



sigli

FROM ASSISTANTS TO **AGENTS**

SMARTER AI FOR REAL-WORLD OPS

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01. Introduction: A Workforce Revolution



Before we begin, a quick note. Everything you're about to read is fully human-written, drawing on the real-world expertise of our engineers, developers, and business strategists. This might seem a strange way of opening a whitepaper on AI. However, nuance is everything with emerging technology. And we think it's important to recognise when AI should take a back seat. Rest assured you're hearing **directly from us, not a bot.**

The idea of artificial intelligence running business ops is not new. However, until fairly recently, it existed mostly in science fiction.

Today, the reality is very different. AI agents, which are capable of handling a whole host of operations autonomously, are cutting costs, driving efficiency and fuelling expansion. There are significant opportunities, and now is the time to start taking advantage of them.

This whitepaper explores the current possibilities and applications of AI agents. It also provides a practical implementation roadmap and an overview of the most common obstacles to watch out for.

02. What Is An AI Agent?

“AI agents mirror autonomous humans. When you hire a human, you’re looking for someone that can own the turf within a business. For example, a salesperson really owning the sales component of the business. That’s ultimately what an AI agent is.

Frank Sondors
Founder of Salesforce

Source: Sigli Innovantage Podcast



An AI agent is a computer programme that can execute complex tasks autonomously. AI agents can design and execute entire workflows—such as, for example, resolving a technical issue for a software customer—with limited (and in some cases, zero) human oversight.

The core difference between an AI agent and a generative AI chatbot, such as ChatGPT, is that agents can understand and interact with a digital context or environment. They can reason across different inputs and initiate actions and keep iterating until they achieve an outcome, not just generate text and images.

In certain circumstances, AI agents can even act as intermediaries between the digital and physical worlds. For example, an agent evaluating warehouse performance might create a task to perform extra label scans in an area with a high rate of misplaced goods.

03.

What's The Difference
Between AI Assistants
And Agents?

The terms “assistant” and “agent” are often used interchangeably. However, they are separate technologies, with AI agents representing a significant innovation.

AI agents build on the capabilities of AI assistants. They take the underlying LLM and integrate it with a surrounding software architecture, combining generative capabilities with workflow planning algorithms, memory (state maintenance), probabilistic reasoning, API access, and more.

Here are summaries of the key differences:

AI assistant (or copilot)	AI agent
AI assistants perform self-contained tasks in response to specific commands (or prompts) through a conversational interface. Most AI assistants are conversational chatbots, but it is possible to integrate them with APIs to offer some real-world functionality, although functionality tends to be limited.	AI agents act autonomously and execute complex, multi-step tasks without relying on prompts. AI agents operate in a context and can access a range of tools to complete workflows. Many AI agents can self optimise.
<i>Example:</i> Asking ChatGPT to write an email or summarise a web page	<i>Example:</i> A virtual AI salesperson that researches, composes, and sends outreach emails to a company’s prospective customers.