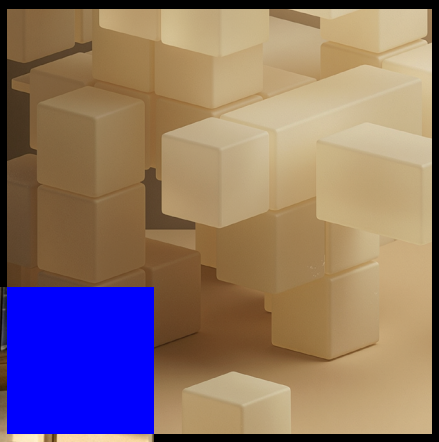
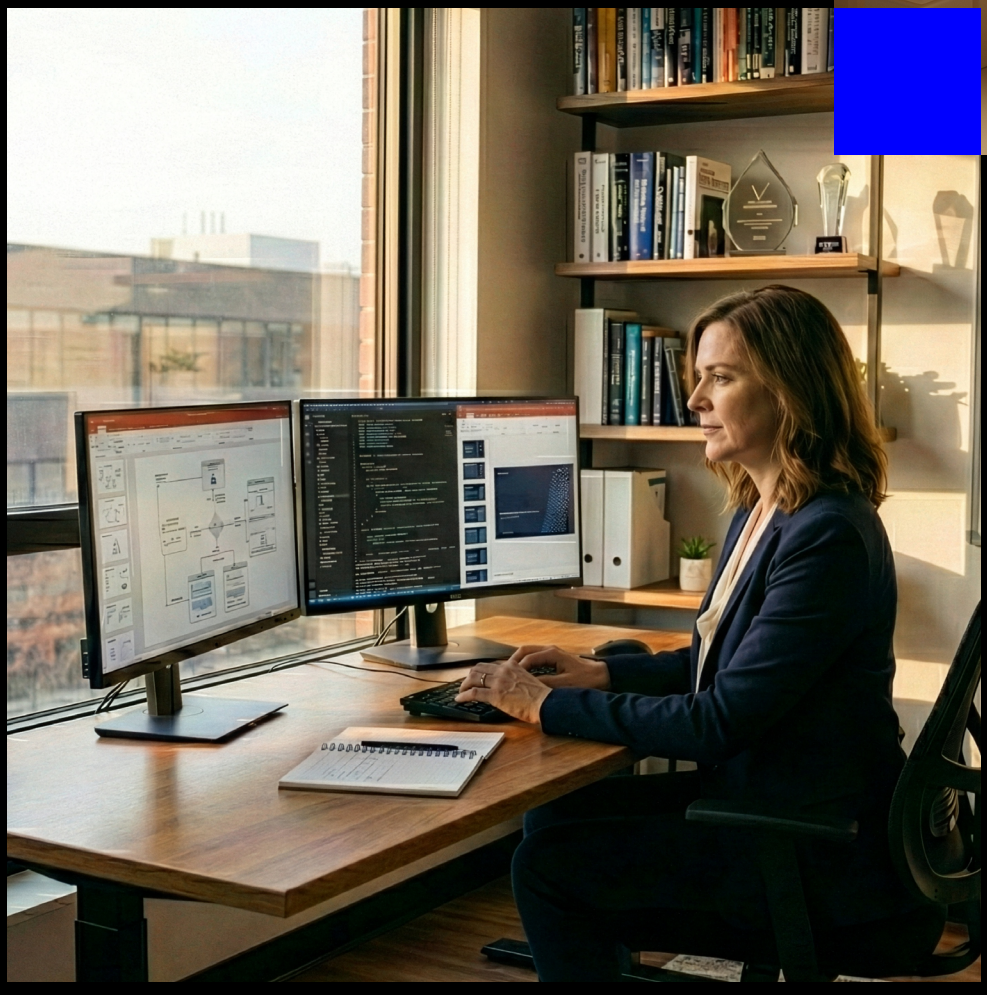
GLG

The Agentic AI Playbook:

Strategic insights from
100 leaders redefining
AI value creation





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Executive summary

As generative AI becomes ubiquitous, business leaders pursuing a competitive advantage are turning to a related but distinct technology: agentic AI, which draws from large language models, machine learning, and natural language processing to execute autonomous decision making. With minimal coding needed, limited supervision requirements, and the ability to handle even more complexity in tasks and goals, agentic AI is capable of transforming organizations and entire industries.

We're still in the early days of agentic AI – and the path to realizing its full potential is riddled with pitfalls. To navigate them, leaders must deeply understand their organizations' processes; think creatively – beyond basic cost efficiencies – about what elements of their work can and should be reinvented; and embrace change as agentic AI breaks down silos and reveals more optimal organizational structures. Success will require thorough knowledge and thoughtful execution.

It will also require ambition. Leaders often lack a clear vision for agentic AI, and their workforces are largely unaligned on its purpose, use, and impact. As a result, most organizations adopting agentic AI are focused on cost savings and efficiency improvements – fruitful gains, but far from the transformational value the technology can unlock.

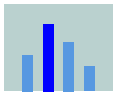
To help chart the way forward, GLG surveyed 100 senior business leaders responsible for deploying and managing agentic AI solutions for their companies and conducted in-depth interviews with 10 more. We leveraged their insights to produce this report, which provides a tactical playbook for bold, forward-thinking agentic AI implementation – detailing key challenges, best practices to overcome them, and the perspective needed to create new value.

About the research

GLG, the founder and leader of the expert network industry, connects clients with the power of human expertise so they can find the intelligence that will give them their strategic edge. In October 2025, GLG surveyed 100 senior leaders in North America, South America, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia responsible for deploying and managing agentic AI solutions for their companies. GLG also conducted in-depth interviews with 10 senior leaders with similar profiles to gather additional context and insights.

The study revealed the following crucial elements of successful agentic AI implementation:

Identifying process gaps currently bridged by subjective decision making: Ambiguity represents the largest barrier to agentic AI adoption. Successful adopters will understand their organization's processes clearly, including where they fail and what gaps tend to be bridged by subjective decision making.



Building architecture for data integration and governance: To be autonomous, agentic systems need access to key business data – which means that organizations must invest in cybersecurity and cross-functional collaboration to maximize the safety and impact of AI agents.

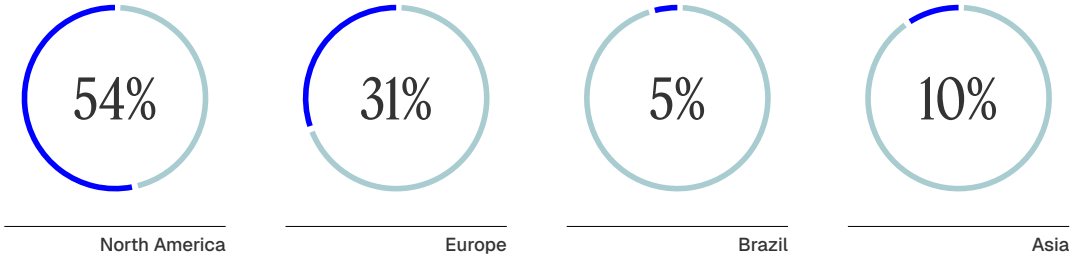
Empowering teams across functions to build agents: To realize the full potential of agentic AI, organizations should draw from the expertise of both IT and line-of-business experts to build internal capability among teams to create and use AI agents.

Orchestrating a robust operationalization plan: Most organizations are focused on cost and efficiency improvements with agentic AI, but the technology's most significant value will come from using it to reimagine job roles and business functions – deepening the need for expertise in digital transformation, creative leadership, and clear visions for agentic AI adoption.

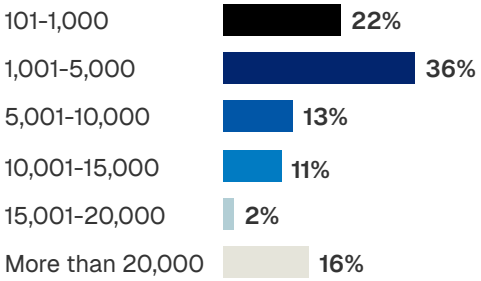
The figures below indicate survey respondents' seniority, their roles, and the distribution of their companies by annual revenue and industry.

Sample distribution

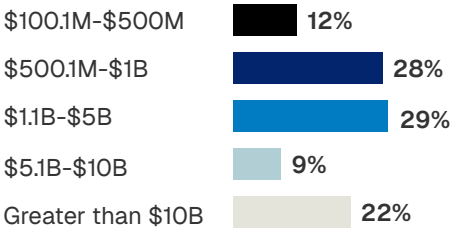
Region



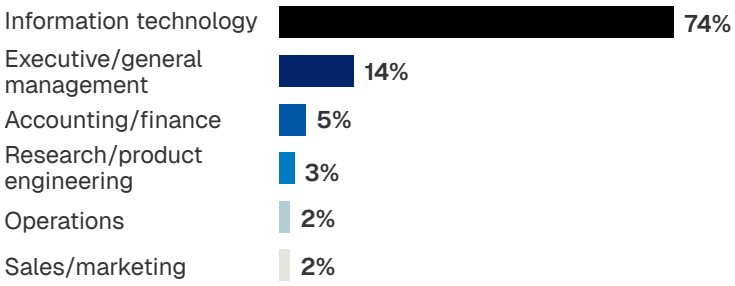
Company size



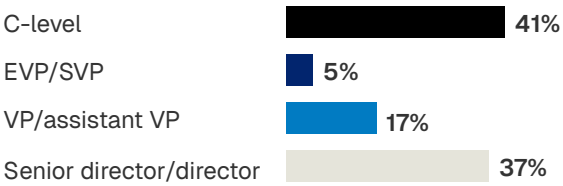
Company revenue



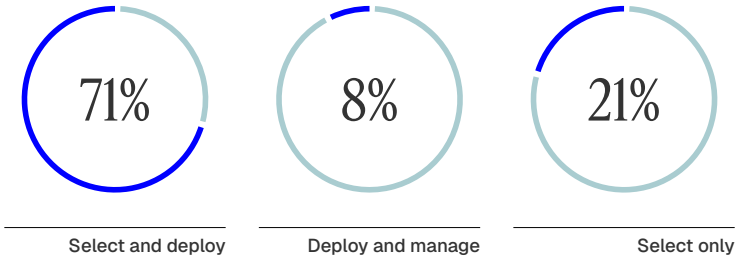
Job function



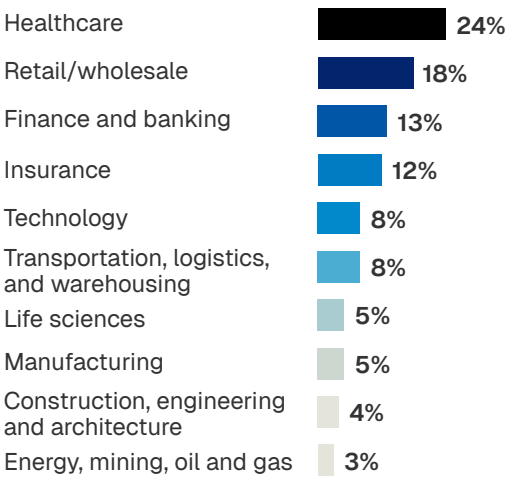
Role/level



Involvement with AI tech



Industry



Background: Barriers to progress with agentic AI

Agentic AI builds on existing AI capabilities. Rather than being a standalone technology or a point solution, it creates new value from previous waves of automation, giving an advantage to organizations that have already done the foundational work of defining processes, clarifying actions in edge cases, and organizing and cleaning up their data. Nearly 90% of survey respondents said that an organization's previous experience with automation helped enable their agentic AI adoption.

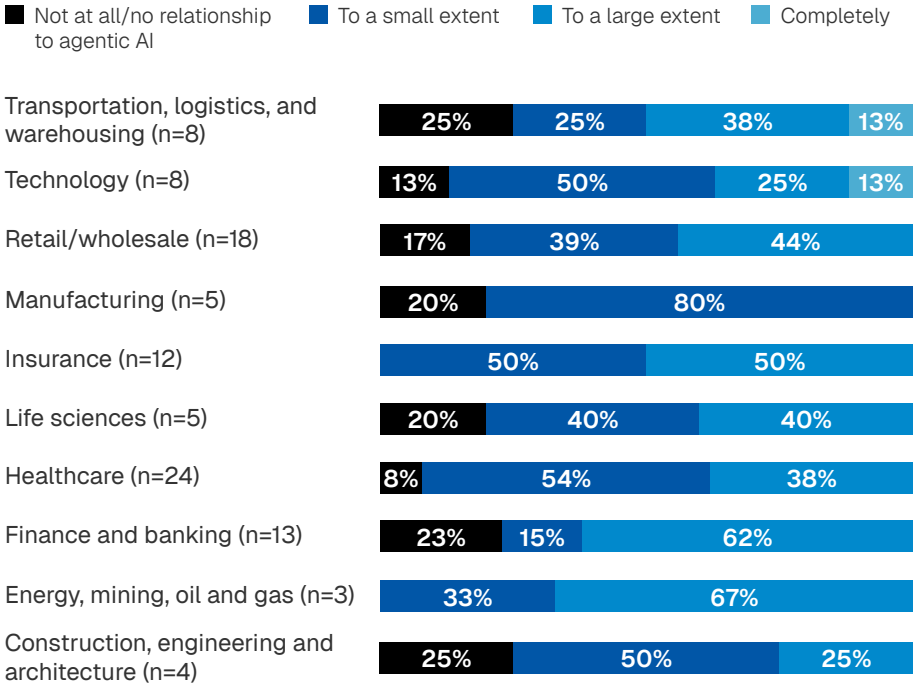
"Organizations that have not previously engaged in RPA

[Robotic Process Automation] or similar initiatives often need to create methodologies and allocate or hire specialized talent from scratch, which slows down adoption and reduces productivity compared to those with established process optimization roles and practices."

HEAD OF AI
at a major transportation infrastructure operator

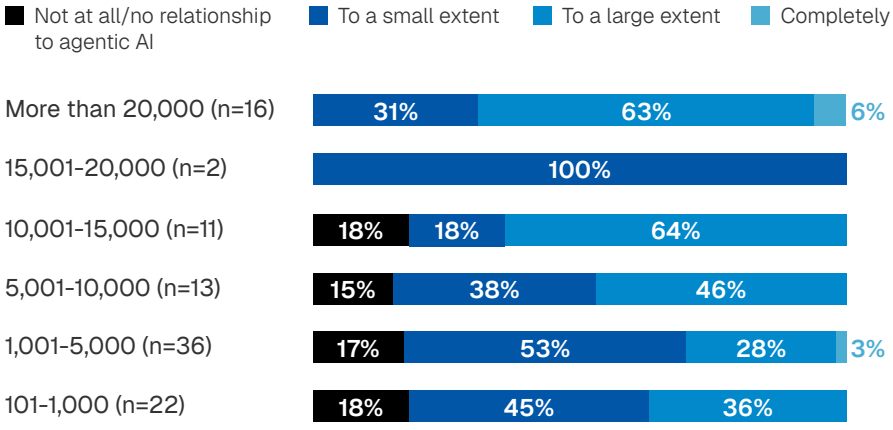
Previous experience with automation by industry

% among total



Previous experience with automation by company size

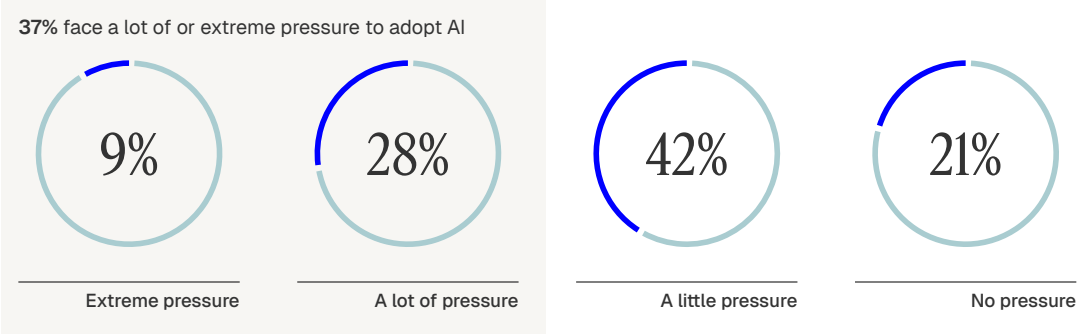
% among total



However, while 37% of survey respondents said that their organizations are under significant pressure to implement agentic AI from their C-level leaders, boards, or shareholders, most are still navigating the earliest steps of adoption. Only 46% of respondents indicated that their organizations have at least one agentic solution in production.

Agentic AI maturity
% among total

Pressure to adopt AI
% among total



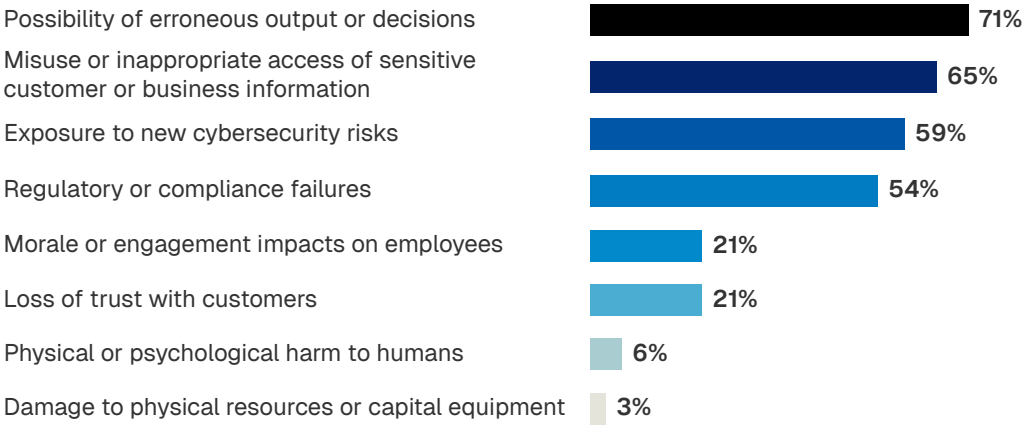
Aside from complex technical challenges, many organizations are wary of agentic AI's apparent risks. 71% of respondents expressed concern about the possibility of erroneous output or decisions, and 65% expressed concern that AI agents might misuse or inappropriately access sensitive customer or business data. Respondents in the technology industry were clear outliers: only 13% expressed concern about the misuse of sensitive data. But in the aggregate, absent clear legal frameworks detailing liability for errors and inadvertent data exposure, organizations are largely on their own when it comes to forecasting risks and creating guardrails, and as a result may hesitate to proceed with the technology.

"What's your tolerance for incorrect results?

That will shape the path you take to find the most appropriate tool for your specific use case."

FORMER MANAGING DIRECTOR
for enterprise data and AI at a national airline

Risks associated with AI agents
% among total



The challenges endemic to all data-related projects can similarly stymie adoption of agentic AI, including resource and budgetary constraints, fragmented or siloed data, and data residency and sovereignty concerns. But agentic AI also poses a unique data management challenge: as agents autonomously integrate data into their tasks, it becomes increasingly difficult to detect problems stemming from the input data's limitations and errors. While human oversight of manual processes may have previously caught instances where insufficient or incorrect data impacted the quality of output, automated agents lacking appropriate guardrails or error-checking may accept faulty inputs and silently proceed with their tasks, producing errors and leaving data issues unresolved.

The rapid pace of change in AI complicates implementation further. When choosing tools to build AI agents, organizations may be overwhelmed by options in an increasingly crowded and constantly evolving market – all while they're still implementing the generative AI technologies that only reached the market within the last three years.

Underlining these challenges is the significant mindset shift that organizations must make to effectively adopt agentic AI, as transitioning from the deterministic workflows of traditional automation to more flexible, autonomous agents demands substantial changes to operational thinking.

"The reason why it's challenging right now,

particularly for businesses that have been around since before generative AI, is that you're still trying to plug these capabilities into your legacy infrastructure. Not just into your technology, but into your people and processes. Moving to a completely different browser experience focused on agentic search, or removing the application layer from your architecture – those are quite radical changes, especially if you're already up and running with a lot of legacy architecture and technology."

GLOBAL TECHNOLOGY DIRECTOR
for an apparel brand

The Agentic AI Playbook

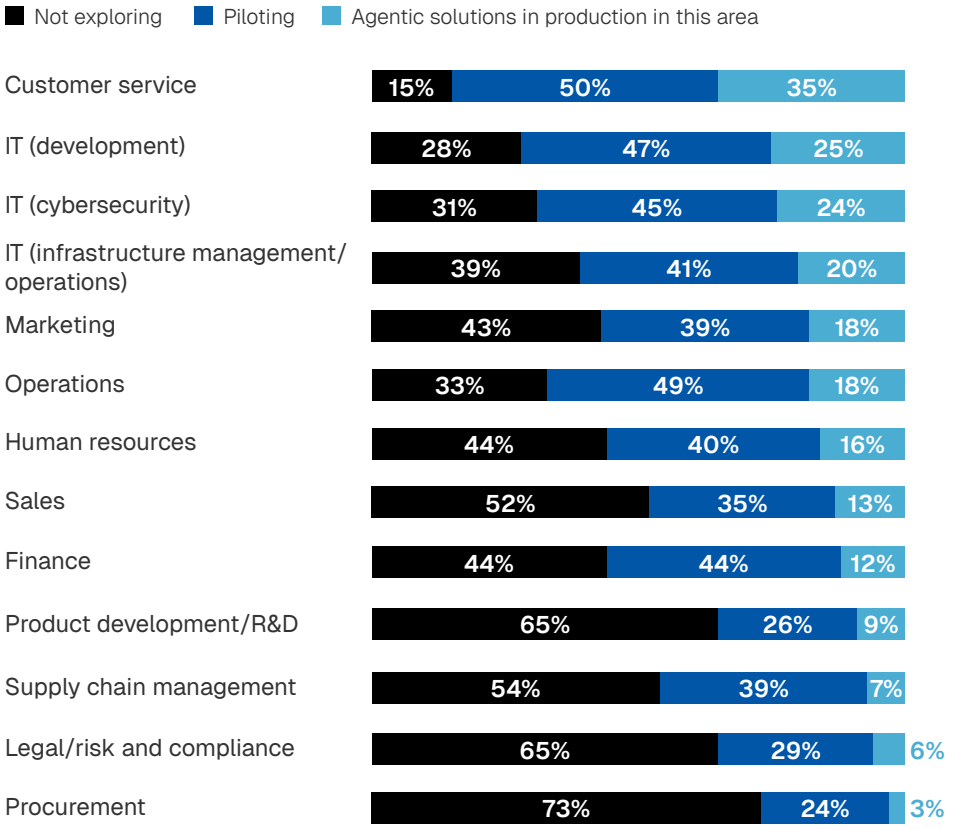
GLG's survey of and in-depth interviews with leading experts revealed key steps organizations can take to overcome these challenges and adopt agentic AI with confidence.

Process discipline

A successful agentic AI program starts with an understanding of where one's business could benefit most from the new technology. The survey found that most organizations are prioritizing use cases in customer service (85%) and IT (72%). Many are also using agentic AI to reduce the workload associated with complex, repetitive tasks, like payment processing in financial services. As the Head of Technology Risk Management at a major bank said, agentic AI can effectively eliminate frequent mistakes caused by human error or mechanical bugs where "the correction step is well known," such as on specific forms. "We know exactly what to do, so we can teach it to an agent."

Use cases for agentic AI

% among total



Once they've identified how agentic AI can add value, organizations must then clearly define the processes that AI agents will execute – documenting how a process should succeed and how it can fail, as well as providing AI agents with key information about how to handle ambiguity, exceptions, and missing information. 70% of respondents said that setting clear process definitions and guidance on handling exceptions are critical to successful deployment.

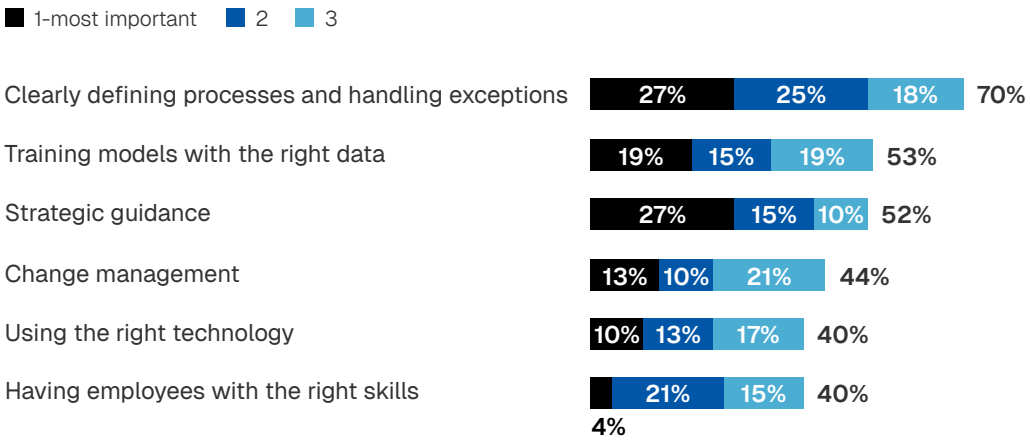
"If you start with a good process

from the beginning, which is mature and well-documented and embedded in the organization, then by automating that process you can build trust and increase the scale."

DIRECTOR FOR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION
at a global insurance provider

Factors supporting successful agentic AI deployment

% among total, sorted descending by rank from one to three



Data integration and governance

57% of respondents indicated that they are investing in data management and quality improvements to ensure that agentic AI has access to complete, high-quality data sets.

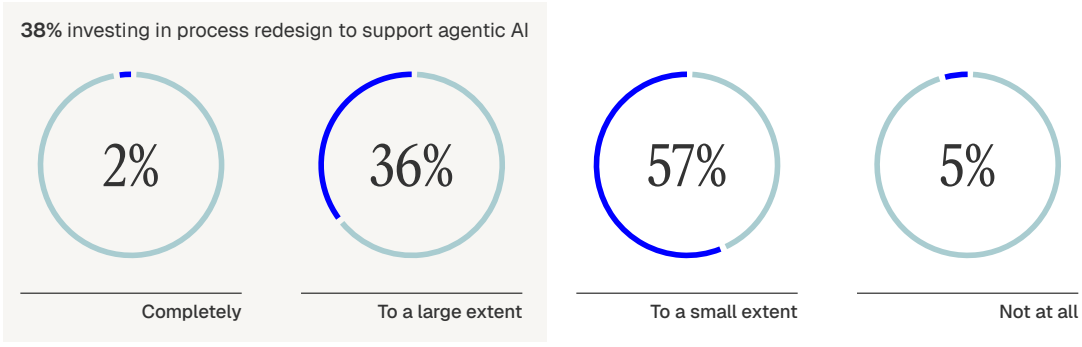
"The key foundation of AI models is the underlying data

- companies need to develop strong data management practices, including data governance, integration, lineage, quality, analytics, security/privacy, and reporting. AI model performance and accuracy are highly dependent on a solid data foundation for training, performance tuning, and operations."

FORMER SENIOR MANAGING DIRECTOR AND GLOBAL HEAD OF DIGITAL EXPERIENCE
for a leading financial services company

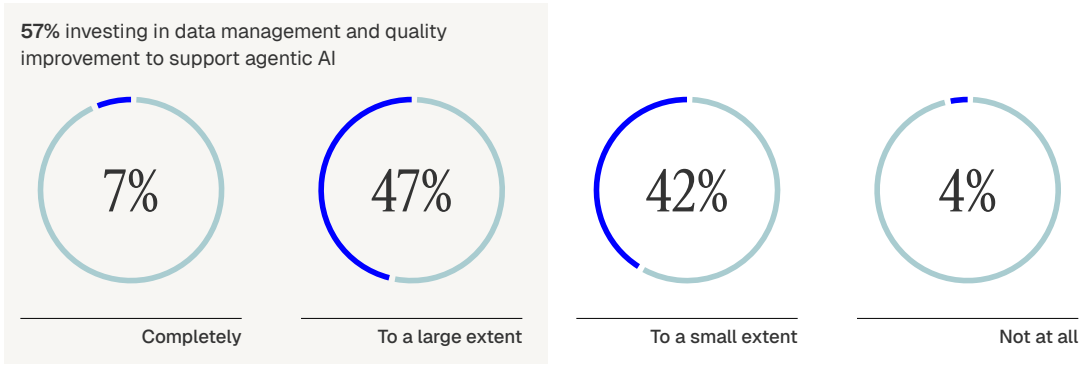
Process redesign due to agentic AI

% among total



Data layer transformation due to agentic AI

% among total



Indeed, many organizations recognize that the current state of their data isn't where it needs to be to effectively support AI agents. As the Head of IT Architecture at a major telecommunications provider said, "We've been working for the last four or five years to reduce data silos and improve the relevance of our data, so that we can have data that is usable and that can provide real added value."

Data security presents an additional complication: 59% of respondents shared that exposure to new cybersecurity risks is one of their top concerns about agentic AI. As organizations invest in the management and quality of their data, so too is it crucial that they invest in infrastructure to ensure that both people and AI agents can use that data securely and compliantly.

Cross-functional enablement and collaboration

It is also critical that stakeholders across the organization share responsibility for agentic AI. The most useful agents will be focused on exceedingly specific tasks related to particular domains, industries, and departments. As a result, when organizations place too much responsibility for agentic AI on IT teams – which likely lack the subject-matter expertise of other departments – they may limit the range and complexity of tasks that agents can manage.

As the senior director of IT at a major financial institution said, "If you're trying to build an agent for the legal department, then you obviously need the legal team involved. If you're trying to implement an agent that will interact with a CRM system, then you need the sales and marketing teams involved."

Connecting the skills of IT and line-of-business experts, in contrast, helps organizations rigorously identify the most valuable use cases, fully elaborate the requirements for specific AI agents, and define appropriate guardrails to protect data and minimize undesirable actions.

With that in mind, organizations should prioritize equipping their teams – across functions – to build and use agentic AI. They must ensure that their nontechnical specialists understand how agentic AI works (and does not work), and can effectively articulate their business and process knowledge to those coding the agents, to help produce agents that go beyond automating system processes and add deeper business value.

74% of respondents

indicated that their nontechnical teams need support from IT to build AI agents used in their business functions.

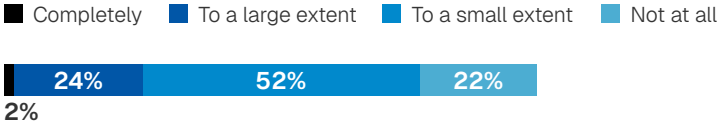
This is a clear pain point for many organizations: 74% of respondents indicated that their nontechnical teams need support from IT to build AI agents used in their business functions, and only 24% believe that their organization's workforce has the skills to leverage AI agents in their day-to-day work. Building sufficient internal capability may require training current employees as well as hiring new talent.

Leveraging AI agents in work tasks

% among total

Ability to build AI agents without support of IT

% among total



Operationalization

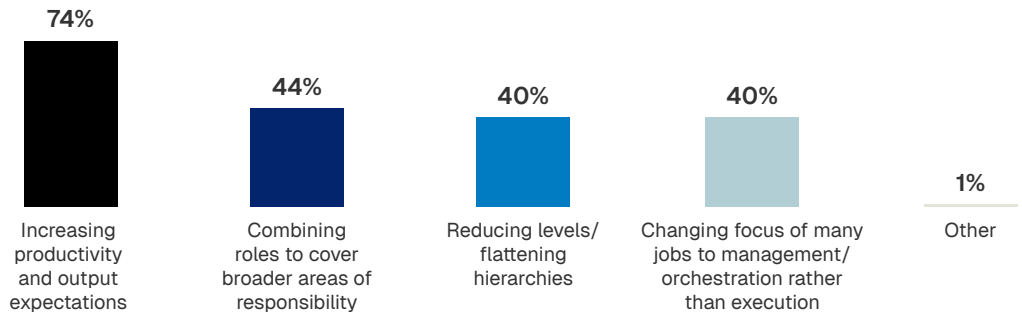
As AI agents perform a wider range of tasks, the crucial role of human professionals will likely evolve from directly "doing" to "orchestrating." With a variety of AI assistants on hand, individual contributors will be able to delegate repetitive work and help close skill gaps in complex workflows. For example, rather than needing an entire procurement department to be involved in the purchase of equipment components – from identifying and vetting suppliers to assessing bids and long-term scalability – an AI agent could execute all of the required checks and complete the necessary documentation.

Many departmental and functional barriers will shift or even disappear, in turn, as agents take on tasks previously accomplished by specialized teams – a trend that could favor teams of generalists over specialists throughout organizations. IT and cybersecurity teams will also play an increasingly important role, and will have to adapt to support agentic infrastructure and carefully monitor data use and protection. Some IT departments may even find themselves becoming "agent factories," building customized agents on behalf of business units.

An organization that's unwilling or unable to evolve job and role structures to account for agentic AI's impact may limit the potential value of their adoption. 74% of respondents anticipate that workers in their organizations would be asked to do more in their existing jobs as a result of having access to agentic AI, while only 40% of respondents indicated that their organizations are reconfiguring jobs to focus on orchestration of agents rather than on execution.

Actions to redefine or transform jobs due to agentic AI

% among total



Realizing the full potential of agentic AI will require imagination. Autonomous agents handling complex tasks could completely reshape industries, not to mention what many jobs and roles look like and accomplish.

Agentic AI has the potential to serve as a real partner in ideation and invention. Were a product planning team to incorporate an agent into their meetings, the agent could pull from both historical data and the immediate context of a particular meeting to make suggestions – even source materials and project costs – in real time.

The organizations that incorporate agentic AI most ambitiously won't stop at the low-hanging fruit of process automation. They'll identify the elements of their work and industry that could benefit from the mechanical skill and speed of automation, create AI agents that draw from the subject-matter expertise of their teams, and empower each of their employees to be a leader with supervision over specialized agents. Thus implemented, agentic AI can serve as a force multiplier not just for individual processes and departments, but entire workforces.

And beyond large organizations, agentic AI could possibly execute complete value chains, in the vein of a one-person start-up. An AI agent may be able to build all the pieces needed for a company to function – like creating the art, code, and marketing materials for a mobile game, submitting it to platforms, setting up its monetization loops, and more. In such a case, rather than an individual supervising agents to fulfill the role of a single function or department, they could act as CEO, managing an entire organization of varied, specialized agents.

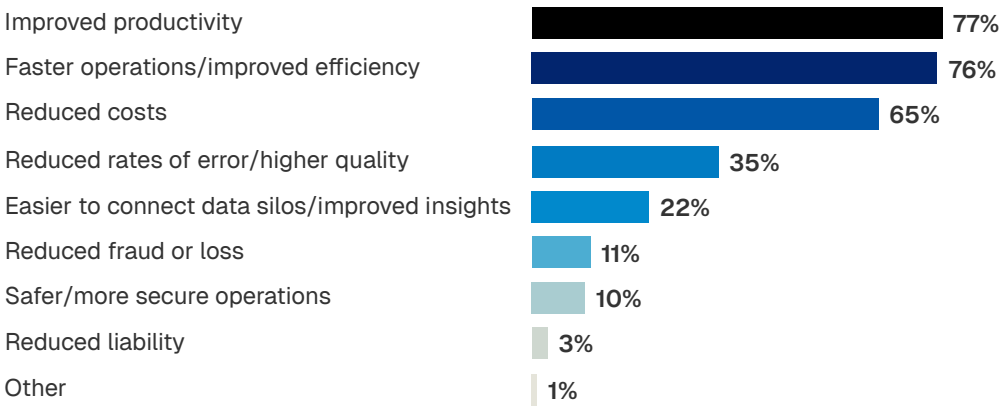
Conclusion: The future of agentic AI adoption

Most organizations today are interested in agentic AI's narrowest potential benefits, like performing rote tasks and cutting costs. 77% of respondents do expect higher productivity from existing teams thanks to agentic AI.

But while that focus can improve efficiency and execution speed, agentic AI promises much more truly transformative value. AI agents have the potential to execute complex chains of decisions, and in doing so autonomously handle multistep processes, from replenishing stockrooms to optimizing the routes and schedules of fleets in minutes or seconds. That said, only 38% of organizations surveyed said that they're using the adoption of agentic AI as an opportunity to redesign processes.

Expectations for agentic AI

% among total



The path to business transformation with agentic AI requires the confidence to take bold steps and the imagination to see what this new technology makes possible. 81% of respondents expect agentic AI to yield at least some degree of business improvement, but only 47% think they will experience significant business process changes. Meanwhile, only 11% believe that the core focus of their business would shift to new types of value creation as a result of adopting agentic AI.

Expected transformation from agentic AI

% among total

These findings show that most organizations are eager for efficiency gains but reluctant to fundamentally change their core business. Others simply don't have a need for full automation – and some even believe that it could undermine the value they offer, like those that revolve around unique artistic visions and experiences, such as luxury apparel makers.

This landscape reflects an opportunity – one few have capitalized on – for leaders committed to agentic AI to set themselves and their organizations apart with strong visions for the technology. More than half of respondents, however, say their leaders cannot articulate a clear need for AI agents, despite their internal statements about the technology's potential.

"You've got to communicate the vision.

Agentic AI is not about job elimination, it's job evolution. That gets lost in the messaging from technical leadership sometimes, but it is a key piece. You've got to get your organization aligned. You've got to inspire them, you've got to give them some reassurance and help them to be partners and not obstacles to the process."

FORMER DIRECTOR OF GLOBAL NETWORK AND TECHNOLOGY
at a national telecommunications provider

To help set that ambitious organizational vision, leaders should learn from their peers and experts who have first-hand experience adopting agentic AI. Such insight sharing will allow leaders to plan the futures of their organizations with greater confidence – and thus inspire greater confidence in their stakeholders.

What even the most ambitious organizations have accomplished with agentic AI so far is just scratching the surface of the technology's promise. Many solutions in active development aim toward the baseline of what agentic AI makes possible, rather than its greatest potential. Leaders should be creative, bold, and diligent in their exploration of agentic AI – implementing it responsibly and sustainably while embracing its potential for long-term reinvention.

Connect with experts at the forefront of agentic AI

JARED BARKER
Former Head of Global Growth
at Palantir Technologies

LINDA LEOPOLD
Former Head of AI Strategy
at H&M Group

DAFYDD MOORE
Director of Global Technology
and CIO at Superdry

BRIAN NEWMAN
Former Director of Global
Network and Technology at
Verizon

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