

MOVE FAST AND WORK WISELY:

Preparing Your Workplace for Agentic AI

The next employee of the month could be a robot.

Well, maybe not next month. But AI isn't staying neatly tucked away in a chat window. It's already stepping into calendars, inboxes, help desks, and workflows.

We're now entering a new stage of AI development: agentic AI. Are you ready for tools that don't just generate ideas but act on them?

The conversation about AI has largely been focused on **productivity gains** and sci-fi-inspired innovation. But successfully leveraging agentic AI will take more than grand claims about hours saved. When systems can interpret information, make decisions, and take action independently, the impact goes beyond efficiency—it touches governance, accountability, culture, and trust.

Organizations that thrive in the age of agentic AI won't be the ones chasing every shiny new toy. They'll be the ones asking better questions, setting thoughtful boundaries, and aligning technology with their values from the start.

Key takeaways

- Unlike generative AI, agentic AI functions independently by interpreting complex data and taking autonomous actions without human prompts.
- To prevent cybersecurity, ethical, and legal vulnerabilities, HR must steward transparency and human accountability as AI autonomy increases.
- Successful implementation requires a cross-functional leadership team including HR, IT, and legal to oversee data governance and change management.

- Protect your culture by defining which tasks require human-IN-the-loop oversight versus those suitable for more autonomous, human-ON-the-loop monitoring.

Agentic AI is here. Are we ready?

Agentic AI isn't a theoretical technology of the future. It already exists, and more and more AI products are claiming to offer agentic capabilities. Think calendars that automatically add meetings, customer service bots that independently handle support tickets from start to finish, or emails that can be drafted and sent without human involvement.

While some of these tools are **more hype than revolutionary** (don't expect Rosie the Robot from The Jetsons to show up in your office tomorrow), many of them are genuinely advancing automation in the workplace. And as agentic AI progresses, understanding how it works and how to use it effectively will quickly become essential professional skills.

WHAT IS AGENTIC AI?

Agentic AI refers to AI tools that can function independently, interpreting complex information from multiple sources, making decisions, and taking action without instructions or assistance from a human.

Agentic AI is not just a more advanced version of generative AI. The biggest trait that sets agentic AI apart is its ability to act spontaneously and autonomously.

While generative AI produces specific output based on your **prompts**, agentic AI completes tasks automatically without routine direction. It's the difference between a generative AI summarizing your email and suggesting a response, and an agentic AI reading your inbox every day and automatically responding to messages on your behalf.

GENERATIVE AI	AGENTIC AI
Suggests a new-hire training when you ask	Enrolls the new hire in training and sends them the invite
Answers a question about onboarding	Automatically schedules onboarding tasks
Generates an email when prompted	Notifies a follow-up is needed and sends the email
Waits for user prompt	Identifies the goal, creates a plan, and acts on it

If an AI agent sending emails automatically or making customer service decisions on your behalf gives you pause, that's a good thing. Agentic AI is an exciting development, but it comes with a lot of risks. Before implementing agentic AI at your organization, it's crucial for leaders to understand **where vulnerabilities lie** and how this technology could impact their workforce.

Create your team's AI roadmap

Ready to implement AI in your HR team? This four-week plan breaks down AI adoption into simple action items, taking your team from learning the basics to building their own custom tools.

Get the Roadmap →

AI risks are now HR risks

HR shoulders the responsibility of protecting the organization from legal, ethical, and compliance missteps. As **HR pros already know**, generative AI has added a whole new dimension to those traditional risk domains. With the development of agentic AI—systems that can make decisions and act with autonomy—your team needs to be prepared for an even greater escalation in risk.

Agentic AI can introduce significant vulnerabilities:

- **Cybersecurity risks:** AI agents often require **broad permissions** and can trigger actions across systems, which can expose sensitive data.
- **Ethical concerns:** Agentic AI can embed or amplify **bias**, lack transparency, and automatically produce outcomes with no clear owner.
- **Operational chaos:** Agents can hallucinate or go rogue, taking actions that exceed scope or ignore directions.
- **Legal and brand risk:** AI-driven decisions can reduce human accountability, leading to **compliance issues**, regulatory violations, and reputational damage.

As AI advances, it will directly affect your people and your business. To ensure your org can survive and thrive in the age of AI, HR must act as a critical steward of **ethical standards** and **company culture**.

Move fast—but don't break things

The pressure to adopt agentic AI is real. **Headlines warn of major paradigm shifts** and industry chatter makes it sound like anything less than a breakneck speed means falling behind. Executives feel intense **urgency to scale AI quickly**—yet many admit they're still figuring out how to make it work in practice.

Speed matters, but speed without direction is expensive and pointless.

Moving too fast without a clear plan can burn resources, erode employee and customer **trust**, and create governance

problems that are far harder to untangle later. To have a competitive edge in the **era of AI transformation**, you need a purposeful strategy that delivers results.

EXPERIMENT AND EVALUATE

Start with one specific, high-value use case—something meaningful but contained. For example, automating internal ticket routing or improving scheduling workflows. Define what success looks like, measure impact, and document what you learn.

CHAMPION HUMAN INSIGHT

Your org's greatest advantage in adopting artificial intelligence is your human intelligence. Keep human oversight and evaluation at the forefront of your agentic AI strategy. Let leaders and frontline managers observe how the AI behaves in real workflows. Where does it struggle? Where does it surprise you? Where does it add clear value?

PROVE VALUE BEFORE EXPANDING

Remember: Your first goal isn't to build a flawless AI ecosystem, but to introduce an agentic function that's useful. Prove the value of agentic AI, build trust across your organization, and lay the groundwork for expansion.

Any company can pay for the latest AI gimmick software and aimlessly play around with it. Moving quickly with intention is how you stay ahead in the AI boom. Every step towards agentic AI adoption should be organized, measured, and directly connected to your business goals. That's how you lead innovation without sacrificing **performance**.

Improve your hiring processes: 5 Ways to use AI today

Feeling buried in resumes? You're not alone. Our free guide gives you practical ways you can use AI to overcome the top hiring challenges for small businesses. Use this FREE guide to unlock hiring efficiency and find the talent you need to grow.

Download Now →

Create your agentic AI dream team

Launching agentic AI in the workplace can't be a solo effort. To successfully implement autonomous AI tools, you'll need to form a leadership coalition across several key departments:

- **HR:** Your HR team brings an essential perspective on how agentic AI will impact culture, values, and employee trust. HR also plays a central role in training, professional development, and **change management**.

- **IT:** Your IT team will take the lead on implementation plans, offer insight into risk areas, and ensure that your **AI policies** stay grounded in technical reality. They understand system permissions and integrations that are critical for operating agentic AI safely.
- **Legal:** Legal teams help interpret evolving regulations, define accountability for AI-driven decisions, and reduce exposure related to privacy, compliance, and intellectual property.
- **Operations:** Operations leaders bring a practical lens on workflows, scalability, and business continuity.
- **Data teams:** Data experts within your organization will make sure that your AI systems are trained on appropriate data and align with your company's **data governance standards**.

Your **cross-functional** strategy team may include other stakeholders as well, depending on how agentic AI will be used in your organization. For example, if your agentic AI system will serve customer-facing functions, your customer experience team will need to be deeply involved in strategy and planning.

Set responsible guardrails

AI is rapidly evolving, and new questions about AI use cases are popping up every day, from operational challenges to ethical concerns. To be prepared, your organization needs to start setting guardrails now. Here are some basic questions for your AI adoption council to answer as you **create policies**.

HOW WILL AGENTIC AI ALIGN WITH YOUR COMPANY VALUES?

Investing in your **company values** is crucial to protecting your culture and brand reputation. Keep your stated values at the front of your mind when making decisions about agentic AI. Any tool you adopt or process you implement should strengthen your workplace's mission and values, not undermine them.

WHEN IS HUMAN JUDGMENT REQUIRED?

One of the biggest distinctions you'll need to make with AI processes is the difference between human-in-the-loop and human-on-the-loop workflows.

- **Human-in-the-loop:** A person must review or approve AI actions before they're finalized. This model works best for high-stakes decisions like hiring, promotions, compensation, or compliance-related actions.
- **Human-on-the-loop:** A person monitors outcomes and can intervene if needed, but the AI operates more autonomously. This may be appropriate for lower-risk, operational tasks.

As you shop for agentic AI tools and develop use policies, make sure your AI leadership team sets clear guidelines on

what processes are appropriate for more hands-off workflows and which tasks require consistent human involvement.

HOW WILL YOU TEST NEW TOOLS?

As with any new tool or process, it's wise to try out agentic AI on a smaller scale before rolling it out for your entire organization. Your agentic AI pilot program should have a clear use case, defined success metrics, a structure for **feedback**, and documented outcomes. If your pilot program goes well, you can start company-wide implementation.

WHAT ARE THE USAGE RULES?

Agentic AI adoption offers plenty of opportunities for **employees to experiment**, but you need to make sure that innovation happens in a safe and secure way. Before launching a new AI tool, be sure every employee knows:

- What the AI is allowed to do
- What it is explicitly prohibited from doing
- What data it can access and use
- Who owns outcomes and escalation pathways

You can share your AI use policies through a company announcement, **training program**, or internal information hub. A written version of the policy should be easily accessible at all times.

HOW WILL AGENTIC AI BE MONITORED?

Agentic AI works autonomously, but treating agentic AI like a set-it-and-forget-it tool opens you up to massive risks. Every new agentic AI system you introduce should come with its own audit schedule and oversight process.

Ask questions like:

- How often will we need to review this agent's performance?
- Who owns this agent? Who is responsible for outcomes and compliance?
- What is our course of action if this agent malfunctions or makes an error?

Free download: Your top questions about AI and HR, answered

Artificial intelligence is transforming the future of work—including HR. We sourced AI questions from HR pros all over the world and brought the top 10 to Alan Whitaker, BambooHR's Head of AI.

Download Now



Establishing a monitoring system not only reduces risk, but also gives you ongoing data and feedback on how your agentic AI is impacting your business.

What you can do today

You might not know *exactly* how agentic AI will impact your organization in the long run, but you can stay prepared by taking practical, people-centered steps right now.

FOR HR PROFESSIONALS

HR teams are positioned to become important leaders in the era of **the AI workplace**. Here are some HR-specific initiatives you can put in place today.

- **Form an AI governance or ethics group.** Bring together HR, legal, IT, and data teams to set guardrails and guide early decisions before agentic AI use expands.
- **Run a workflow audit.** Look for **HR tasks** where agentic AI could be applied and any areas where agentic AI could cause harm. Pay special attention to workflows that involve sensitive employee data and responsibilities that require critical thinking.
- **Start small with an HR pilot project.** Test agentic AI tools on a low-risk, well-defined HR task. Use this experiment to evaluate outcomes and gauge **employee sentiment** before applying agentic AI to other use cases.
- **Train managers early.** Make sure managers are clear on what agentic AI is and isn't. Clear up myths and reinforce that AI is a copilot, not a replacement for human judgment. Dispelling misinformation early on will ensure leaders set the right tone when introducing agentic AI to their teams.
- **Promote agentic AI risk awareness.** Include information on agentic AI risks during onboarding and **regular employee training**, so employees are prepared when it's time to adopt new tools.

FOR THE BROADER WORKFORCE

Preparing for agentic AI extends beyond just your HR team. Here's how you can support agentic AI adoption across your organization.

- **Launch training and development programs.** Employees should know what agentic AI is, what it can and can't do, and how it will be used at your company.

- **Update job descriptions.** Review and update **role descriptions** to reflect new AI-related responsibilities and skills. Aligning job descriptions with the reality of the roles will ensure stronger hiring outcomes and support employee performance.
- **Invest in new roles.** Hire or train current staff for new AI-related roles, such as AI operations, data governance, and oversight.
- **Create safe feedback channels.** Encourage employees to share concerns and questions without fear. Offer options for anonymous or **confidential feedback**.
- **Communicate openly about change.** Be transparent about goals, expectations, and potential workforce impacts. If roles shift or staffing changes are required, handle those conversations with clarity and respect.

Innovate with intention

Agentic AI has great potential for streamlining work and creating space for people to focus on more impactful initiatives. But without the right boundaries and preparation, your organization will be at the mercy of the tools and algorithms you use.

HR, IT, and people leaders are in a unique position to lead on both ethics and strategy. By stepping up now to develop people-centered policies and implement tools with intention, your company can become an influential force in shaping the future of AI-empowered work. 🌱

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This free course helps you understand how AI is transforming HR—from speeding up recruitment and payroll to enhancing employee satisfaction and performance.

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