

Become the winery Google and AI recommend.

A Search and AI strategy for Black Estate

NEW ZEALAND · AUSTRALIA · THE TRAVELLING WORLD | PREPARED FOR PEN NAISH
· AUGUST 2026

1. Executive summary

The short version. You have spent nineteen years building one of New Zealand's genuinely special wineries, a certified organic and biodynamic estate with a restaurant, a cellar door and a story people travel for. That work has quietly given you the most valuable asset in search: real authority. The gap is that when a traveller opens ChatGPT to plan a South Island trip, or types "wineries near Christchurch" into Google, the answer is written from other people's pages, not yours. Your goal is not more online wine sales. It is to be the winery the AI recommends, the name that fills the restaurant, the cellar door and the private tours. You already have the hard part. What is missing is the search and AI foundation that turns your reputation into recommendations, and a migration this week that protects everything you have built rather than putting it at risk.

Three things to know

- **You are the authority leader of your region, and you have not cashed it in.** Your Domain Rating is 51 with 873 referring domains, ahead of every neighbour we checked, Pegasus Bay (43), Greystone (37), Pyramid Valley (32) and even the national biodynamic names Felton Road (40) and Millton (27). Yet you rank for only 36 organic keywords, and nearly all of them are your own name. The years of hard work are done. The lever is on-page foundations, not more link building. [AHREFS](#)
- **The travellers are already finding you, from all over the world.** Over the last 90 days your site drew visitors from New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, the United States, Japan and the UK, and your most-read page after the homepage is "Things to do", not the shop. Destination discovery is already your strongest pull. It is just running on brand searches, not on the category questions travellers actually ask. [YOUR GA4](#)

- The AI answer layer is already live in your category, and already sending you people. Google now fires an AI Overview on "wineries near Christchurch" and "New Zealand pinot noir". Your own GA4 shows a live "AI Assistant" channel that has grown from 2 sessions in May to 49 in July. Whoever gets cited first holds that recommendation. Right now that is not reliably you. **AHREFS + YOUR GA4**

DR 51

your Domain Rating, the strongest winery in your region

~50%

of your traffic is already organic search, the channel you own

2 → 49

monthly visits from AI assistants already, up from 2 in May

45 / 100

AEO readiness today, Certified is 80

Where you focus, at a glance

Destination discovery

YOUR #2 PAGE ALREADY

YOUR PULL

Travellers plan trips around wineries, and your "Things to do" page already out-reads your shop four to one. Own the top-three destination answers and the AI trip-planning recommendation.

The biodynamic & wine story

~3,600 GLOBAL SEARCHES / MO

OPEN LANE

You are a certified biodynamic estate that says almost nothing about it online. "Biodynamic wine" and "New Zealand pinot noir" both draw real global demand and fire AI answers. Yours to own.

The 1 September migration

DAYS AWAY

PROTECT IT NOW

Your Shopify launch is the one moment that can lock in nineteen years of authority or leak it away. Getting the redirects right is the highest-return work on the table this quarter.

Grounded in your real GA4 and a live Ahrefs pull of your site and your competitors, not category guesswork. Search Console will sharpen the keyword picture further once we have access.

GA4 + AHREFS

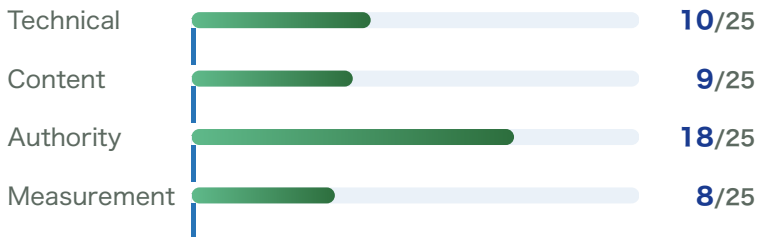
2. How AI-ready you are today: the AEO scorecard

We score every brand out of 100 against our AEO Maturity Model: four pillars (Technical, Content, Authority, Measurement), each out of 25. **Certified is 80 out of 100**, Professional on all four, the standard we build clients to. You are at 45 today, and it is the best kind of starting line: your authority is already near the top, and the whole gap sits in the two pillars that move fastest.

Black Estate

EMERGING · STRONG AUTHORITY, THIN SURFACE

45/100

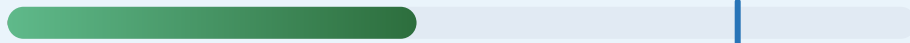


+35

points to Certified. Your authority already sits at Professional, the pillar most wineries would take a decade to build. The climb is technical and content, the two fastest-moving pillars, and the new Shopify build is the perfect moment to do it.

WHERE YOU ARE · WHERE YOU NEED TO BE

Black Estate



45 / 100

Today · Emerging, 45 / 100

Where you need to be · Certified, 80 / 100

Pillar	Where you sit	Why
Technical	10 / 25	Stock WordPress and WooCommerce. Bare-default robots.txt, no llms.txt, and none of the Winery, Restaurant, Product or FAQ schema AI reads. Menu and transport details are locked inside PDFs. All fixable, and the new Shopify build is the moment to fix it.
Content	9 / 25	No blog (the current one is a newsletter signup), no FAQ blocks, and product pages that read beautifully but omit pairings, style and the biodynamic story. Little for AI to cite.
Authority	18 / 25	Your standout pillar. DR 51, 873 referring domains, 7,316 backlinks, the strongest in your region. This is what makes fast ranking gains realistic.
Measurement	8 / 25	GA4 is clean and in place. Search Console not yet shared, no captured baseline, no AI tracking. Setting this up first makes every gain visible.

3. The 1 September migration: your biggest risk, and your biggest quick win

This is the most time-bound section in the document. You are moving from WooCommerce to Shopify, and the new site goes live on 1 September, days away. A migration is the single moment that can make or break nineteen years of search authority, and it needs a plan.

Why this matters so much for you. Your authority lives in 7,316 backlinks pointing at specific pages: your homepage, your wines, your "Things to do" page, and your vintage archive of 130-plus wines going back to 2010. When the site moves, every one of those URLs changes. Redirect each old address to its correct new home and all that authority carries across. Miss them and those links hit dead ends, the authority drains away over the following months, and rankings quietly fall. It is invisible on launch day and expensive by Christmas.

We have seen this happen. A brand we work with, Nature Baby, migrated to Shopify without a tight redirect plan. Everything looked fine on the day, then broken links piled up over the following months, their Australian traffic fell, and it cost real money to recover. Your site is more static than theirs, which helps, but you carry more history: that vintage archive is pure link equity, and it is exactly the kind of deep, older page migrations tend to drop.

What the migration needs, in order	Why it matters
A complete 301 redirect map	Every old URL (23 pages plus 400-plus product and vintage URLs) pointed to its correct Shopify home, so authority and rankings carry across
Protect the vintage archive	Your 130-plus historical wines hold real backlink equity and brand value, and get lost first in a migration
Rebuild the technical foundations on the new site	robots.txt, lms.txt, Winery and Restaurant schema, clean headings and meta, so the new site launches AI-ready
Get key info out of PDFs	Your menu and transport details become real, crawlable pages that AI can read and recommend

The single highest-return work right now. With launch on us, the highest-return move is to get on the migration immediately: review your developer's plan, lock the redirect map, and stay across it through go-live and the critical first weeks after, which is exactly when broken redirects surface. It protects the traffic you already have, and the new site settles in certified AI-ready instead of carrying the same gaps into a fresh platform.

4. The market: search, AI, and the traveller

Here is where we are deliberately honest, because it shapes the right strategy for you. New Zealand is a small country and premium biodynamic wine is a niche, so raw local search volumes are modest. The value for Black Estate is in three things: owning the low-competition destination terms you already rank for, winning the AI recommendation layer where volume does not show up in a keyword tool, and reaching the international traveller who plans ahead.

Destination discovery, your primary goal

Search term	NZ vol / mo	Difficulty	AI answer live
waipara wineries	250	Low (22)	Local pack
wineries near christchurch	20	Low (17)	Yes
north canterbury wineries	40	Very low (6)	Local pack
best wineries new zealand	40	Very low (1)	Featured
north canterbury restaurants	30	Very low (0)	Local pack

Small numbers, but read what they are: high-intent, low-difficulty, and you are already on page one for most of them. These are searches to win in months, because your authority already exceeds everyone competing for them. And "wineries near Christchurch" already fires an AI Overview, the recommendation you most want to own. [AHREFS, NZ](#)

Wine and brand, at home and globally

Search term	NZ vol / mo	Global vol / mo	AI answer live
new zealand pinot noir	80	1,200	Yes + shopping
biodynamic wine	20	3,600	Knowledge panel
natural wine new zealand	20	30	Some
north canterbury / waipara pinot noir	~30	120	Some

The local wine numbers are thin, but two terms carry real global demand that speaks to your traveller and export audience: "biodynamic wine" (3,600 a month worldwide, and you are a certified example of it) and "New Zealand pinot noir" (1,200 a month, already firing an AI Overview and a shopping pack). You hold genuine authority to be the cited answer for both. [AHREFS](#)

The real prize: the AI recommendation. The questions that fill your restaurant and cellar door are spoken into ChatGPT and Gemini, not typed into a keyword tool: "plan me three days in the South Island", "best biodynamic winery to visit in New Zealand", "where should we have lunch near Waipara". These have no clean search volume, which is exactly why they are the opportunity. AI engines prefer sources that are specific, credible and expert, and a certified biodynamic estate with three named vineyards, a real restaurant and a nineteen-year archive is precisely what they like to cite. The reason they do not cite you reliably yet is that the pages answering those questions do not exist. Build them, and your authority does the rest.

5. The opportunity, honestly

Your goal is destination discovery and brand, so we will not pretend this is a big online-sales play. The value lands in three honest places, in order of certainty.

First: protect what you already have

Your organic search already feeds a business turning over roughly NZD \$2.5M a year, with the restaurant and cellar door alone at about 55% of that. A clean migration protects that traffic; a poor one puts a slice of it at risk, as it did for Nature Baby. This is the most certain return on the table, and it is why the timing is now.

Second: recover the online channel

Online was 20% of your wine sales before 2022 and is around 3% of the business today, worth about NZD \$83,000 a year at a healthy NZD \$266 order value. Anchored to your real order value, here is what recovery looks like.

Case	Extra organic-driven orders / yr	First-order revenue / yr
Conservative	+150	NZD \$40,000
Mid	+300	NZD \$80,000
Upside	+500	NZD \$133,000

Anchored to your real NZD \$266 order value. Wine is a repeat purchase and you are moving to a subscription model, so lifetime value runs well above first-order. Treat these as first-order floors.

GA4 + MODEL

Third: fill the restaurant, cellar door and tours

This is your biggest prize and your least measurable, so we hold it directionally. Every extra traveller who finds you through an AI recommendation or a top-three destination ranking, and books a table, a tasting or a private Netherwood tour, spends at full margin and walks the wine out the door. Because the visit economy is 55% of your business, a modest lift here dwarfs the online line. We size it precisely once we have your covers and average spend.

Illustrative visit-economy lift (directional)	Value / yr
+300 destination-driven dining parties (~\$180 each)	NZD \$54,000 DIRECTIONAL
+100 private tour bookings (Netherwood, party of 2)	NZD \$25,000 DIRECTIONAL

Directional only, using placeholder average spends we replace with your real covers and average spend in the first weeks. The point is the shape: small discovery gains on the visit side are worth more than large ones online. MODELLED

6. Competitive white space

Here is the organic footprint of the wineries in your world, pulled live from Ahrefs. It shows both the prize and why you are so well placed to take it.

Winery (NZ scope)	Domain Rating	Organic keywords	Referring domains
Black Estate	51	36	873
Pegasus Bay (neighbour)	43	26	832
Greystone (Waipara)	37	19	600
Felton Road (Central Otago, biodynamic)	40	2*	778
Pyramid Valley (biodynamic)	32	2	601
Millton (Gisborne, biodynamic)	27	5	619

*Felton Road and Pyramid Valley run .com sites with largely international audiences, so an NZ-only filter understates their keyword counts. The regional Waipara comparison is the truest read, and you lead it. [AHREFS SITE EXPLORER, NZ](#)

You own your name. You are absent on the category.

Your search visibility today

SHARE THAT IS YOUR OWN
BRAND NAME

~12 of 15 terms

The category you win

NON-BRANDED, IN THE TOP
THREE

~0

Of your top 15 ranking terms, 12 are your own name. The handful of category terms you rank for ("waipara wineries", "winery christchurch") all sit on page one but outside the top three, on brand strength alone, with none of the content that would push them up. That is the easiest kind of gap to close. [AHREFS](#)

Your white space. Three open lanes, and you are the natural owner of all three. First, the Waipara and North Canterbury destination terms, low difficulty, already page one, waiting for the content to push them top three. Second, the biodynamic and natural-wine story, a global-interest topic you are a certified authority on and say almost nothing about online. Third, the AI travel recommendation, where the questions have no keyword volume, the competition has no content, and your reputation is the tiebreaker.

7. Foundations, honestly

We crawled your current site. The honest headline: strong authority, thin foundations, and a migration that is the perfect moment to fix all of it at once.

Finding	Status	Where it is handled
DR 51, 873 referring domains, category-leading authority	Strong asset	Protect through migration
"Things to do" page answers logistics well and ranks	Real asset	Expand + schema
robots.txt bare default; AI crawlers not welcomed; no llms.txt	Gap	Quick technical fix
No Winery, Restaurant, LocalBusiness, Product or FAQ schema	Gap	Core technical fix
No blog; the current "blog" is a newsletter signup	The real content gap	Set up + content
Menu and transport details locked inside PDFs	Issue	Convert to real pages
Vintage archive (130+ wines) holds equity but is thin and at migration risk	Protect + enrich	Redirect map + content
Search Console not yet shared; no baseline or AI tracking	Gap	Measurement setup

The single highest-leverage fix. Build the technical foundations (schema, llms.txt, clean structure) into the new Shopify site as it launches, get your menu and key info out of PDFs and into real pages, and stand up the blog and FAQ structure. Your authority already tells the engines to trust you. This gives them something worth reading and quoting when they do.

What we would build, and what it costs. Given where you are, the smart move is a focused 60-day Foundations Sprint that protects the migration, builds your technical and authority foundations, and stands up a real content library on Notable, then hands you the engine to keep running. The full scope, timeline and pricing live in [The offer](#) tab.

Search volumes and competitor data from a live Ahrefs Site Explorer and Keywords Explorer pull, New Zealand scope, August 2026. Black Estate traffic, channels, order value and geography from your real GA4, last 12 months. Foundations from a live crawl of blackestate.co.nz; schema findings

are directional pending a Rich Results Test on the new site. The AEO scorecard uses Team Empathy's four-pillar maturity rubric. Online recovery figures are modelled and anchored to your real order value; visit-economy figures are directional placeholders. Revenue figures are directional, not a guarantee of results.

Team Empathy

Helping brands become the one AI recommends

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