

Why Your **Paid** and **SEO** Teams Need to **Synergise Efforts** in **2026**

AN ADLIFT PERSPECTIVE



We said it in 2025. The Data Proved it

Now **AI** has made it non-negotiable.

In **January 2025**, **Prashant Puri** wrote on PPC Hero that integrating SEO and paid search was no longer optional.

AdLift's own research across **80+ websites** showed: When **SEO** accounts for **50%** of **paid search traffic**, CAC drops **20%**. When SEO fully matches paid session volume, CAC drops **60%**.

Most brands read it and went back to their silos anyway.

In 2026, that decision is costing them.

What changed and What it is **Costing Brands** right now

Paid CTR on queries featuring AI Overviews has plummeted **68%**, dropping from **19.7%** to **6.34%** between **June 2024** and **September 2025**. In **July 2025**, paid CTR collapsed from **11% to 3%** in a **single month**.

At the same time, **average CPCs** have risen by as much as **40%**, marketing budgets are flatlining, and **20 to 30%** of most accounts' spend is quietly underperforming.

You are paying more **per click**. Getting fewer of them. And a significant **chunk** of your **budget** is doing very little.

The **Proof** was always there

AdLift's 2025 research across **80+** client websites:

- SEO conversions run **40 to 60%** higher than paid
- Finance client: **108%** organic traffic growth, **52%** CAC reduction
- BFSI client: **2x top-10** rankings, **84%** SEO traffic growth, **28%** lower CAC
- Loan services: **340%** more SEO-driven leads

These outcomes did not happen from paid working harder or SEO working smarter in isolation. They happened because **both disciplines shared a brief.**

The New Problem

AI is collapsing the consideration phase

Customer journeys that used to take days are now compressed into minutes. AI Overviews handle the research and comparison activities that traditionally occurred across multiple search sessions.

The clicks that remain are higher intent. But you only win them if your brand is already visible and trusted in the AI responses that came before the click.

Organic AI presence comes first. Paid amplifies a brand that is already present. In that order.

From Prashant Puri, CEO, AdLift

“ In 2025 we published the data. **SEO** and **Paid** working together cuts CAC by up to **60%**.

The math was clear then. In **2026**, with AI compressing the funnel and CPCs still climbing, the brands still running these as separate strategies are fighting the algorithm with one hand tied behind their back ”



Why organic **AI** presence is now a **Paid Media** problem

Paid visibility is shifting from **buying clicks** to buying inclusion. Brands that are not already eligible and trusted will **Pay More** and **Win Less**.

The same signals that determine organic AI citations now influence paid inclusion in **AI-mediated surfaces**. Weak organic AI presence means **higher CPCs, lower Quality Scores, and deprioritised placements**.

Paid ads and AI summaries now frequently appear side by side. **Aligning paid and organic messaging** so both reinforce the same authority signals is no longer optional.

The AdLift approach:

2 TOOLS, 1 STRATEGY

Step 1

Know where you stand with [Tesseract](#) Before touching a campaign or a content brief, audit your brand's AI citation footprint.

Tesseract tracks your presence across ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, and DeepSeek in real time, including sentiment scores.

If AI is citing a competitor when someone asks about your category, paid spend will not fix that. Tesseract identifies it so you can.

Step 2

Build content authority with **ContentLiftTM** The brands winning **AI citations have deep, structured, authoritative content.**

ContentLift builds exactly that.

18.8M+ WORDS.

840K+ BACKLINKS.

350+ CLIENTS.

The same content that earns organic AI citations also improves **landing page Quality Scores**, which directly lowers your CPCs.

Step 3

Layer in paid with a shared brief Once your AI presence is mapped and your **content foundation is solid, paid becomes an amplifier.**

Campaigns are structured around intent. **First-party data trains platform algorithms** toward your highest-value segments.

Creative is informed by what is already working organically, not briefed in isolation.

4 things to do this Quarter

- # Run an **AI citation** audit with **Tesseract**
- # Align **Paid and SEO teams** on a shared **keyword** brief this week
- # Audit your top **paid landing pages** for **organic performance**
- # **Stop measuring** paid and organic separately. The metric that matters is blended **CAC** across the full search portfolio

The **Brands** winning in **2026** are **not spending** more.

They are **Spending Smarter** because their paid and organic strategies are finally talking to each other.

The **ones still running silos** are paying higher **CPCs** for fewer **clicks on weaker pages**.

The integration conversation **Prashant** started in **2025** is the most important conversation you can have about your **paid media budget today**.

THE SILO ERA IS OVER

**ONE BRIEF. ONE GOAL.
ONE NUMBER: BLENDED CAC**

Let's build it together

adlift.com

