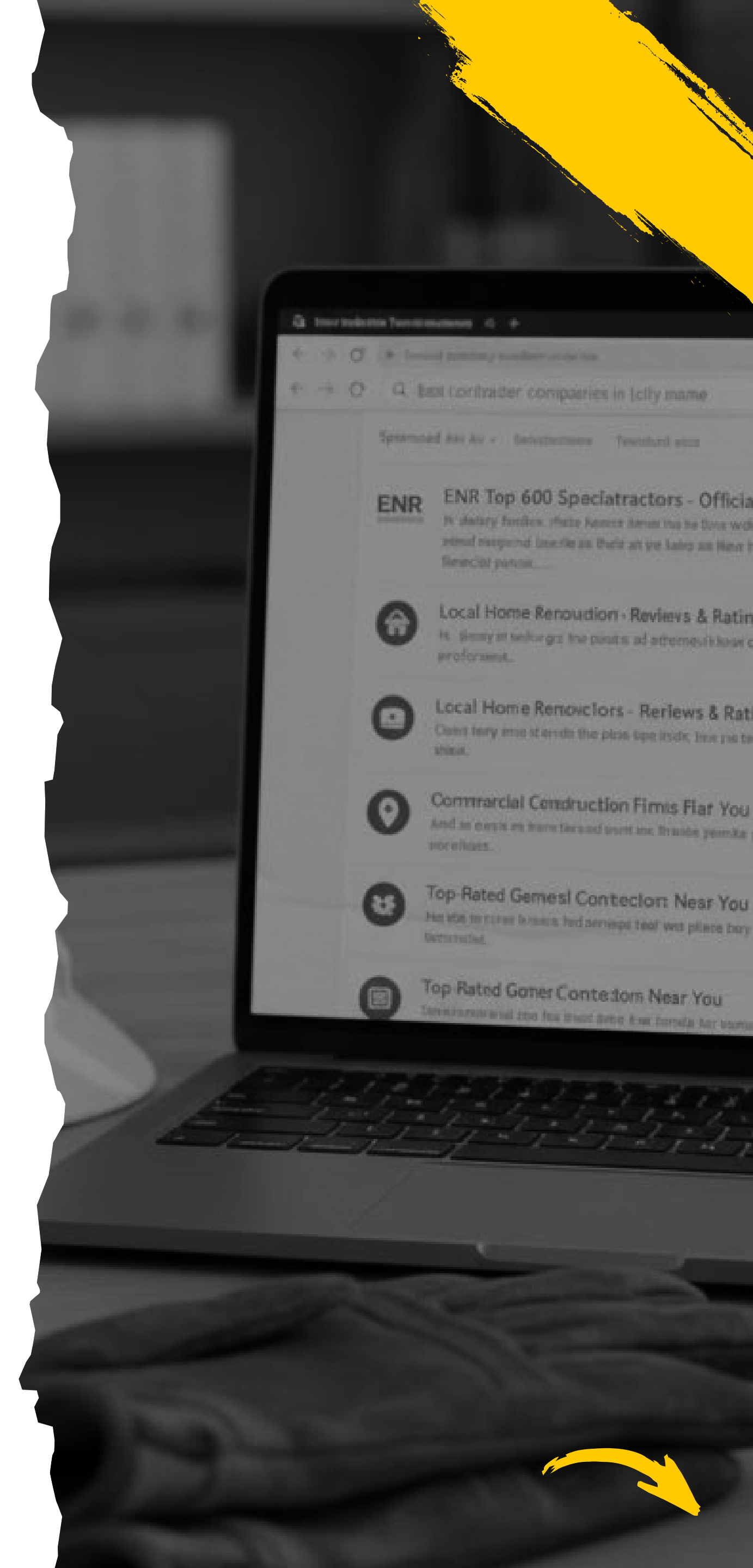
78.25% of *ENR* Top 400 contractors and 79.20% of *ENR* Top 500 design firms score above that 30-point threshold. Broaden the lens to scores above 20, and the numbers climb to 93.75% and 97.20%, respectively. Fewer than 4.33% of firms across both lists scored below 20. At this level of the market, a strong digital foundation is simply the cost of entry.

Not one company in the top 50, contractor or design firm, had a DA below 30. That number has held steady across all three years of our research.

The leaders at the top haven't budged since we started tracking in 2024: AECOM (71), Ferrovial Construction (64), Bechtel (61), and Skanska USA (60). Three years of consistent rankings reinforce a simple point: Domain authority isn't won quickly, and once established, it compounds. These firms aren't just winning projects; they're building digital equity that makes every future search more likely to land in their favor.

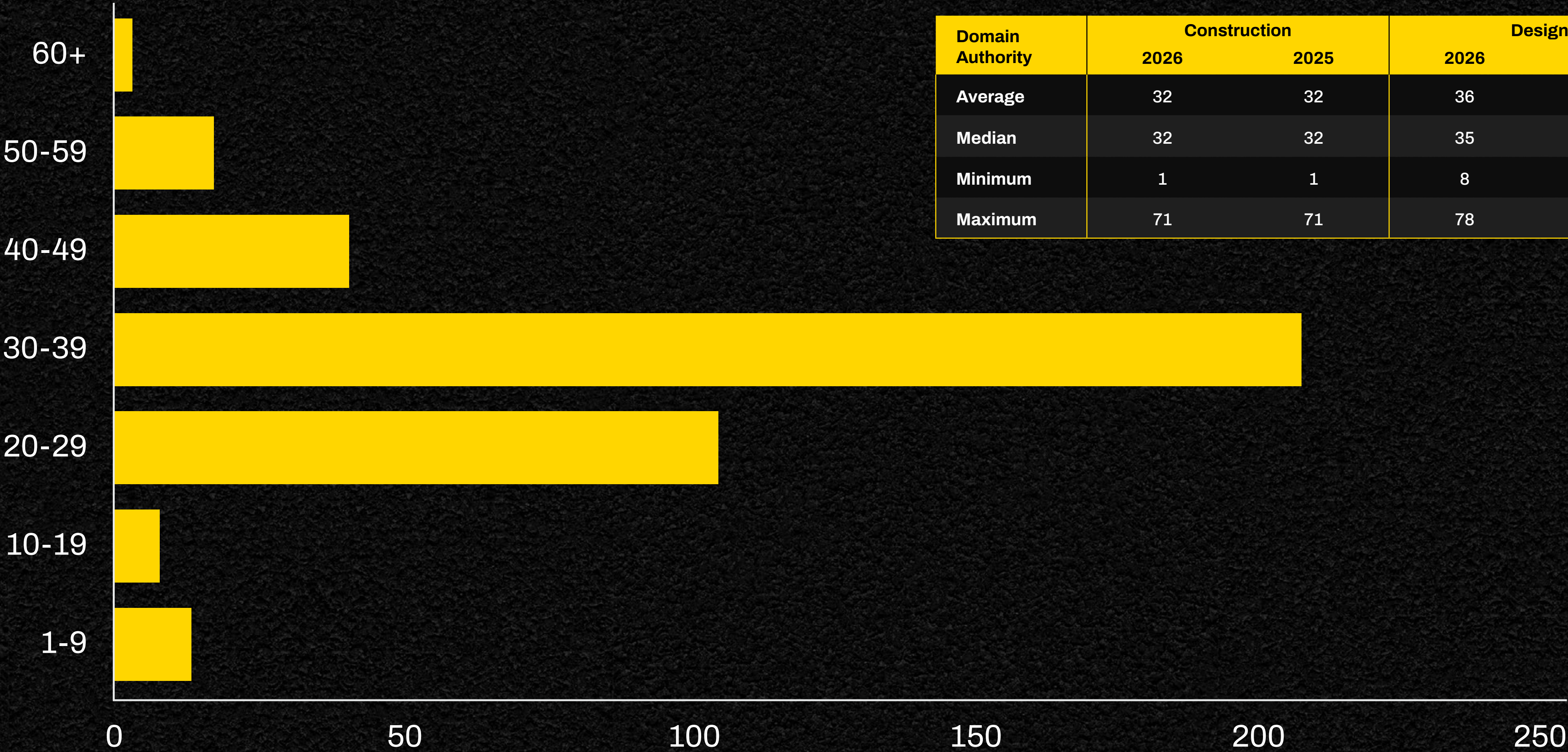
The data makes it clear that digital authority and market prominence move together. The contractors with the strongest reputations in the industry also have the strongest digital footprints.

For smaller contractors, the lesson isn't that you can't compete; it's that the time to start building is now, not after your competitors have already built a lengthy head start.



DOMAIN AUTHORITY SCORES

■ ENR 600 Specialty Contractors



Domain Authority	Construction		Design	
	2026	2025	2026	2025
Average	32	32	36	37
Median	32	32	35	37
Minimum	1	1	8	7
Maximum	71	71	78	78

BACKLINKS

Backlinks, links from other websites pointing to yours, are one of the most powerful signals in SEO. Each one tells search engines (and AI systems) that another credible source considers your content worth referencing. In construction, backlinks come from project press coverage, award recognition, industry associations, trade publications, job boards, and community involvement. These aren't just SEO tactics; they're the byproduct of a company that's actively visible and respected in its market.

The correlation between backlinks and domain authority is about as clean as data gets. Nearly every contractor with more than 1,500 backlinks had a DA of 30 or higher. On the flip side, almost every site with a DA under 10 had fewer than 200 backlinks. Build the links, build the authority, it's that consistent.

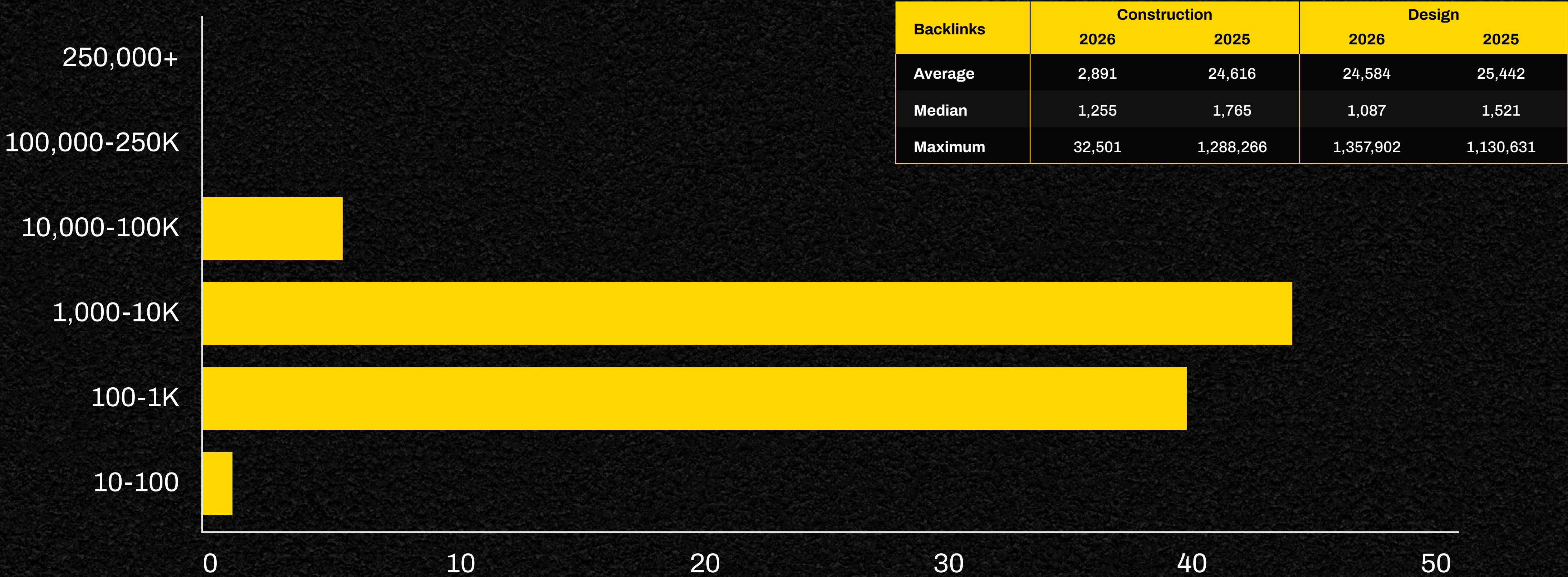
The average backlink count for construction companies dropped sharply this year, from roughly 25,000 in 2025 to 2,891 in 2026, but that shift is almost entirely explained by a single outlier: a large contractor with nearly 2 million backlinks who no longer appears on the 2026 list. One extreme metric will distort any average. That's why we use the median as our benchmark; it tells a more useful story: 1,255 backlinks for contractors this year. That's down about 250 from 2025, though backlinks remain the most difficult dataset to capture comprehensively.

For context, the *ENR* Top 400 median of 1,255 backlinks is more than three times the 382 median we found when researching contractors with revenue under \$100 M. Scale matters mostly because many of their backlinks happen organically without effort, because larger contractors work on newsworthy projects. What matters more is effort: the firms growing their backlink profiles through thought leadership, press mentions, and industry partnerships are the same ones moving up in search visibility.



BACKLINKS SCORES

■ ENR 600 Specialty Contractors



SPAM SCORES

Backlink quality matters just as much as quantity, if not more. A link from a trusted source, such as a local newspaper with a domain authority of 50, carries far more weight than one from a low-authority, unrelated site. On the other hand, links from irrelevant or untrustworthy websites can damage credibility. Search engines are increasingly flagging these “toxic” backlinks, and high spam scores serve as a warning sign.

Encouragingly, only 17% of contractors in our study registered a spam score above 10, meaning most maintain relatively clean backlink profiles. Among the largest contractors, even those with thousands of backlinks, spam scores remained low.

By contrast, the contractors with the highest spam scores consistently had some of the weakest Domain Authority scores, providing further evidence that spam-heavy profiles negatively impact long-term SEO performance.

Keep this in mind if you’re purchasing a new domain name, as you inherit that domain’s spam score. When investigating domains with low domain authority and high spam scores, we noticed that a few of them belonged to A/E/C firms that had recently changed names [rebrand, merger, or new domain suffixes like .build] and therefore had new domains.

The takeaway is clear: do things the right way, not the fast, easy way. Companies benefit most from earning backlinks through reputable industry channels such as trade media, professional associations, and respected blogs.

For companies seeking to lower their spam score, modern SEO platforms can detect toxic links and provide remediation steps. While reaching out to site owners to request removal is an option, the more practical approach is to use Google’s Disavow Tool to cut ties with harmful backlinks and protect your digital reputation.



SPAM SCORES

■ ENR 600 Specialty Contractors



Spam Scores	Construction		Design	
	2026	2025	2026	2025
Average	7	7	6	7
Median	2	2	2	2
Maximum	57	75	76	81



If your website has a high spam score, here are the signals that tools like Moz use to identify patterns and common traits often associated with low-quality or spammy websites.

- **Small site size:** Spam domains often have very few pages.
- **Suspicious TLDs (Top Level Domain):** Certain extensions (like .download, .stream, .biz, .win) are more common among spam sites.
- **Long domain names:** Extra-long subdomains or root domains are a red flag.
- **Numbers in the domain:** Including digits in a domain is often linked to spam.
- **Missing Google Fonts:** Legitimate sites are more likely to use Google Fonts; spam sites often don't.
- **No Google Tag Manager:** Most spammy sites skip GTM tracking.
- **No DoubleClick tags:** DoubleClick ads are rarely present on spam sites.
- **No phone number:** A missing or fake phone number is a common spam signal.
- **No LinkedIn link:** Spam sites rarely connect to a LinkedIn profile or company page.
- **No email address:** Genuine businesses typically list a real email; spam sites often don't.
- **No HTTPS:** Secure certificates are a sign of trust; spam sites often stick to HTTP.
- **Use of meta keywords:** Modern, reputable sites don't use this outdated tag; spammers often still do.
- **Low traffic levels:** Very low visit counts can correlate with spam.
- **Odd use of rel=canonical:** Incorrect or non-local canonical tags are more common on spam sites.
- **Unusual title tag length:** Titles that are excessively short or long are a warning sign.
- **Unusual meta description length:** Same as titles: extremes in length correlate with spam.
- **Bloated meta keywords tag:** Overly long keyword tags are a red flag.
- **No favicon:** Trusted sites almost always have one; spam sites often don't.
- **No Facebook pixel:** Spam sites usually skip social tracking like the FB pixel.
- **Too many or too few outbound links:** Abnormal linking patterns raise flags.
- **Odd number of domains linked:** Linking to an unusually high or low number of unique sites is suspicious.
- **Too many links compared to content:** An imbalanced link-to-text ratio is often spammy.
- **Weird domain spelling:** Strings of vowels or consonants in a row are common in spam domains.
- **Hyphen-heavy domains:** Multiple hyphens in a name are another correlation.
- **Strange URL length:** Extremely short or long URLs can be a spam signal.
- **"Poison words" in content:** Terms related to shady industries (e.g., gambling, adult, pharmaceuticals) are often present.
- **High-CPC keyword anchor text:** Spam sites often use outbound link text tied to lucrative industries like pharma, adult, or gaming.

Don't worry if your company's website has a few of these indicators, but do take action if your website has many of them.

EVALUATING WEBSITE SPEEDS

Speed is where many construction companies quietly lose business, and they don't know they're losing. A slow site doesn't just frustrate visitors, it signals to search engines that users don't want to stay, which suppresses rankings. And as AI-powered search platforms increasingly factor in technical performance when deciding what to cite, because they use less processing power, a slow site becomes doubly costly. AI may filter out your slow-loading website before your content quality even comes into play.

Desktop speed scores across 400 contractor websites ranged from a concerning 13 to a perfect 100, with only 5 contractors hitting that top mark. The average came in at 68, a 5-point drop from last year and a number that should give the industry pause. This isn't a small dip; it's a trend moving in the wrong direction, even among companies with the marketing budgets to fix it.

Mobile is the bigger problem. Nearly half of all searches now happen on a phone, but only 4 contractors scored a perfect 100 on mobile (and yes, every one of them also had a perfect desktop score). The average mobile score dropped to 52, down 5 points from 2025, with the lowest score in the dataset landing at an abysmal 3. A score that low isn't a performance issue; it's a business issue.

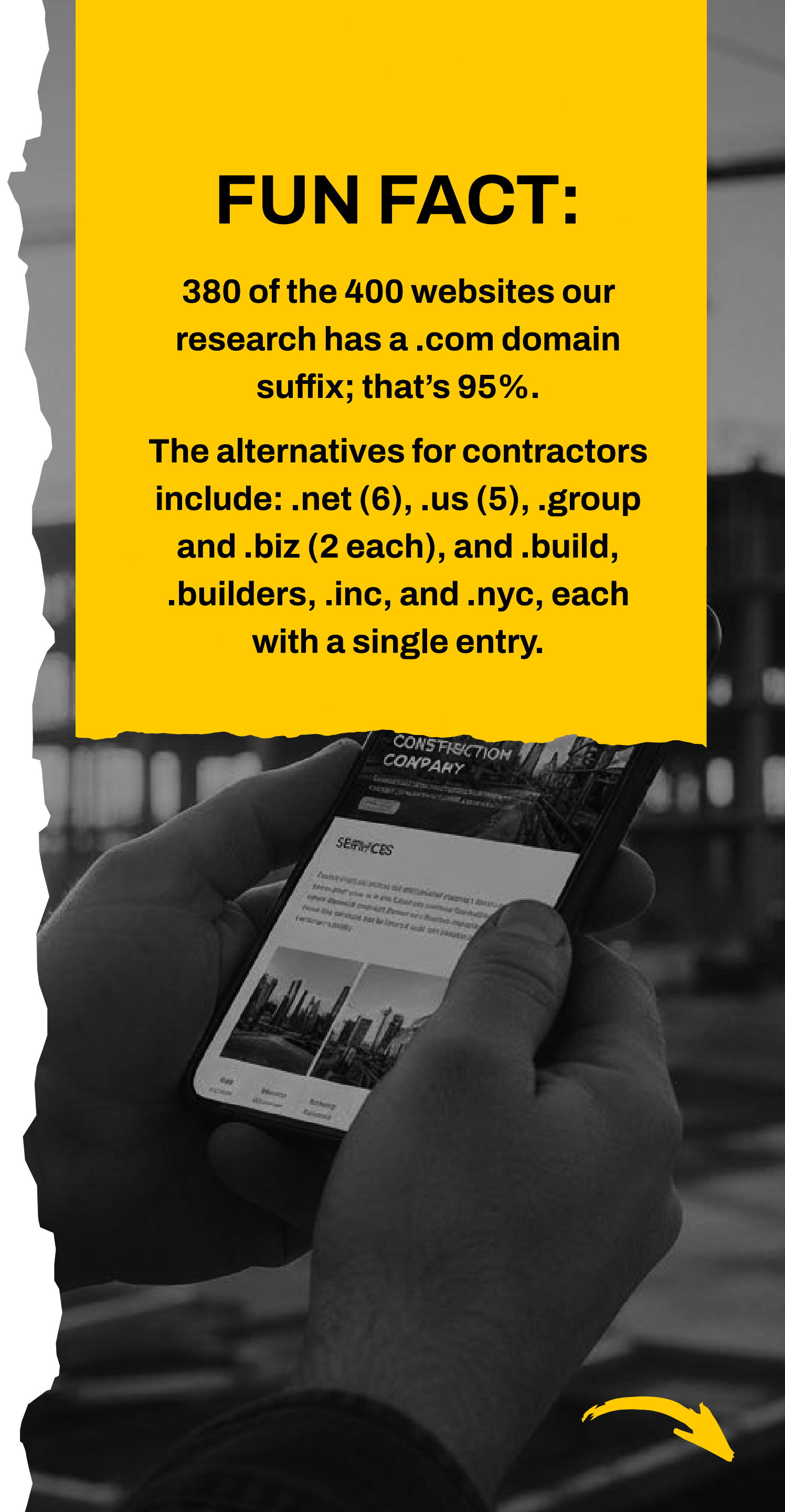
What makes this decline notable is that mobile optimization should be getting easier, not harder. (We know from another research project that 40% of the 2024 top contractors' websites use a CDN [Content Delivery Network] for speed, security, and stability.) The tools, frameworks, and hosting solutions available today make fast mobile sites achievable at almost any budget. These scores suggest that too many firms are either not prioritizing it or not auditing their own performance.

The opportunity this creates for smaller and mid-sized firms is real. You don't need a massive web team to outscore an *ENR* Top 50 contractor on mobile. Image compression, leaner scripts, and modern hosting choices can move the needle quickly. A regional firm with a 90 mobile speed score will outrank a national name with a 48 every time; size doesn't override speed. [I go into much more detail on how smaller contractors can beat mega contractors towards the end of this guide.]

FUN FACT:

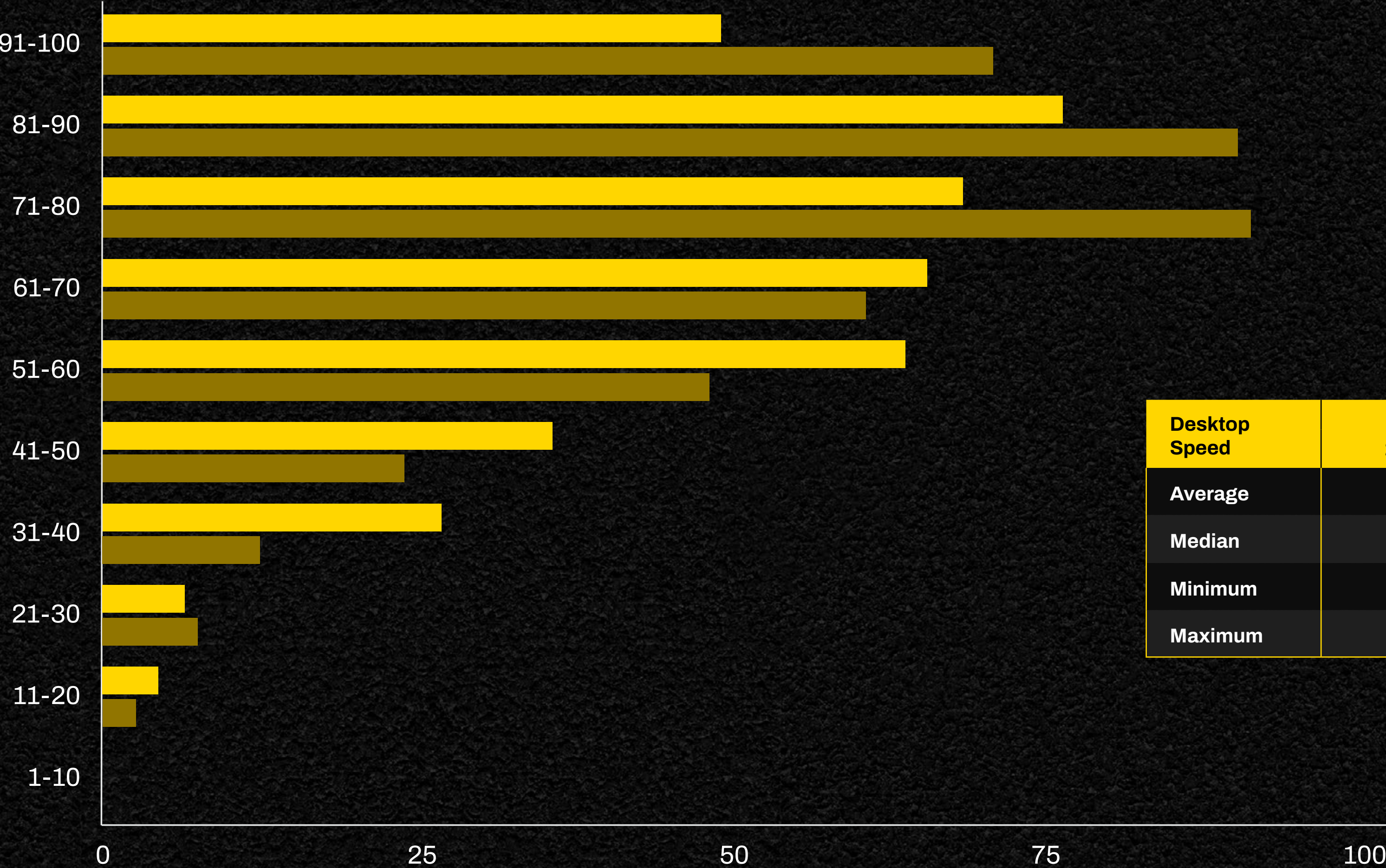
380 of the 400 websites our research has a .com domain suffix; that's 95%.

The alternatives for contractors include: .net (6), .us (5), .group and .biz (2 each), and .build, .builders, .inc, and .nyc, each with a single entry.



DESKTOP WEBSITE SPEEDS

2026 2025

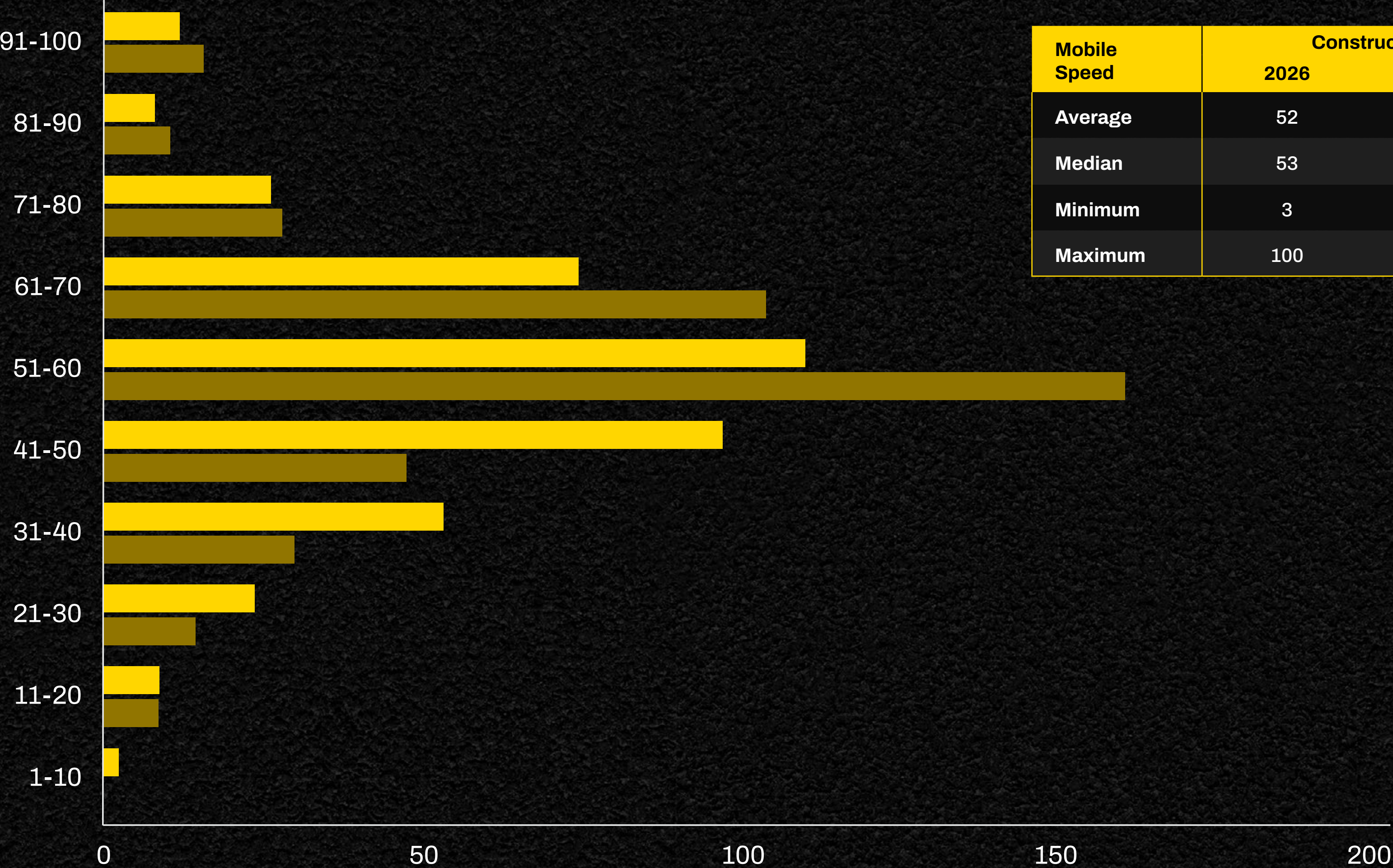


Desktop Speed	Construction		Design	
	2026	2025	2026	2025
Average	68	73	73	75
Median	70	75	75	77
Minimum	13	14	30	18
Maximum	100	100	100	100



MOBILE WEBSITE SPEEDS

2026 2025



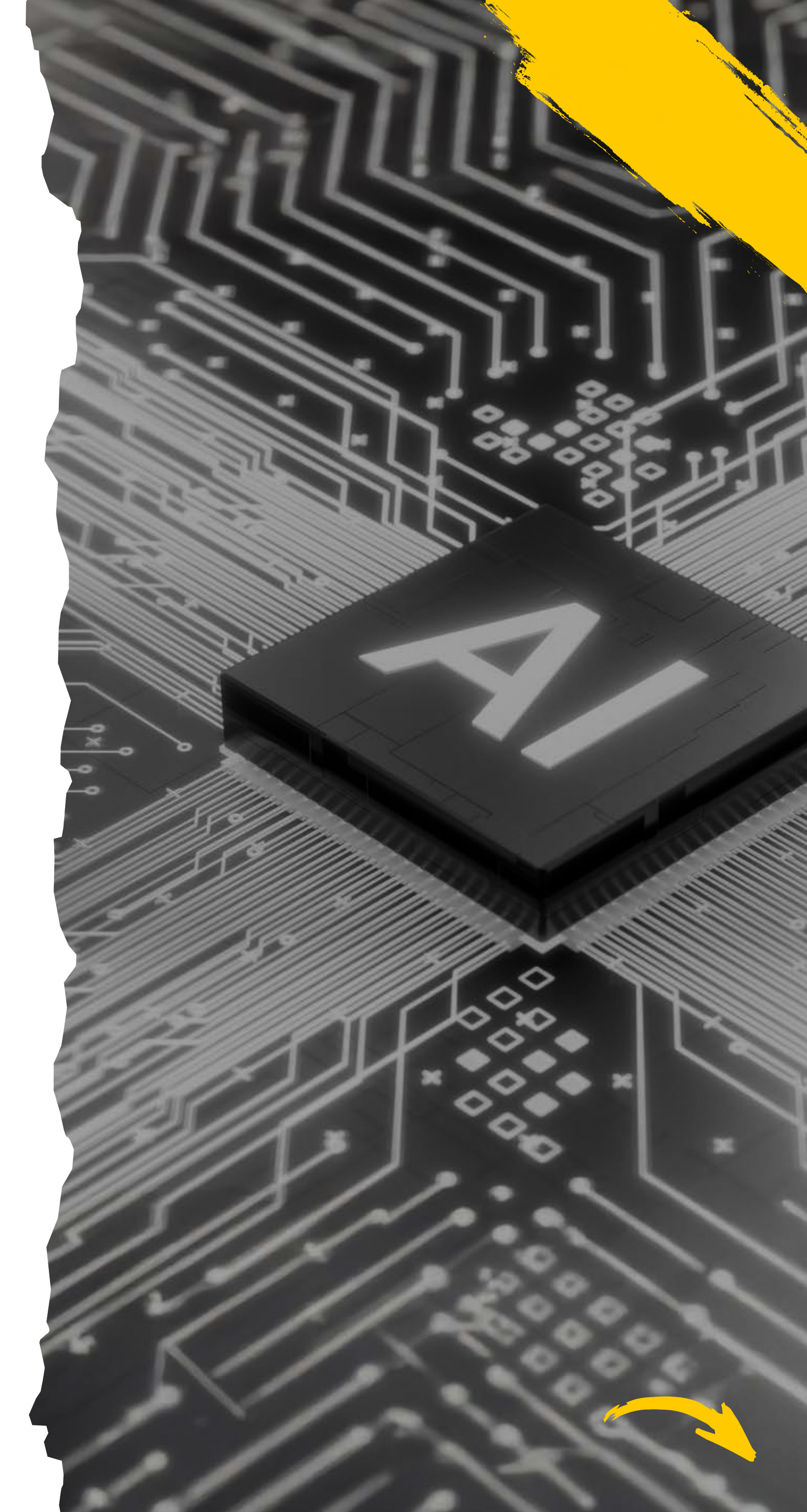
Mobile Speed	Construction		Design	
	2026	2025	2026	2025
Average	52	57	56	57
Median	53	56	56	56
Minimum	3	13	10	8
Maximum	100	100	100	100

THE AI GOLD RUSH

We've heard the question at every industry event for two years now: "Should we be worried about AI replacing search?" The better question is whether your company is visible in AI results when your prospects start using them, and that's already happening. AI-driven search accounts for roughly 5.6–7.8% of all searches as of mid-2026, and while that may sound modest, the growth curve is steep. Experts widely expect it to hit 20% of searches in the near future.

What matters to A/E/C marketers and construction executives isn't the percentage; it's the behavior. People using AI search tools are asking different questions, in different ways, at different stages of the buying process. And they're increasingly applying that same approach to finding contractors, subcontractors, and employers.

Google still holds over 90% of search volume, but ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Perplexity, Copilot, Gronk, and others are reshaping how people find specialized services. The comparison to the early days of SEO isn't a cliché; it's an accurate pattern. The A/E/C companies that invested in SEO in the 2000s built advantages that still compound today. The ones that waited spent years playing catch-up. The same dynamic is unfolding now with AI visibility.





WHY AI SEARCH VISITORS MATTER MORE

AI search traffic is proving far more valuable than traditional search traffic. According to SEMrush, visitors who come through AI search are 4.4 times more valuable than a typical organic visitor. Why? Because they're further along in their decision-making process.

The average Google search is just 3–4 words long (SimilarWeb), though nearly half of searches are now over 4 words. By contrast, AI queries are typically 20–30 words in length. Users don't just type "best construction management software"; they ask nuanced, detailed questions like:

- *I'm a 50-person commercial GC. What's the best construction management platform that imports P6 schedules and offers trade contractor coordination?*
- *Which roofing contractor in Omaha installs Brava composite cedar shake roofs and has experience with multifamily properties?*
- *Act like a recruiter and let me know the top 5 electrical contractors that hire journeyman with a TWIC card to work in the DFW area?*

This level of detail signals that the buyer already knows what they want and is much closer to taking action. Clients have shared specific queries their new clients and hires have used to find them, and some queries are 2 pages long and quite detailed.

HOW AI SELECTS RESULTS

AI tools rely on a process called **retrieval-augmented generation (RAG)** to decide which sources to include in their answers. While each model weighs factors differently, they generally look at:

- **Authority signals:** domain reputation, author credentials, editorial standards
- **Content structure:** clear headings, logical flow, scannable formatting
- **Factual density:** data points, statistics, and expert quotes in every section
- **Recency:** how fresh and frequently updated your content is

For example, ChatGPT heavily favors authority and domain reputation, while Perplexity prioritizes freshness. Gemini blends these AI signals with traditional SEO metrics because it's built by Google.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR A/E/C FIRMS

Call it AEO, GEO, or SEO 2.0: the label matters less than the underlying data. A study by CyberAgent found that **99% of URLs shown in AI results were already ranked in Google's top 20 organic listings**. AI isn't pulling from a separate web; it's pulling from the same sources search engines have always rewarded. So you can't ignore SEO if you want to be visible in AI.

That's actually good news if you've been investing in SEO. The firms with fast websites, credible backlinks, structured content, and active publishing calendars aren't starting over for AI, they're already positioned to win in it.

For those who aren't yet investing in SEO, the window to catch up is narrowing. Here's where to focus:

- **Show up early in AI tools** to attract higher-value buyers.
- **Double down on authority signals**, thought leadership, backlinks, and expert content.
- **Show trust signals like awards**, client testimonials, metrics, core values, safety, and client logos.
- **Structure your content for scannability and depth** so AI models can cite it directly.
- **Keep your content fresh**, so you're favored in AI engines that prioritize recency.

The companies that built search authority early are still benefiting from it. The ones building AI authority now will say the same thing in five years.



GOOGLE VS. AI SEARCH SIGNALS

FACTOR	GOOGLE SEARCH	AI SEARCH (ChatGPT, Claude, etc.)
Authority	Domain authority, backlinks, trust signals	Heavily weighted expert authorship, domain credibility, and professional reputation
Content Structure	Keywords, headings, metadata, schema	Clear formatting, logical flow, scannable sections for easy citation
Factual Density	Helpful but secondary to keyword relevance	Critical, as AI favors content rich in stats, expert quotes, and concrete details
Recency	Important for news/trending topics	Prioritized by specific engines (e.g., Perplexity), constant updates matter
User Intent	Interpreted through keywords + click behavior	Captured directly from long, natural-language queries (20–30 words on average)
Engagement Metrics	CTR, dwell time, bounce rate	Not directly measured. AI cares more about clarity and completeness of the source
Content Access	Crawled via Googlebot, sitemaps	Pulled via retrieval-augmented generation (RAG) from indexed, high-trust sources
Citation Format	Links appear in a ranked list (10 per page)	Sources embedded directly in answers; only a handful cited per response

THE ROI OF SEO IN CONSTRUCTION

Construction executives don't need more marketing expenses; they need investments that produce measurable returns. SEO belongs in that second category. Unlike paid advertising, which starts and stops with the budget, a well-built SEO program builds compounding digital equity. The backlinks you earn, the content you publish, and the technical improvements you make continue working long after the initial investment.

WHY SEO DELIVERS STRONG ROI

- **Lower Cost per Lead:** B2B research consistently shows organic leads from search cost 60–70% less than paid advertising. For contractors, that means inbound project inquiries at a fraction of what you'd pay to generate them through events, ads, or cold outreach.
- **High-Value Opportunities:** Someone searching for a contractor in a specific market or specialty isn't browsing; they're buying. In construction, a single contract won through search visibility can justify an entire decade of SEO investment. The math works at almost any project size.
- **Recruiting Advantages:** With the skilled labor shortage showing no signs of resolution, top talent has options and is researching them online. SEO that surfaces your career pages, project work, and company culture is much cheaper than recruiter fees and more effective at reaching candidates who already want to work in construction.
- **Durability:** Stop a paid ad campaign, and the leads stop immediately. Stop an SEO program, and the backlinks, optimized content, and technical improvements you've built keep generating traffic for months or years. That durability is what makes SEO one of the highest-leverage marketing investments available to a construction firm.





ROI IN REAL NUMBERS

- A regional contractor investing \$5,000 per month in SEO can expect 20–30 additional qualified leads annually, plus 70–150 qualified job applicants, depending on how well their content reflects their culture and project work.
- Firms appearing in AI-powered search results are seeing visitor value 4.4x higher than traditional organic traffic, according to SEMrush. Higher intent means fewer leads needed to close the same amount of work.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR COMPANY

The firms that treat SEO as a core business function, not a marketing line item, are the ones pulling ahead. For contractors and design firms, that ROI shows up in three places:

- **Revenue growth:** More visibility equals more bids and projects.
- **Stronger workforce:** More candidates discover and apply to your firm.
- **Lower acquisition costs:** Sustainable traffic reduces reliance on expensive ads or cold outreach.

The real cost of not investing in SEO isn't what you spend; it's the work that goes to the firm that did.

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR SEO

HOW A/E/C FIRMS CAN STRENGTHEN SEO

Google and AI platforms like ChatGPT evaluate hundreds of factors, but the underlying architecture of strong SEO hasn't changed. What has changed is the bar. Three years ago, having a fast, indexed website with decent content was enough to stand out in this industry.

Today, the companies gaining ground are the ones treating their websites and content as revenue-generating machines by documenting their expertise and showing proof that they know what they're talking about, delivered in a format that both search engines and AI can readily cite.

- 1. Lead with EEAT**
- 2. Create Content that Works Harder**
- 3. Focus on the Right Keywords**
- 4. Strengthen Technical SEO**
- 5. Earn High-Value Backlinks**
- 6. Prioritize User Experience**
- 7. Keep Content Fresh**



1. LEAD WITH EEAT

Google evaluates content using **Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness**:

- **Experience:** Demonstrate firsthand knowledge through project case studies and on-the-ground insights.
- **Expertise:** Highlight credentials, certifications, and years of specialized industry experience.
- **Authoritativeness:** Build recognition through media features, awards, and backlinks from trusted construction sources.
- **Trustworthiness:** Maintain transparency with accurate, up-to-date content, clear contact info, and client testimonials.

2. CREATE CONTENT THAT WORKS HARDER

Search engines reward content that directly answers user questions. For contractors and design firms, this means going beyond a list of services. Share case studies, industry insights, and helpful resources that position your company as a trusted authority to both owners and prospective employees. Utilize your Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) for thought leadership in your blog, articles, webinars, and resources.

3. FOCUS ON THE RIGHT KEYWORDS

Generic terms like “*general contractor*” and “*architecture*” are nearly impossible to rank for because they’re so generic. Long-tail keywords, such as “*Phoenix senior living construction*” or “*multifamily siding contractor in Omaha,*” help you connect with specific clients who are searching for precisely what you offer.

Additionally, you don’t need to spam your content by repeatedly using the same search terms over and over in blogs and in page content. Search engines and AI tools are intelligent and understand topical terms without requiring you to repeat yourself.



The background of the left side of the page features a dark, grayscale image of a construction site. Overlaid on this are several white line-art icons: a group of three people, a globe, a large dollar sign inside a circle, and a laptop. These icons are connected by thin white lines, suggesting a network or a process flow.

4. STRENGTHEN TECHNICAL SEO

Behind-the-scenes performance matters:

- **Navigation and structure:** Clear, logical page hierarchies.
- **Mobile optimization:** Fast, responsive design for on-the-go users.
- **Page speed:** Compress images, streamline scripts, and consider a CDN.
- **Security:** HTTPS is non-negotiable.
- **Schema and indexing:** Proper coding ensures search engines understand your content.

5. EARN HIGH-VALUE BACKLINKS

One high-quality backlink from a trade publication or respected news source outweighs dozens from irrelevant sites. Industry directories, guest articles, and mentions of project partners are effective ways to build authority. Additionally, AI tools value public relations, often citing top firms because of press mentions and awards.

6. PRIORITIZE USER EXPERIENCE

Search engines measure engagement. A site that's easy to navigate, visually strong, and full of compelling visuals, featuring project photos, videos, and case studies, keeps visitors engaged and builds credibility.

7. KEEP CONTENT FRESH

Search engines favor websites that evolve. Update service pages, add new projects, publish blog posts, and share company news regularly. Fresh content creates new keyword opportunities and signals your firm is active and relevant. (Last year, we found that the most recent blog or news post on an *ENR* 400 Top Contractor website was 24 weeks old on average, and one contractor's "latest news" is nearly a decade old now.)

By aligning their SEO strategy with EEAT and focusing on these fundamentals, construction companies can enhance their rankings, bolster credibility, and compete effectively for both clients and talent.

If you need help, AltCMO offers affordable, efficient thought leadership and SEO programs purpose-built for general and trade contractors ready to take the next step in online search.

HOW SMALLER CONTRACTORS CAN COMPETE

The benchmarks in this report reflect the *ENR* Top 400, which means the bar is set by some of the largest construction companies in North America. That context matters. A median domain authority of 32 and 1,255 backlinks represents years of brand-building by companies with dedicated marketing teams and significant PR budgets. For a regional contractor doing \$50M or \$100M in revenue, those numbers can feel out of reach. They're not, but the path to get there looks different.

STOP COMPETING IN THE OCEAN

The most common SEO mistake smaller contractors make is targeting broad search terms like “general contractor Houston” or “commercial construction Seattle.” Those searches pit you against not just large contractors, but also associations, universities, permit offices, news sites, and national directories. Only 0.63% of users click past page one. If you can't reach page one for a term, you don't exist for that search.

The better strategy is to stop competing in the ocean and start owning a pond. A targeted term like “healthcare contractor Sugarland, TX” or “industrial contractor testing lab experience” has far less competition and far higher conversion rates. Long-tail keywords convert at 2.5x the rate of broad terms because the person searching already knows what they want. Mega-contractors spread their content across dozens of markets and project types. That scale gives them an advantage in brand recognition, but it works against them in local and niche search.





OWN A GEOGRAPHY, OWN A NICHE

Winning in a smaller market requires depth, not just presence. That means landing pages organized by suburb or service area, blog content about local permitting and building conditions, project case studies tied to specific locations, and community involvement that generates real press mentions. With 46% of all Google searches carrying local intent, a smaller contractor that goes deep in two or three markets will consistently outperform a larger competitor that treats those same markets as footnotes.

The same principle applies to the market sector. Picking two or three specific niches and positioning your subject matter experts as the go-to voices in those areas builds authority faster than trying to cover everything. A contractor that publishes consistently about urgent care construction, or about the permitting challenges of building in a specific county, will outrank a national firm on those terms within months. The *ENR* Top 400 companies in this study post new website content roughly every 170 days on average. That gap is an opening for any firm willing to publish more consistently.

SPEED AND PAGE PERFORMANCE ARE A LEVELER

The website speed data in this report is one of the clearest competitive opportunities for smaller firms. The average mobile speed score for *ENR* Top 400 contractors is 52. A regional contractor with a well-maintained, modern website can achieve a 75+ score without a large budget. Google ranks faster sites above slower ones regardless of company size, and AI tools prioritize technically sound sites when deciding what to surface. A \$30M contractor with a fast, focused website will consistently outperform a \$600M firm with a slow, bloated one in local and niche searches.

The contractors that use these benchmarks to identify where they already have an advantage and build on that are the ones closing the gap fastest. You don't have to beat AECOM at its game. You just have to be the obvious choice in the market where your next project is.

MEASURE, COMPARE, & IMPROVE

Benchmarks only matter if you use them. The purpose of this report isn't to make you feel good or bad about where your company stands; it's to give you a clear, industry-specific reference point so you can make better decisions about where to focus. Run these checks, log your numbers, and track them over time. The firms making the most progress are the ones treating SEO as an ongoing discipline, not a one-time project.

THE ALTCMO SEO BENCHMARKING TOOL

In past editions, we pointed readers to Moz and Google PageSpeed Insights. Those tools weren't built with A/E/C benchmarks in mind, so this year we built our own—and it's free to use. Visit seo.altcmo.net, enter your website URL, and select whether your company is a general contractor, trade contractor, or design firm. Within seconds, you'll see how your website stacks up against the exclusive benchmarks in this report.

The tool is free and includes:

- **A/E/C benchmarks built from this research**, segmented by contractor type and design firm, so you're comparing against the right peer group, not generic industry averages.
- **Core web vitals and technical performance**, so you can see exactly where your site's technical foundation stands.
- **Competitor research**, so you can see how you measure up against the firms you compete against.
- **Monthly reporting**, so the snapshot doesn't become a one-time check you forget about.
- **Google Analytics integration**, connecting your SEO performance to real traffic and behavior data, is included in your monthly reports.

It's free, secure, and our gift to the AEC industry, because like this report, we built the tool we always wished existed.



COMPARING YOUR RESULTS

HOW TO USE THIS DATA

- **Measure:** Run your firm through the AltCMO tool at seo.altcmo.net and note your scores across each metric.
- **Compare:** See where you stand against the benchmarks in this report and against the competitors you select in the tool.
- **Improve:** Act on what you find. Low domain authority points to a backlink and thought leadership gap. Slow mobile speed points to a technical fix. The tool surfaces the priorities so you know where to start.

The firms gaining ground in SEO aren't doing anything exotic; they're tracking the right metrics, acting on what they find, and staying consistent. That cadence, repeated monthly, is what separates firms that improve from firms that wonder why they're invisible.

METRIC	BENCHMARK	GOAL	YOUR SCORE
Domain Authority	32	↑	
Spam Score	2	↓	
Backlinks	1,255	↑	
Desktop Speed	68	↑	
Mobile Speed	52	↑	

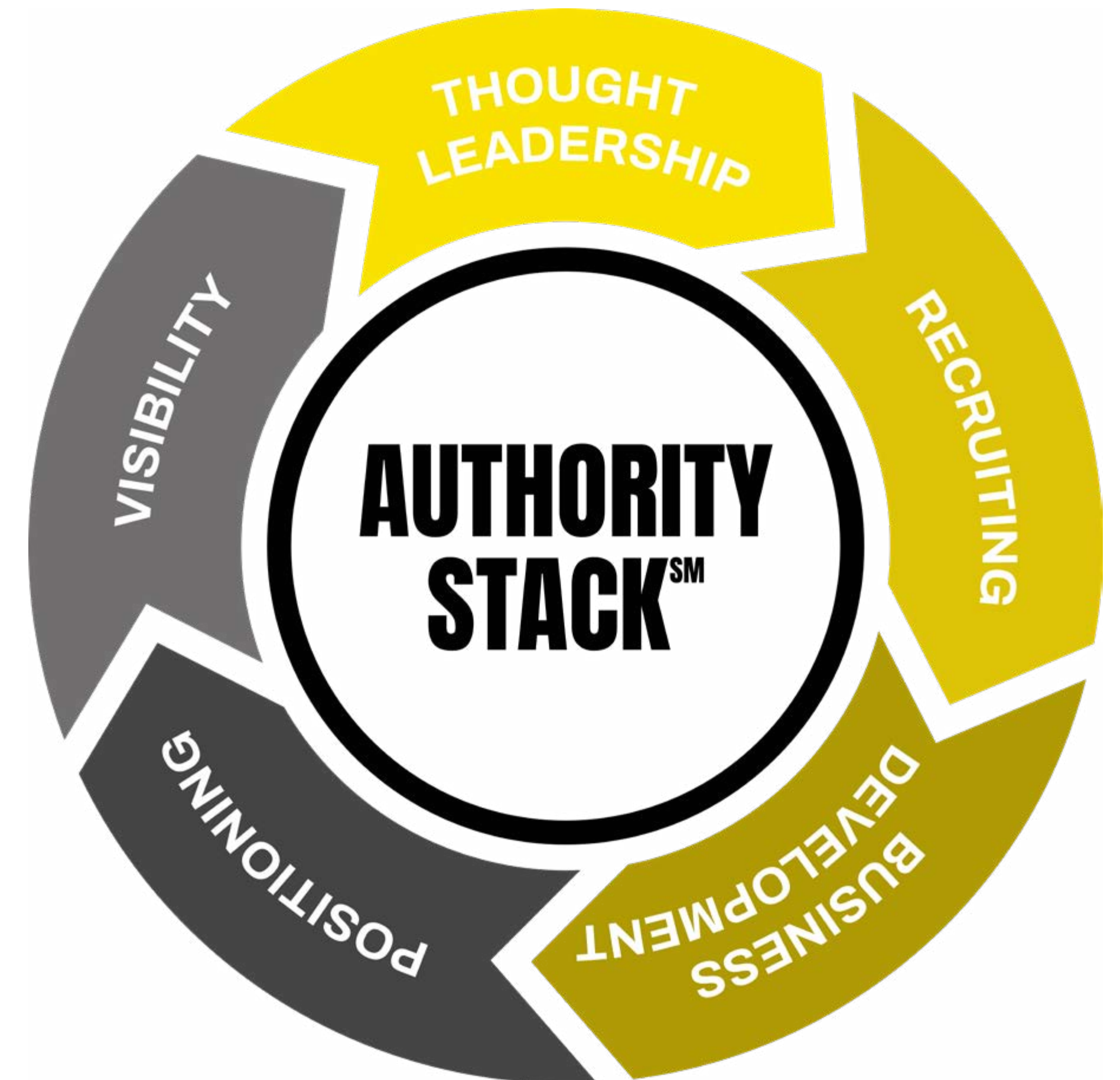
WHO IS ALTCMO?

AltCMO is the only marketing firm built exclusively for the construction industry, led by **fractional Chief Marketing Officers (CMOs)** who have spent their careers working with general contractors, trade contractors, and industry partners. We don't generalize from other industries and apply it to construction; we work exclusively in construction, which means faster ramp-up, fewer wasted decisions, and strategies that reflect how this industry actually works.

BEYOND SEO: BUILDING AUTHORITY THAT LASTS

We built our AI-powered SEO program after watching too many construction clients pay premium rates to generalist agencies that spent months (often years) learning the industry, on the client's dime. We already know the language, procurement cycles, project types, and buyer personas. That knowledge cuts out the learning curve and gives your program momentum from week one.

SEO gets you found. But being found and being chosen are two different things. That's why we built **Authority Stack**, a content and visibility program designed specifically for AEC firms that want to be cited by AI, recognized by industry media, and remembered by the clients they're competing for. It covers long-form articles, project spotlights, social campaigns, awards, and video, everything that converts a search result into a decision.



LET'S BUILD

READY TO SEE WHERE YOUR WEBSITE STANDS AGAINST THESE BENCHMARKS?

We offer a complimentary SEO and thought leadership review tailored to your firm, not a generic audit, but a real assessment grounded in three years of construction-specific research.

We'll show you exactly where you stand, what the gap looks like compared to your peers, and how AltCMO's construction-specific SEO program and Authority Stack can move those numbers.

