

17 THINGS

Jono Alderson Said That
Made The Ground Shift.

This Wasn't A Keynote. It Was
A Warning.



TL;DR

The web no longer has a front door.

AKA: People decide before they ever reach your site.



1 The thing we all quietly assume

**For ~20,000 years we've relied
on the same things:**

Any of these, in fact:

- shout loudly
- grab attention
- pull someone inside
- control the environment
- influence what happens next

Crossing the
threshold =
power.

Everything we
do is built on
that **one idea.**



2 The web didn't change the model

When the web arrived, the tools changed. The model didn't.

- Ads.
- Email.
- SEO.
- Content.
- CRO.

**All designed to
do the same
thing:**

**Get them
through**



**the digital
threshold.**

2 The web didn't change the model

Once they were inside

We had the power to

- control the story
- frame the choices
- optimise behaviour

That was the deal.

3 CRO's quiet dependency

CRO assumes something critical: the user arrives unopinionated

So we have

- funnels, tests, dashboards, heuristics
- that only work after arrival.

But what if

**No visit = no
influence.**

**No influence =
no CRO.**

This matters.

A lot.



3 Then the gatekeepers arrived

**Search engines. Feeds.
Marketplaces. Platforms.**

Visibility stopped being about:

- “Who shouts loudest?”

And became

- “Who the system allows through.”

**We stopped
persuading
humans.**

**We started
persuading
filters.**

And CRO...

**stayed
inside the
site.**

4 The threshold quietly eroded

Then something worse happened.

People stopped needing to click at all.

- Search became answers.
- Feeds became decisions.
- Comparison happened upstream

Over 50% of searches now end without a click.

No visit.

No threshold.

No *journey* 

to optimise.

5 And then AI finished the job

LLMs don't send traffic.

They:

- synthesise
- summarise
- compare
- recommend

5 And then AI finished the job

And the final blow?

Your site becomes:

- a citation
- a data point
- or nothing at all

**There is no
arrival
moment.**

Not anymore.



6 No arrival means no data

You are now blind

No visit means:

- no analytics
- no attribution
- no journeys
- no forms
- no experiments

The system
answers
privately.

You were never
told that you
lost.



7 The machine immune system

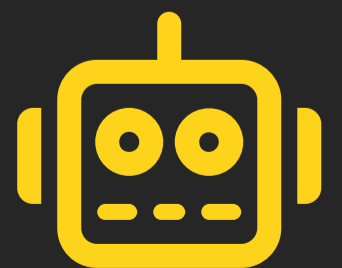
Modern systems behave like immune systems

They:

- detect manipulation
- strip persuasion
- cross-check claims
- collapse generic content
- reject “conversion theatre”

**Everything
that worked on
humans?**

**Does not
survive
contact with
machines.**



8 What gets stripped away

Everything is flattened into statistical noise

Gone:

- funnels
- layouts
- button tests
- colour psychology
- urgency
- emotional nudges

**The machine
only keeps:**

**meaning.
evidence.
coherence.**



9 CRO's uncomfortable position

**You're optimising the things
the machine discards.**

Not because CRO is bad, but

- **because the paradigm moved**

**You're optimising
for an audience
that**

increasingly

never arrives.



10 The surface is dead

Not “dying”. Not “changing”.

- It's dead.

The interface is
no longer where
decisions
happen.



11 So where do decisions happen?

Upstream.

Inside the system's understanding of the world

- not on your site
- but across everything it knows about you.

**Your site is one
signal among
many**

many

many

many

many

many.

12 The corpus

Your influence is now distributed, not contained

The model builds consensus from:

- documentation
- reviews
- forums
- specs
- videos
- Reddit
- old pages you forgot existed

**You don't decide
who you are.**

The system does.



13 Reputation becomes structural

Trust isn't emotional anymore.

It's:

- consistency
- corroboration
- absence of contradiction
- completeness

14 The real shift

Trust isn't emotional anymore.

The new experiment is not:

- A vs B

It's:

- what the system believes
- how you're described
- whether you're included at all

Inclusion



Conversion



15 The website's new job

Your site isn't dead. It's been demoted.

It now:

- anchors interpretation
- stabilises meaning
- trains the system

You're no longer
publishing for
humans first.

You're publishing
for **interpretation.**



16 Precision beats performance

**Speed. UX polish. Visual
rhythm. Nice. Secondary.**

What matters now:

- clarity
- boring details
- specs
- limitations
- definitions
- truth

**The stuff we've
historically
hidden.**



17 The new mandate

**You are no longer optimising
behaviour.**

You are:

- **shaping understanding**

**Not funnels.
Not pages.**

Reality.



Final mic drop

**Your next experiment
shouldn't be on your website.**

**It should be trying to
understand
what the system believes,
how you're represented and
whether you're trusted.**

If your strategy assumes a front door,
you're optimising a moment that
may never happen.



Question The Surface.
Not Just The **Conversion**.
