Article

What is agentic AI, and how can it transform your business?

AI agents are changing how humans get work done. The world may never be the same.

When the first AI chatbots emerged in late 2022, we were all amazed by the human-like capabilities the technology could achieve. Now, just two years later, these tools are beginning to operate autonomously in the form of AI agents.

But if generative AI was a revelation, agentic AI is more like a revolution.

Beyond merely retrieving information or generating new content, AI agents can act on our behalf and even corral other agents to perform related tasks. This powerful capability promises to have a dramatic impact on how humans operate in the workplace and beyond.

By providing huge gains in productivity and efficiency, agents will create more opportunities for higher level strategic thinking, says Joann Starke, senior product marketing manager at Hewlett Packard Enterprise.

"For example, instead of a sales manager spending hours pulling data from CRM systems, market reports, and competitor analysis to prepare for a quarterly review, an AI agent could proactively gather all relevant information, synthesize it into key insights, identify trends, and even flag potential risks or opportunities before the meeting," says Starke.

AI support agents may be able to resolve up to 80% of customer service inquiries, slashing operational costs by as much as 30%.[1] One study predicts that AI agents will take on tasks equivalent to $6 trillion worth of human labor by the year 2030.[2]

The potential use cases for agents span virtually every industry. Retail agents will analyze historical sales data, forecast future demand, and adjust inventory levels on the fly. Finance agents will handle loan approvals, process insurance claims, and flag fraudulent transactions. Agents will be deployed in manufacturing facilities to optimize production lines and perform proactive maintenance automatically.

But agentic AI is likely to have the greatest immediate impact on technology teams, thanks to its ability to automatically handle many help desk requests, monitor and manage IT systems, and accelerate software development. "The true power of AI will be found not in its ability to predict what will happen next but to actually take action on that," says Starke.

How agentic systems work

Like AI chatbots, agents rely on large language models (LLMs), augmented by additional information sources, to respond to natural language prompts. But because agents enjoy greater levels of autonomy, they're able to do much more.

For example, if you ask ChatGPT a question, it will query its LLM knowledge base and return a response. If you ask the same question of an AI agent, it may seek more information on the web, query multiple databases, or use external tools to help calculate the ideal answer. You can ask the agent to refine its answer or tell it to seek out more information, and it will learn and adjust future responses accordingly.

Every agentic system takes the same four-step approach to autonomous problem-solving:

— **Perceive.** Collect data from multiple sources to understand the environment in which the agent is operating and the problem it needs to solve.

— **Reason.** Analyze this data, come up with a plan for solving the problem, and break the response into a series of discrete tasks.

— **Act.** Perform the actions necessary to fulfill the request.

— **Learn.** Re-examine and refine the response, using additional information sources or tools as needed, becoming smarter over time.

In other words, you don't have to tell the agent how to solve the problem; it just does it. If you assign the same agent a new task, the sources and tools it calls upon may be significantly different.

But the real power of AI agents comes when they act collaboratively. For example, a software developer might use one AI agent to orchestrate the actions of three other agents: one to check code for errors, another to track bugs, and a third to create documentation.

Those agents may in turn call on other agents, each with access to particular tools or sources of information, says Starke. Applying agents to the coding process allows you to test, debug, and ship software at a speed that is faster by orders of magnitude.

"Instead of taking a day to check for vulnerabilities, update the code, and approve it, you can do it in five minutes," Starke notes. "Agentic AI can dramatically increase the velocity of your code changes and updates."

But autonomy also has its limits, she says: "At the end of the day, you want to make sure a human is making that call and you don't have agents automatically updating your code without supervision."

[1] "Gartner Predicts Agentic AI Will Autonomously Resolve 80% of Common Customer Service Issues Without Human Intervention by 2029," Gartner Research, March 5, 2025.

[2] "Maximizing ROI With Agentic AI: Why Agentforce Is the Fast Path to Enterprise Value," The Futurum Group, February 2025.

Trust is earned, not given

When AI is empowered to take actions, establishing guardrails early becomes even more critical, says Starke.

"An LLM sending you a text hallucination is usually not that big a deal," she says. "But if an agent takes action on that hallucination and another agent acts on that and so on, it can compound over time."

Teams configuring agentic systems need to ensure they have the right level of permissions to perform a specified task and no more than that. "The coding agent doesn't need access to your financial data, and the financial agent doesn't need access to your code repository," she says. "Managing those permissions and building a workflow to respect those boundaries are some of the key challenges enterprises will need to address. You also need to continuously monitor agents' output to make sure they're acting the way you expect them to. That's how you can build trust in agentic systems."

Learn more at

HPE.com/ai

Visit HPE.com

Chat now

a50013434ENW

HEWLETT PACKARD ENTERPRISE

hpe.com