SPONSORED CONTENT | WHITE PAPER

Teaming up with AI: how agents will fuel enterprise transformation and reshape work

CIO

SPONSORED BY UiPath | cognizant

Agentic AI represents an epoch moment as we transition to a dynamic, digitized economy, enabling a completely new type of workforce in which humans will not oversee all decision making.

Unlike traditional automation tools, AI agents can perceive their environment, reason through problems, and take initiative to achieve defined goals. As an example, Cognizant's Recruit IQ solution uses agentic AI to streamline hiring and onboarding, automating 70% of the processes . In the pharmaceutical industry, agents promise to reduce the length of clinical trials dramatically. These are just two examples. Agentic automation is poised to revolutionize nearly every industry and function.

The greatest hurdles to widespread agentic AI adoption lie not in technology, but in culture, operational agility and mindset. To successfully integrate autonomous systems, organizations must be prepared to fundamentally transform their work structures, foster trust in AI, and invest in employee upskilling. This requires a multifaceted approach that prioritizes clear governance, transparency, and effective change management.

Early adopters have found success by starting with well-defined, high-impact use cases, maintaining human oversight, and clearly communicating the benefits of AI augmentation – not replacement – of human capabilities.

It is vital IT leaders understand the full potential and scale of change that AI agents will bring across the enterprise. A prime example can be seen in HR processes.

Onboarding new employees in large enterprises is often a complex, multi-week process that requires coordination among multiple teams and involves substantial paperwork, including various forms and setup across disparate systems. These delays can negatively impact business performance, by reducing efficiency while hindering talent acquisition.

With Agentic AI, Cognizant has addressed these challenges. Their Recruit IQ solution applies AI to nearly every step of the hiring process, from candidate acquisition to interview scheduling, onboarding, training, and human resources administration.

- Time is saved in the hiring process by scanning applications for key data while using automated document verification to ensure candidate authenticity.

- Meanwhile the normally task heavy interview process is transformed. AI agents schedule interviews while offer letters are customized. The entire process is integrated with the company's preferred HR software.

- Most of these tasks occur without direct human involvement. Although people approve of critical decisions, AI agents handle many routine tasks and choices autonomously.

The overall impact reveals profound change. Recruit IQ has automated 70% of the recruitment process and achieved a 73% reduction in labor costs. New hires are on the job faster, and the entire process is more reliable and better documented.

The Recruit IQ solution is an example of how AI agents are revolutionizing decades-old workflows and enabling organizations to achieve unprecedented levels of agility. Agents autonomously perceive their environment, make decisions, and take actions to achieve specific goals with minimal human oversight.

Agentic AI's ability to transform the hiring process offers a powerful example of how businesses can simplify time-intensive business processes. The cumulative effect of such technology across enterprise operations has the power to create a new kind of workforce that concentrates on innovation, creativity, and strategic growth.

A game changer

2024 was the year generative AI moved from buzzword to business imperative – with large organizations worldwide spending an average of $47.5 million this year on the technology, according to research Cognizant conducted with Oxford Economics.[1] According to recent research by UiPath,[2] agentic AI has caught the eye of top executives, 37% of whom are already using the technology and 93% declaring high interest in its value. The top perceived benefits of agentic AI include:

1. Better oversight of business workflows (cited by 58% of executives)

2. Increased integration among applications (53%)

3. Improved automation of complex business workflows (52%)

These are among the reasons agentic AI is expected to grow rapidly. In fact, Cognizant's research found that three-quarters of leaders say it's vital to their continued success, which has spurred a pervasive sense of urgency, with almost 70% of leaders fearful they're not moving fast enough.

Reimagining processes

Agentic AI is a key technological breakthrough that will enable organization-wide transformation, introducing intelligence, autonomy, and adaptability to processes.

Agentic AI's ability to learn and improve opens up, new, untapped value by automating tasks that were previously too complex to automate. Agents essentially become part of a team, working alongside human colleagues

and robots to take on increasingly complex tasks over time. Unifying and coordinating agentic AI, automation, business process management, process intelligence, and people, UiPath Maestro orchestration transforms disconnected tasks into cohesive, end-to-end processes, enabling business transformation and the ability to scale AI effectively while maintaining visibility and control.

"This creates whole new opportunities to orchestrate the entire value chain," says Chakradhar (Gooty) Agraharam, Global Head of Intelligent Process Automation Leader for Cognizant's Intuitive Operations and Automation (IOA) business. "It opens up an endgame in which bots can interact with each other and drive higher value outcomes."

"Basic automation delivers five to 15% incremental value. But agentic AI promises 50 to 80% value. When done right, agentic automation isn't about adding AI to a workflow, it's about fundamentally reengineering the way you manage data, process, and human interaction," adds Agraharam.

Organizations that have taken the plunge into agentic AI report that some of the greatest benefits come from reimagining business processes.

"This technology can learn, analyze, give you answers, evaluate results, and provide recommendations for improvement," says Mariesa Coughanour, Head of Advisory, North American Delivery & Mindshare for the Intelligent Process Automation Practice in Cognizant's IOA business. "Being able to diagnose and fix problems that have been tough to address in the past is a big step forward and enabler for employee adoption."

"The self-healing nature of agentic AI is a critical advancement. We will see a new form of collaboration between people and technology. Human interventions will provide not only

The self-healing nature of agentic AI is a critical advancement. **We will see a new form of collaboration between people and technology.**

controls but learning enhancements for agents to orchestrate at significant scale."

"Being able to detect a change, adapt and continue to process takes a lot of dollars out of support costs," she says. "Humans spend less time on oversight and need to attend only to the occasional exception. The agentic AI operating model transforms systems from reactive automation to proactive autonomy."

The need for governance

But with great power comes great responsibility. Agentic AI is still in its early stages of development. Many software vendors have released point solutions that work with their products, but coordinating tasks across multiple enterprise applications is a challenge.

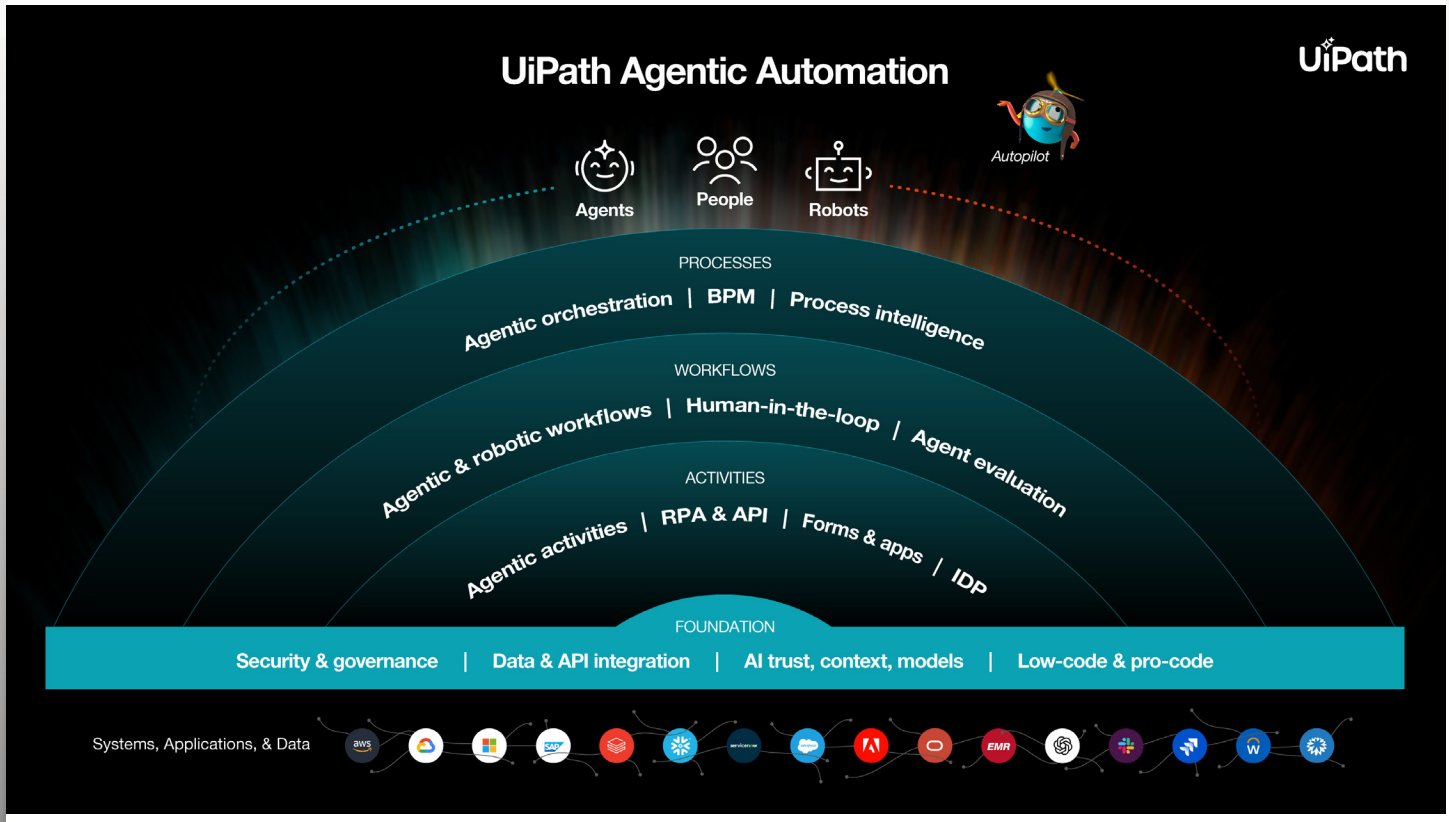
Efforts to create standardized interoperability tools and protocols are progressing rapidly, but adoption

remains largely in the proof-of-concept stage. Even with robust technology in place, organizations need new evaluation, security, governance, training, and testing practices to ensure that agents act responsibly and within the bounds of legal and ethical guidelines.

The biggest challenges are more cultural than technical in nature. Many enterprise processes are built upon rigid hierarchies, manual workflows, and human approvals. Success is measured by the efficiency with which well-defined tasks are accomplished.

Letting go of traditional ways of working can be disorienting for employees who have been working the same way for decades.

In contrast, an agentic business framework is centered on goals, trust, and human-AI collaboration. Process design shifts from executing structured workflows to goal-based task orchestration, which defines desired outcomes and enables agents to determine the most effective way to achieve them. Change is constant. Trust is critical.



Agentic AI requires people to become more goal-oriented, defining clear objectives for agents to achieve and constraints to operate within, with humans acting as strategists or coaches. Workers must learn to trust agent decisions while also developing skills to audit, interpret, and override them when necessary. Employees have an opportunity to change what they do at work and develop new skills. In this new agentic era, their roles will evolve.

As agents learn and take on more responsibilities, professionals must continually learn new tools and shift to higher-value, judgment-based work, ultimately leading to more rewarding outcomes.

This tectonic shift in thinking challenges conventional wisdom. Not surprisingly, many organizations introducing agents encounter pockets of suspicion and resistance from employees who worry that technology will take away their jobs.

The reality is that agents are best leveraged as coworkers who participate in a collaborative decision-making process focused on achieving optimal outcomes. The technology will allow companies new ways of working, redefining what is possible, while creating new markets and industries.

The human-AI collaboration holds exciting possibilities if enterprise leaders create an environment built on trust where employees understand the key role they must fulfill. If businesses can overcome initial inertia and ensure the appropriate ethical standards are in place, the possibilities for era-defining success will grow.

Join the team

Mark Geene, Senior Vice President, AI Products and Platform at UiPath, sees AI agent integration as similar to onboarding a new team member.

“I like working with people who learn fast and respond to direction,” he says. “The same thing needs to happen with this agentic workforce.” Human supervision enables agents to gradually take on increasingly complex tasks with trust ensured by explainability and audit trails.

People bring strategic oversight, human intuition, empathy, and critical thinking to agentic automations. As trust builds, agents become just another colleague.

People remain essential to the equation because agents don't adhere to traditional definitions of automation. Software has traditionally been used to perform repetitive processes where a given set of inputs always yields a predictable set of outputs.

In contrast, agentic behavior can vary with the same inputs due to situational variables or external factors that are not fully controlled. This is a feature, not a bug. But while adaptability is one of agentic AI's greatest strengths, it can also create problems where precision is required.

That's why it's important that for "anything critical, high value, or high impact within an organization, there's a human in the loop," Coughanour says. We need to ensure there is governance, in particular while these agents are learning, but also to build trust and maintain business continuity while on these transformational journeys.

Preparing for the journey

Successfully introducing agentic AI to an organization requires leaders to be transparent about the organizational impact, while also being positive about the prospects of eliminating routine and repetitive tasks from the workplace.

For example, agents can leverage generative AI to ingest and summarize large volumes of legal documents and contracts, create recommendations, and suggest follow-up actions. They can take on tedious and repetitive tasks, such as expense reconciliation and resolving data quality issues. In a procurement scenario, they can scan approved vendors, compare prices, negotiate terms, and even generate and submit purchase orders within preset guidelines.

Early adopters in the pharmaceutical industry are seeing across-the-board benefits in pharmacovigilance, which is the process of detecting, assessing, understanding, and preventing the adverse effects of medicines and vaccines. For example, an 80% enhancement has been demonstrated in "listedness checks,"

which determine if a reported adverse event is already documented in the product's official label.

The traditional method requires exhaustive validation of source data, cross-checking, coding, and thorough background research. One drug maker is now delegating many of these manual tasks to large language models and using agents to analyze results, determine causality, and generate reports.

"Typically, each stage would require a different system and a different set of automations," says Agraharam.

"An agent can now run this process from the initiation of a trial to confirmation and submission to the regulatory bodies. These impacts will be significant with the potential of increasing the speed of life saving drugs to the market." The technology has the potential to dramatically reduce the more than eight years (median) now required to bring a new drug to market.[3]

Organizations that take a proactive approach to adopting agentic AI see payoffs beyond improved efficiency. Business functions become more horizontal, enabled by cross-functional agent collaboration. Decision-making times are reduced as agents break down the silos that inhibit information flows. Routine tasks can be dispatched more quickly, allowing the people to focus on more strategic priorities.

Coughanour cites the example of the quarterly financial close, a process that can consume weeks of effort. "People work around the clock to complete this process," she says. "Imagine if they could get the job done in a day or even in a click, so they could focus on forecasting, strategy, or other higher valued outcomes."

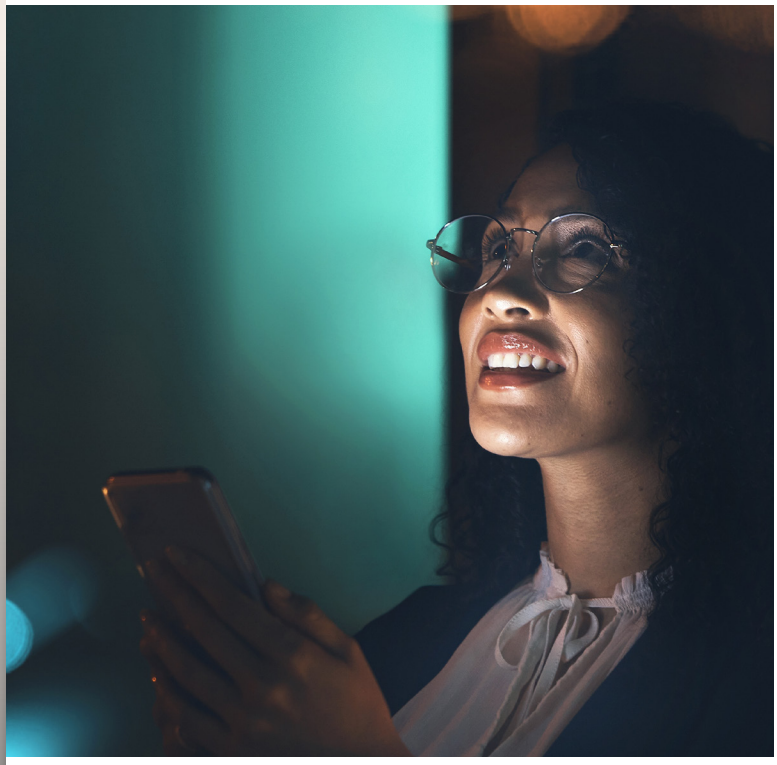
Aim high

Introducing agents requires a change management process. While there are some nuances, there are fundamentals that remain consistent. Leaders need to understand the benefits and trade-offs of implementing agentic AI, particularly the downstream impact, such as new skill requirements and the operational and cultural implications of process change. "A huge part of the process is partnering with HR teams on how to enable people as work is done differently, train on new working models, and prepare for the new skills that will be needed," Coughanour says.

A crucial factor for organizations is mapping out their agentic AI investment, to drive success. "Proofs of concept are easy. Scale is hard," Coughanour says. "Make sure to choose use cases that have value. You're going to want to showcase your results, and people are going to use that experience to figure out the next piece."

Don't let the technology intimidate you, Agraharam advises. "You're not dealing with a beast," he says. "Agents are a safe set of technologies that can help you get where you want to go." That said, leaders need to be aware of the pitfalls and put contingency plans in place for the inevitable surprises. Geene advocates for a process UiPath calls "controlled agency." This means starting with a lot of human supervision and, based on what you learn, expanding into scenarios that provide agents with greater levels of autonomy based on clearly defined evaluation of their performance while running in your operation. AI that is too tightly controlled or requires constant checking does not generate desired return on investment (ROI). Sometimes, an agent can interrupt workflows or create more effort than it saves. But ultimately, the goal is to design hybrid workflows where agents handle the work, then seamlessly hand-off to humans for judgment calls – without creating extra friction.

Initial use cases should have clearly defined guardrails and rules for agent behavior. "Put them into a predictable, repeatable process bounded with automations that you already know and trust," Agraharam says. "Don't try to replace entire roles but augment them with additional functions."



Agraharam draws a parallel to previous disruptors, such as the internet and smartphones. “Initially, there was a lot of fear and apprehension, but as people started seeing value, their organizations self-corrected for the technology,” he says. “In my view, agents will eventually become fully democratized.”

Successfully embracing agentic AI is less about implementing new technology and more about preparing people to work alongside it. When approached thoughtfully, agentic AI is more than an automation tool; it becomes a catalyst for organizational transformation. By cultivating a culture of trust, learning, and experimentation, enterprises can unlock new levels of agility and innovation. The organizations that succeed will be those that not only deploy agents but also empower their people to grow alongside them.

From vision to impact

We are entering a new era in which agentic AI reimagines how work is done. Realizing this potential demands strategic alignment, governance, and cultural adaptation to harness agents as trusted partners. CIOs should consider an approach that encompasses the following elements.

- **Define a business-aligned agentic AI strategy.** Identifying high-value use cases where agents can deliver measurable impact without introducing undue risk. Leverage expert advice to map agentic workflows to strategic objectives, operational realities, and cultural readiness. Prioritize scenarios with both near-term ROI and long-term scalability.

- **Establish a controlled agency framework.** AI agents should be empowered to operate autonomously while ensuring enterprise-grade levels of security, governance, predictability, and performance. A "controlled agency" approach starts with highly supervised deployments and expands autonomy as performance and trust grow. Each use case needs clear guardrails, success metrics, and escalation protocols.

- **Integrate with existing systems and processes.** Take a vendor-agnostic path to integration using low-code tools to connect agents across enterprise applications without major re-platforming. Be open to redesigning processes so agent actions align with existing governance, compliance, and business rules.

- **Build a governance and oversight model.** Create cross-functional governance teams combining IT, operations, compliance, and business leaders to monitor agent performance, ethics, and security. Advanced monitoring, observability, and reporting capabilities provide the transparency required for trust.

- **Prepare and upskill the workforce.** Partner with HR to design training programs that equip employees to work effectively with agents, focusing on higher-value judgment, oversight, and decision-making skills. Change management and industry-specific training programs help drive adoption and engagement.

- **Pilot, measure, and scale.** Start with a small number of high-impact pilots. Document lessons learned, showcase early wins, and refine processes before

expanding. Seek partners that have the operational scaling expertise and orchestration tools to move from proof-of-concept to enterprise-wide deployment.

- **Commit to continuous improvement.** Manage agents the same way you would human associates. Regularly review performance data, adapt workflows, and introduce new integrations that ensure that agents evolve alongside business needs.

By approaching deployment as a strategic, human-centered transformation, CIOs can turn agentic AI into a sustained competitive advantage.

Together, Cognizant and UiPath help organizations harness the full potential of agentic AI – improving productivity, reducing risk, and creating a collaborative future of work where humans and intelligent agents operate in concert. To learn more, visit uipath.com/cognizant and Cognizant's Intelligent Process Automation page.

1 Cognizant & Oxford Economics, Building momentum: The path to confident AI adoption, 2025, https://www.cognizant.com/us/en/aem-i/building-momentum-the-path-to-confident-ai-adoption

2 UiPath AI and Automation Trends 2025, https://www.uipath.com/resources/automation-analyst-reports/agentic-ai-research-report

3 Brown DG et al, Clinical development times for innovative drugs, National Review of Drug Discovery, November 21,2022, https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9869766/

CIO SPONSORED BY UiPath | cognizant®