FORRESTER®

Building The Autonomous Enterprise

How Organizations Are Preparing For And Adopting AI Agents

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The Autonomous Enterprise Is Near

The autonomous enterprise is no longer a distant vision — it's starting to take shape. As organizations begin to chart their path forward, more are turning to AI agents to deliver automation across core operational functions. They want solutions that integrate with existing systems and solve real business challenges.

Organizations are also learning that the real opportunity with AI agents isn't in copilots or personal productivity tools. The value is in using AI agents for process automation to deliver impact at scale.

However, expected barriers stand in the way of adoption. In May 2025, Automation Anywhere commissioned Forrester Consulting to explore the current state of AI agent adoption. We found that talent gaps, integration challenges, and security concerns are the top challenges organizations face. To move forward, it's imperative to align the right platform to the agent use case.

Key Findings

Momentum is building: While most organizations are still early in their AI journey, 74% expect to see meaningful opportunities for AI agents within two years.

Intelligent automation platforms offer value: The top choice for longer-running, end-to-end processes that combine AI workflows with traditional automation is an intelligent automation platform.
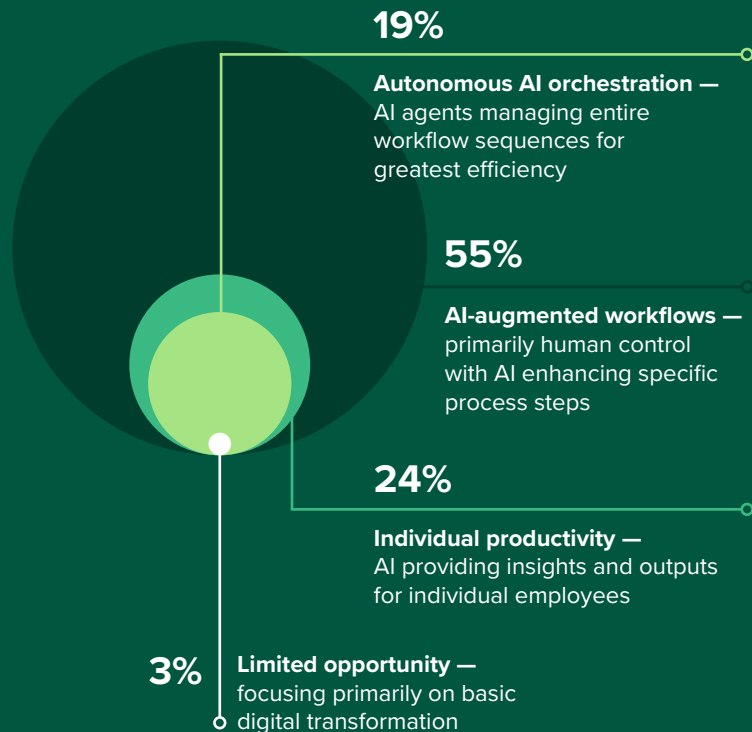
Agents bring benefits across use cases: Organizations have prioritized customer support, research, sales operations, operational support, IT operations, and HR as key use cases for initial AI agent adoption.

Adoption Is Early But Accelerating

While the AI buzz makes it seem like full-scale adoption is already here, only 31% of organizations say AI is a core part of their business today. The remaining 69% are still in the early stages, making now the critical window to experiment and plan.

Within two years, three out of four decision-makers expect AI agents to play a role in their organization. When asked about the biggest opportunity for AI agents at their organization within the next two years, 55% noted AI-augmented workflows as the biggest opportunity, and19% said the same of autonomous AI orchestration. This denotes a shift away from viewing AI as purely a productivity-boosting tool as only 1 in 4 noted personal productivity as the biggest opportunity for AI agents at their organizations. This shows a shift in perception away from AI as an individual efficiency tool and toward one that will transform how work gets done across entire systems and teams.

"What do you see as the biggest opportunity for AI agents at your organization in the next two years?"

19%

Autonomous AI orchestration — AI agents managing entire workflow sequences for greatest efficiency

55%

AI-augmented workflows — primarily human control with AI enhancing specific process steps

24%

Individual productivity — AI providing insights and outputs for individual employees

3% **Limited opportunity —** focusing primarily on basic digital transformation

Base: 466 global decision-makers responsible for enterprisewide AI strategy at their organization
Source: Forrester's Q2 2025 Automation And Agentic AI survey [E-62551]

Organizations Are Scaling Agent Implementation Over The Next Year

Organizations have begun experimenting with different types of agents. The most common starting place has been with employee support agents that help with personal productivity, with 53% of decision-makers saying they have implemented these today. Customer-facing agents are also common, with 48% having implemented them. Within the next year, an additional 39% will have implemented both of these agent types, making them the most widely used today and in the near future.

Less common today are enterprise automation agents, consumer advocacy agents that act on behalf of consumer interests, and organizational stewardship agents that handle things like compliance and governance. However, within the next year, 69% plan to implement enterprise automation agents, 43% say the same of organizational stewardship agents, and 33% have plans for consumer advocacy agents.

"When does your organization plan to implement the following?"

● Using today   ● Within the next year

Employee support agents

| 53% | 39% |

Customer-facing agents

| 48% | 39% |

Organizational stewardship agents

| 19% | 43% |

Consumer advocacy agents

| 16% | 33% |

Enterprise automation agents

| 13% | 69% |

Respondents Prefer To Purchase Automation Platforms

Organizations have a clear preference for the type of vendor that they want to work with: intelligent automation platforms from RPA and DPA vendors. When asked their preference for longer-running, end-to-end processes that combine AI workflows with traditional automation, 31% of respondents selected an intelligent automation platform — the top choice.

This preference can be attributed to a few things. Decision-makers often want a more conservative approach to introducing models and agents into their environment; they want agents where the deterministic automation controls the end-to-end flow; and they want governance and control measures — all things that an intelligent automation platform could deliver. Furthermore, 60% said this option would be valuable or extremely valuable for their organization.

"Which of the following provider options does your organization prefer to engage for longer running, end-to-end processes that combine AI workflows with traditional automation?"
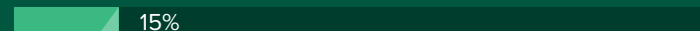
Intelligent automation platform from RPA and DPA vendors
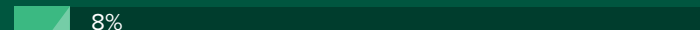
31%
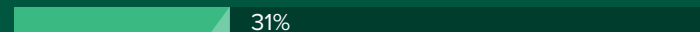
General purpose copilots from hyperscalers

20%
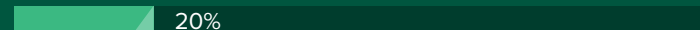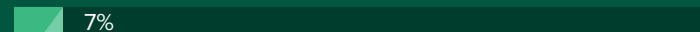
Agentic frameworks provided by services companies

15%

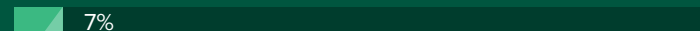Captive copilot platforms provided by "portfolio companies"

12%

AI-led agent platform startups

8%

Business process management platform vendors

7%

Large language model vendor agentic framework

7%

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Source: Forrester's Q2 2025 Automation And Agentic AI survey [E-62551]

Organizations Encounter Barriers To Adoption

Although respondents note that their organizations are on the journey to AI agent adoption, the road is seldom perfectly paved. Organizations anticipate a variety of obstacles standing between them and the autonomous enterprise. Top challenges keeping organizations from realizing the full potential of agentic AI fall into two main buckets: technology and nontechnology related.

When considering top nontechnology-related challenges, filling talent gaps, demonstrating ROI, and determining the right balance between human oversight and AI autonomy float to the top. Finding that balance is especially important for organizations, as 71% said they need automation that works alongside their team rather than replacing them, augmenting capabilities and leaving strategic decisions in human hands.

"How challenging are the following to your organization's ability to realize the full potential of agentic AI?"
(Showing "Challenging"/"Very challenging")

Nontechnology challenges:

63%

Difficulty finding employees with both domain expertise and AI skills to develop and manage agentic systems

61%

Determining the appropriate balance between human oversight and AI autonomy

60%

Building employee expertise to adopt and collaborate with AI agents

58%

Demonstrating clear ROI from agentic AI to justify continued investment

Base: 466 global decision-makers responsible for enterprisewide AI strategy at their organization
Source: Forrester's Q2 2025 Automation And Agentic AI survey [E-62551]

Navigating Adoption And Integration Challenges

In conjunction with their nontechnology challenges standing in the way of realizing the full potential of agentic AI, organizations also face various technology-related barriers. Topping the list are data privacy and security concerns, availability of high-quality training data, establishing governance frameworks, and dreaded integration challenges. These integration concerns are especially top of mind for respondents as they can add significant complexity and costs. When asked more specifically about them, 70% said agentic solutions need to integrate with the existing enterprise software ecosystem without requiring a complete infrastructure overhaul.

Overall, there is little differentiation from the topmost concern (at 66%) and bottommost (at 58%) across nontechnology and technology challenges. This just shows how complex adoption can be and that each element comes with its own set of obstacles.

"How challenging are the following to your organization's ability to realize the full potential of agentic AI?"

(Showing "Challenging"/"Very challenging")

Technology challenges:

66%
Concerns about data privacy and security when using AI agents with sensitive information

61%
Integrating AI agents with existing legacy systems

61%
Establishing clear governance frameworks for AI agent deployment and oversight

59%
Lack of high-quality data for training AI agents to perform effectively

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Source: Forrester's Q2 2025 Automation And Agentic AI survey [E-62551]

The Path Forward Is Paved By Expectation

Although the path to AI agent adoption can be complex, many organizations are actively on the journey forward. For them and others, AI agents are positioned to be so transformative that the investment of time, cost, and effort is worthwhile.

AI agents are more than just a chatbot or general-purpose copilot, which 66% of respondents say is not economically viable. It's AI systems that plan, decide, and act with increasing autonomy, orchestrating complex workflows with minimal human intervention.[1] And it's expected to transform how organizations deliver value. Seventy-four percent want agents that can analyze databases for optimization opportunities. Seventy-one percent expect them to handle customer inquiries and documentation processes. And 71% say that longer-running processes that couple model decision management with a strong action aspect is where the true value lies.

"Please state your level of agreement with the following statements:"

(Showing "Agree"/"Strongly agree")

Companies need agents that can analyze vast existing databases and identify optimization opportunities.
74%

Agentic enterprise solutions should handle routine customer inquiries and documentation processing while maintaining compliance standards and security protocols.
71%

Proper business value/ROI for AI agents will only be achieved with longer-running processes that combine model decision management with a strong action (automation) aspect.
71%

General-purpose copilots can help personal productivity but may not be economically viable.
66%

Aligning The Right Platform Can Make Or Break Adoption Efforts

Choosing the right platform for building AI agents depends on an organization's specific needs and wants. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, but there is consensus on preferences and concerns. When asked about their top concerns when selecting a platform for building AI agents, respondents most commonly noted data security and privacy-related challenges, costs, customization flexibility, and integration capabilities with the existing technology stack.

When considering more specifically the different types of available platforms for future process management needs, respondents were 13% more likely to select a provider with a proven track record or deep experience, rather than an emerging AI-led startup. For these respondents, maturity matters.

Top Concerns When Selecting A Platform For Building AI Agents
(Showing top six)

1. Data security and privacy protection challenges

2. Total cost of ownership, including both initial implementation and ongoing operational expenses

3. Customization flexibility to address specific needs and business processes

4. Integration capabilities with existing technology stack

5. Scalability to handle increasing workloads and user demands

6. Technical support quality and availability

Organizations Are Starting With Customer Support Agents

All organizations will need a starting place, and for many, that is customer support. Nearly 75% of respondents indicated that they are planning to pilot an AI agent for customer support within the next year. Seventy-one percent of respondents are also planning to pilot an AI agent for research for things like generating insights from business data and conducting competitive research within the next year.

While there are many use cases to choose from for piloting an AI agent, one thing is certain: Respondents expect transformational levels of value. When asked about the potential value that AI agents would bring to a wide range of use cases across their organization, respondents said that every single use case would stand to gain significant value.
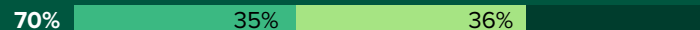
"When is your organization planning to pilot an AI agent for the following use case areas?"

● Within the next 11 months   ● One year from now

Customer support
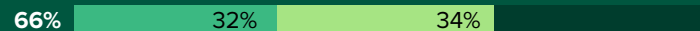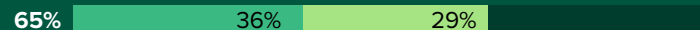**73%**   52%   22%

Research
70%   35%   36%

Sales automation
69%   34%   35%

Operational support
66%   32%   34%

IT operations
65%   36%   29%

Recruitment and HR
65%   36%   29%

Finance and accounting
65%   27%   37%

Document processing
63%   38%   24%

Base: 466 global decision-makers responsible for enterprisewide AI strategy at their organization
Note: Individual percentage values may not sum to totals due to rounding.
Source: Forrester's Q2 2025 Automation And Agentic AI survey [E-62551]

Conclusion

While the autonomous enterprise might sound like science fiction, the reality is that it's coming. With 74% of decision-makers seeing opportunities for AI agents within the next two years, organizations are preparing to transform how core elements of their business operate, with nearly 20% pursuing autonomous AI orchestration.. Despite barriers like talent gaps, integration challenges, and security concerns, organizations are starting with customer and employee support agents while preparing to pilot agents for other advanced use cases.

Selecting the right platform for building AI agents is critical for success, and organizations are prioritizing platforms that align with their unique needs, focusing on data security, integration capabilities, and flexibility. Respondents note that intelligent automation platforms from RPA and DPA are the preferred choice.

Endnotes

[1] Source: Allie Mellen and Rowan Curran, Cybersecurity's Latest Buzzword Has Arrived: What Agentic AI Is And Isn't, Forrester Blogs, and Agentic AI Agents Are A Rare Sighting, Forrester Research, Inc., April 14, 2025.

Resources

Related Forrester Research:

Agentic AI Agents Are A Rare Sighting, Forrester Research, Inc., April 14, 2025

Agentic AI Is Rising And Will Reforge Businesses That Embrace It, Forrester Research, Inc., March 7, 2025

Rowan Curran, Leslie Joseph, Brian Hopkins, and Craig Le Clair, Agentic AI Is The Next Competitive Frontier, Forrester Blogs

Project Team:

Kate Pesa, Market Impact Consultant

Contributing Research:

Forrester's Generative AI research

Methodology

This Opportunity Snapshot was commissioned by Automation Anywhere. To create this profile, Forrester Consulting supplemented this research with custom survey questions asked of global decision-makers responsible for enterprisewide AI strategy at their organization. The custom survey began and was completed in May 2025.

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Demographics

REGION	
North America	**29%**
Latin America	**24%**
Europe, the Middle East, and Africa	**24%**
Asia Pacific and Japan	**23%**

INDUSTRY	
Healthcare	**24%**
Financial services and/or insurance	**24%**
Telecommunications services	**15%**
Technology and/or technology services	**14%**
Manufacturing and materials	**13%**
Government	**10%**

COMPANY REVENUE	
$500M to $999M	**11%**
$1B to $1.99B	**22%**
$2B to $5B	**41%**
>$5B	**26%**

RESPONDENT LEVEL	
C-level executive	**20%**
Vice president	**27%**
Director	**31%**
Full-time practitioner	**22%**

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.