

TECHNICAL

The Schema Markup AI Engines Actually Use (and the Kind They Ignore)

By Scott Tischler · August 31, 2026 · 7 min read

Structured data grew up

For years, schema markup was treated as an SEO nicety — a way to earn a star rating or a rich snippet. In the AI-answer era it has quietly become something more important: it's how you hand a machine a clean, unambiguous version of your facts before it has to guess. Answer engines are trying to build a confident, correct picture of your business. Schema is the difference between making them infer that picture from messy prose and handing it to them structured.

That reframing matters because it tells you what schema can and can't do. It doesn't manufacture authority — no amount of markup makes a model trust a claim nothing else on the web supports. What it does is remove friction and ambiguity from the facts you can back up, so the model spends less effort guessing and is more willing to state things about you plainly.

The schema that carries weight

You don't need dozens of types. A handful map directly onto what answer engines are trying to understand.

- **Organization / Person.** This is your entity's identity card — name, description, links to your other profiles (the sameAs property), logo, founding details. It's the anchor everything else attaches to, and consistency here is the foundation of how the web understands who you are.
- **Article.** For every substantial piece of content: headline, author, publish date, section. It tells the engine this is authored, dated, attributable material — exactly the kind it prefers to cite.
- **FAQPage.** Genuine questions with self-contained answers, marked up so the machine can lift them cleanly. This is one of the highest-leverage additions for getting quoted, because it pre-packages extractable answers.

- **Product / Service.** Where you sell something, structured details — what it is, who it's for, how it's priced or categorized — help the model answer "best X for Y" questions accurately.

Notice the pattern: each type corresponds to a real question an engine asks about a business — who are you, what did you publish, what do you answer, what do you sell. Schema types that don't map to those questions add clutter, not clarity.

The rules that make it work

Three principles separate schema that helps from schema that's ignored or, worse, penalized.

Mark up only what's true and corroborated

Schema is a claim, and models cross-check claims. Marking up an award you didn't win or a credential you can't support doesn't fool anything — it just adds a contradiction the model will discount. Structure the facts you can defend, everywhere they appear.

Keep schema and page in agreement

The structured data must match what a human sees on the page, and ideally what the rest of the web says too. When your schema, your visible content, and your off-site presence all tell the same story, the model treats it as settled. When they disagree, the whole signal weakens.

Validate and maintain it

Broken or outdated schema is a slow leak. Run it through a validator, fix errors, and update it when facts change. This is unglamorous maintenance, but structured data only works while it's accurate.

The honest role of schema

My practitioner's take: schema is necessary but not sufficient. It's the clean skeleton your entity hangs on — get it right and the rest of your authority work has something solid to attach to; skip it and you force the models to reconstruct your facts from prose, which they'll do less confidently. It won't make you the answer on its own. But paired with real content, corroboration, and consistency, it removes a whole category of reasons an engine might get you wrong or leave you out. Build the skeleton, then earn the authority that fills it in.

Key takeaways

- ◆ Schema markup gives answer engines an unambiguous, machine-readable version of your facts — reducing the guesswork that makes models hedge or omit you.

- ✦ Not all schema is equal for AEO: Organization, Person, Article, FAQPage and Product carry real weight; obscure types mostly don't.
- ✦ Schema doesn't invent authority — it clarifies facts you can already back up. Marking up claims you can't corroborate elsewhere does nothing.
- ✦ Consistency between your schema and the visible page (and the rest of the web) is what earns trust; contradictions get discounted.
- ✦ FAQPage schema in genuine question-and-answer form is one of the highest-leverage additions for getting passages quoted.
- ✦ Validate it, keep it current, and treat it as the skeleton the rest of your entity signals hang on.

Frequently asked questions

Does schema markup directly make AI recommend me?

Not directly — schema doesn't create authority, it clarifies facts. What it does is remove ambiguity, giving the model a clean, structured version of who you are, what you offer, and how things relate. That makes it easier and safer for the engine to state facts about you confidently, which is a real advantage when the alternative is the model guessing or hedging.

Which schema types matter most for AEO?

Organization and Person (for entity identity), Article (for content), FAQPage (for quotable Q&A), and Product or Service where relevant. These map to the things AI engines are actually trying to understand about a business. Exotic schema types add little; get the core ones right and consistent first.

Can bad schema hurt me?

Yes — schema that contradicts your visible content or the rest of the web is worse than none, because it signals unreliability. Mark up only what's true and corroborated, keep it in sync with the page, and validate it. The goal is a consistent story, not a longer one.

About the author. Scott Tischler is the Founder & Chairman of Alrecommend.ai and a practitioner-authority on AI search and Answer Engine Optimization. With 20+ years in marketing technology — including American Express, MetLife, and UBS — and executive and professional study at Wharton, Harvard, and Oxford, he helps businesses become the ones AI recommends.