slack
from Salesforce

AI Agents Are the Catalyst for a Limitless Workforce

Businesses are hungry to discover the best way to use AI. Agentforce's autonomous agents will propel them into a new era of productivity.



AI agents will help unlock new growth for organizations globally

Today, teams face more work than they have the resources to support. While many organizations are turning to AI for help, they have no tolerance for inadequate solutions and generic responses. General-purpose chatbots and copilots struggle to provide accurate, personalized responses to complex requests and, crucially, they can't act on their own.

Now more than ever, organizations need a work operating system that connects their digital labor force, in the form of autonomous AI agents, with their people, information, and tools to drive work forward.

Slack, by Salesforce, is that work operating system, and it was made for this moment. As a worldwide leader in team collaboration, Slack is in a unique position to repair the broken work environment and evolve the human work experience to enable the emerging, limitless digital labor force.

This opportunity only gets better with Agentforce, the digital labor platform that makes it easy to build and customize agents that can support customers and employees 24/7. It becomes even more powerful inside Slack, where employee-facing agents can support teams by acting autonomously with permissioned access to contextual data, enterprise apps, and workflow automations.

Our customers are already putting this powerful technology to work. At OpenTable, agents handle routine tasks such as reservation changes and loyalty-point redemptions so support associates can focus on delivering exceptional customer service for more-complex situations. And retailer Saks Fifth Avenue is using agents to update customers on their order status and process returns, while their human counterparts concentrate on strengthening customer relationships with personalized service.

This is the world Slack and Salesforce are ushering in. Read on to learn about the challenges facing workers around the world and how we can solve them together. Welcome to the agentic era!



What's in this report

We're in the middle of a tectonic shift in how people do their jobs. The future of work is one where autonomous AI agents can analyze information, make decisions, and act on behalf of workers – significantly increasing their capability and capacity.

This is the vision Slack and Salesforce are delivering. To dig deeper into this new reality, Slack partnered with Qualtrics to run a survey of more than 20,000 desk workers across industries in 15 countries – from C-suite executives to people managers and individual contributors – to study how AI agents are setting the stage for a limitless workforce, enabling greater productivity, and creating more time for strategic, human work.

Slack's Workforce Lab surveyed:

20k
Desk workers

15
Countries

Who we interviewed

IBM, Canva, Deloitte., box, envato, MIMIT healthcare, WRITER, PLATIVE, salesforce, ezcater, rexera, McLEOD

Who we surveyed

Slack, a Salesforce company, conducted this global survey in partnership with the research firm Qualtrics from September to November of 2024. The total sample size was 20,452 desk workers and executives across a range of sectors in the following countries: U.S. (3,473); Canada (1,009); U.K./ Ireland (2,034); India (2,006); Germany (2,079); France (2,011); Australia (2,040); Singapore (1,328); Japan (1,006); South Korea (1,009); Brazil (753); Mexico (755); the Netherlands (514); and New Zealand (435).

Who we surveyed

We polled office, remote, and hybrid workers, including 500 phone interviews with executives.

The survey encompassed a wide range of job functions, including sales, customer service, IT, marketing, and engineering across several industries, including financial services; retail and consumer goods; core business services/consulting; communications, media, and technology; healthcare and life sciences; and manufacturing, automotive, and energy. The survey did not target employees or customers of Slack or Salesforce.

In this report, we refer to the following respondent groups:

- **Executives and leaders**:
  Presidents, partners, C-suite
- **Managers**:
  People managers, ranging from team leads to VP-level leads
- **Desk workers**:
  Independent contributors, e.g. analysts, graphic designers, and developers
- **Expert AI users**:
  Workers whose experience with AI tools is “far above average”
- **Non-expert AI users**:
  Workers whose experience with AI tools is “average” or “below average”

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Executive summary

We asked leaders in the tech industry – including **IBM, Deloitte, Writer, and Canva** – to share their vision for an AI-enabled workforce. One theme was clear: The future of work will involve humans and a digital labor force collaborating as teammates. Here are the top takeaways from our report.

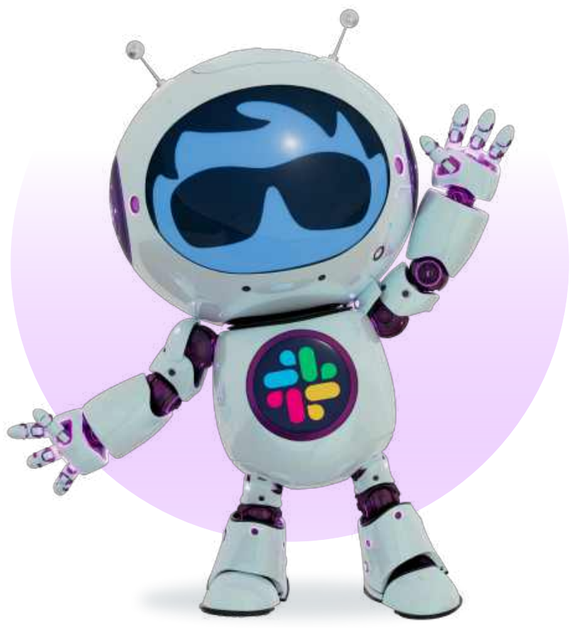
1 Autonomous agents with clearly defined roles are poised to deliver the tsunami of productivity that large language models (LLMs) heralded when they went mainstream in 2022. Agents are generative AI systems that can adapt to new information, make decisions, and act on a user's behalf using pre-defined guardrails. They connect to your existing work operating system and are designed with clear roles for specific jobs. They integrate into a wide range of business processes and operate alongside humans as teammates.

People working with agents are 72% more likely to say they feel "very productive" at their job.

They spend their time differently than their fellow employees, doing more creative work and skill building. As agents become more ubiquitous and trusted, they'll save time and free up people to focus on high-value, strategic tasks.

2 Agents are emerging at a fortunate time, because general-purpose solutions such as chatbots and copilots have largely underwhelmed in both impact and usage – falling short of their promise to drive productivity. Our research shows that early AI adopters' engagement has slowed noticeably, in line with the Gartner Hype Cycle. Meanwhile, late adopters aren't getting the support they need to successfully use the technology, and they are still determining how much they can trust it. Challenges such as insufficient education and training, privacy and security concerns, and unclear norms around AI use have put the brakes on faster adoption. These factors are holding back many companies from getting the most value out of the technology. But businesses have an opportunity to proactively address these challenges and empower their employees to experiment with specialized, accountable, trustworthy, and collaborative AI agents.

3 Companies that don't invest in a conversational digital labor platform risk falling behind their competitors. In the agentic future of work, conversation is as good as code: If you can describe it, agents can do it. This is particularly good news, because there is a gap in AI readiness among workers who haven't received the support they need to be effective with existing tools.



12% of our respondents said they had been offered extensive training in AI.

45% said they either don't know their company's AI policies or that their company doesn't have any.

Companies should select a trusted, secure digital labor platform that can be deployed where teams are already working, to increase adoption and make immediate productivity gains. This not only reduces friction for employees, it makes AI agents more powerful since they're learning from unstructured data such as conversations, files, and apps. Businesses that don't invest in making it easy for their employees to use AI – or for their AI to securely learn from unstructured data – will find it increasingly difficult to keep pace.

4

The way we work today is fundamentally broken. Half of the workers we surveyed said they are "constantly" working via email, and that 38% of their time is spent on low-value tasks. If companies indiscriminately throw AI tools into this mix, they'll doom their workforce with a tangled web of work "solutions." A work operating system solves this problem by connecting all your people, tools, data, and now agents in one place.

Employees switch between more than 10 apps every day to do their work, wasting time tracking down the information they need to do their jobs.

Slack is the best place to deploy a digital labor force – right where your teams are already working. This is possible thanks to Agentforce, the digital labor platform for enterprises that enables a limitless workforce. When deployed in Slack, Agentforce agents become teammates: They can suggest and take actions in the flow of work based on their deep awareness of workers' goals, priorities, and context.

INTRODUCTION BY DR. FRANNY HSIAO

Building trust in AI: Agentforce was designed with secure guardrails

Leaders can improve their employees' confidence in AI by encouraging them to experiment with agents that are trustworthy, accountable, and collaborative.

Slack's latest research reveals that workers around the world remain cautious about adopting artificial intelligence. That's understandable: When revolutionary technology like this arrives on the scene, it can be hard to embrace without fully grasping its impact. However, AI can be a force for good if we are proactive and thoughtful about how we design and implement it.

As a Distinguished AI Architect who has worked in the field for more than 20 years at IBM and Salesforce, I have dedicated my career to designing and developing AI solutions and advising customers on how to ethically design governance and guardrails into their AI strategies.

While AI agents present a powerful potential to scale the workforce, many of our customers tell me that trust remains a significant issue when it comes to AI adoption. They want agents that are accountable, trustworthy, and collaborative. That's why we created Agentforce, the digital labor platform for enterprises, with security being top of mind by building in trusted data and safety guardrails such as the Einstein Trust Layer to protect your company's data. Using a robust set of features – including secure dynamic grounding, zero data retention, audit trails, prompt injection detection, and content safety models including toxicity detection – the Einstein Trust Layer means you can take advantage of AI's powerful potential without compromising your security standards.

Our ultimate goal is to foster and support "empowered human agency," which is when humans understand the risks of AI systems so they can successfully harness them to create better experiences and future outcomes. Companies can achieve this by investing in training their employees so they have the knowledge and skills to leverage AI tools effectively. But forward-thinking leaders should go beyond mere upskilling by proactively addressing employees' worries about job replacement and AI trustworthiness. Nurturing a culture of continuous learning and partnering with their employees to co-design and reinvent their roles will help leaders build trust with employees.

The future of work won't be a rosy one if we indiscriminately add AI agents on top of an already broken way of working. We need to intelligently delegate time-consuming, error-prone, repetitive types of work to agents, and free up people to focus on human magic – such as empathy and creative problem-solving – where people remain superior to agents.

Once you address workers' valid concerns, that's when you get to empowerment. Instead of human intelligence competing with artificial intelligence, we're able to achieve collaborative intelligence.



Dr. Franny Hsiao
Distinguished AI Architect, Salesforce

CHAPTER 1

AI agents will catapult us into a new era of employee productivity

As agents become more trusted and ubiquitous, they'll free up people to focus on high-value tasks.

A future is coming where each employee collaborates with a team of powerful AI agents that respond to questions and act 24/7. These agents can autonomously provide tech support, answer questions from a company's knowledge base, file and approve expense reports, write sales account plans – and that's just scratching the surface.

Agents can be securely built and trained on a company's trusted enterprise data, which makes them useful in a wide range of employee-facing scenarios, in a way that generalized AI copilots and assistants can't compete with. As sophisticated systems programmed with clear guidelines to perform specific roles at work, they can analyze information, learn over time, make decisions, and take action on behalf of users, offering a significant leap forward in the workplace that promises to redefine productivity through digital labor.

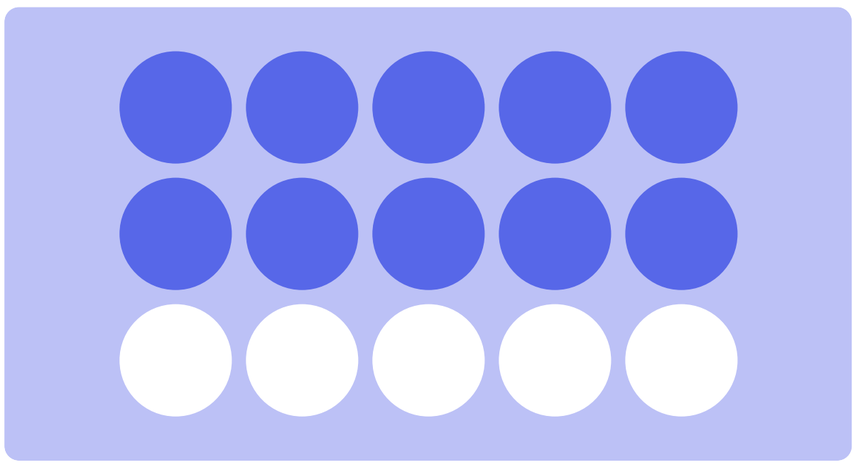
> **Early adopters of autonomous agents will not only benefit from productivity gains but will also have an advantage when it comes to attracting and retaining top talent. High-performing creatives, engineers, scientists, and others will seek out organizations with agentic AI capabilities as a way to balance their time toward more engaging and fulfilling work activities, while also improving overall well-being. Human capital will remain a critical asset for organizations in the future, and AI agents will provide a differentiator in the battle for scarce and high-performing talent.**
>
> **Greg Vert**
> AI for Human Capital Leader
> Deloitte

People working with agents are 72% more likely to say they feel "very productive" at their jobs, according to our survey. They spend their time differently, doing more strategic work and skill building. And while the average user says they would use the extra time on more administrative tasks, expert AI users say they're using their time saved on problem-solving.

Many organizations are already getting started with this transformative technology: 42% of companies are using generative AI, and 27% have used agents in their workplace. These early adopters are already seeing impressive results. “The agents that have clear functions within specific systems are getting the most engagement,” said **Michael Peeler, Head of GTM Analytics and Engineering at IBM**. “One of ours is called ‘Ask HR,’ which is integrated with SAP SuccessFactors, our HR tool. Last week, I reorganized a team of 40 people inside Slack – without ever logging into the HR system – and saved a couple of hours. To me, that’s an invaluable user experience.”

2 out of 3

employees believe that working with AI agents will make their job more strategic and creative.



The new AI agents that are coming to market can manage routine tasks, optimize schedules, and anticipate needs across every department. Here are some examples of what agents can do in the following lines of business:

1. **Sales:** Reps spend 70% of their time on non-selling tasks. Agents can shorten the sales cycle by integrating with CRM systems to analyze customer data, predict buying patterns, and automate lead management – so salespeople can spend more time doing what they do best: selling.

2. **Marketing:** Only 31% of marketers are fully satisfied with their ability to unify customer data sources. Agents can free up marketers to work on deeper strategic planning and help teams create consistent, personalized experiences across customer journeys by autonomously executing A/B tests, adjusting ad spend in real time based on analytics, and generating content ideas from trending data.

3. **Human resources:** Chief information officers view HR as the department that is most prepared to implement AI in their workflows. Agents give HR professionals time to concentrate on strategic talent development by streamlining the onboarding process, monitoring employee engagement, and managing routine inquiries.

4. **Finance:** Financial services firms see an average productivity gain of 20% after implementing AI tools. Agents help financial professionals be more efficient by executing tedious administrative chores like expense reporting, from scanning receipts to categorizing expenditures to ensuring policy compliance.

5. **Customer service:** Customer service representatives spend only 39% of their time working with customers. At the same time, customers say they walk away from a third of their interactions with customer service without their issue being resolved. Agents improve customer satisfaction and loyalty by providing around-the-clock customer support, resolving issues swiftly, and escalating to human service reps only when necessary.

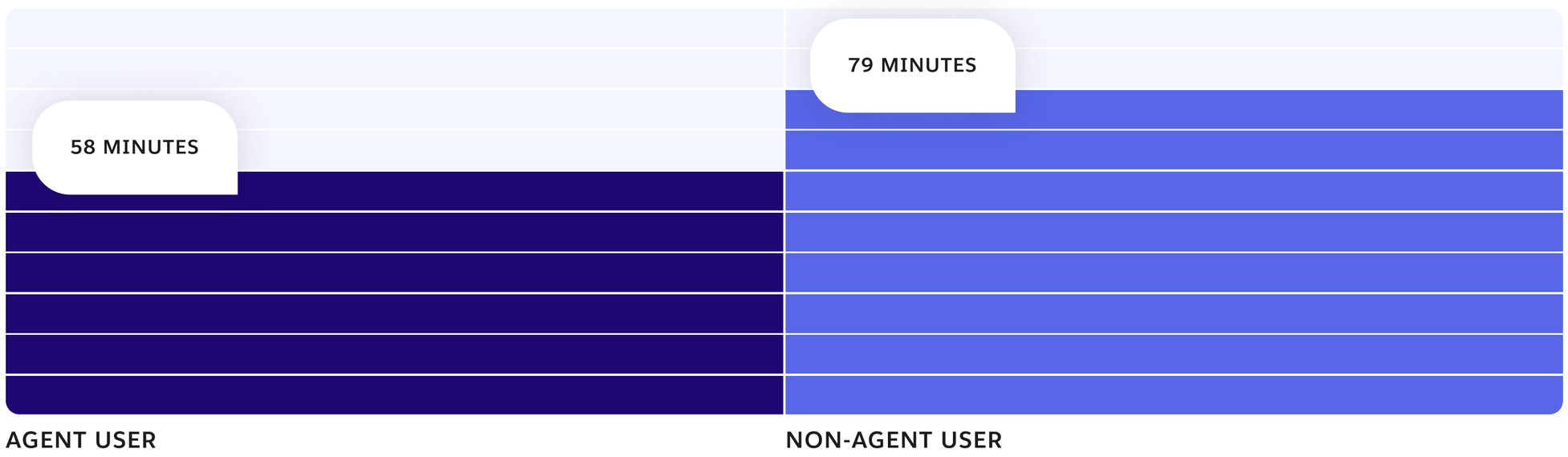
Rexera, a tech startup that simplifies and speeds up real-estate closings, is a great example of how to work more efficiently with agents. “In a large transaction, operations teams have to do all kinds of manual and clerical tasks, and we are replacing much of that work with AI agents,” said **Vishrut Malhotra, Rexera’s CEO and co-founder**. “We think AI agents are well-suited for the repetitive, monotonous work of reading tax certificates or chasing payoff statements. This makes real-estate purchases orders of magnitude faster by reducing error rates and the frictions that homebuyers feel.”

While 25% of desk workers fear that AI agents might displace jobs, 62% of those who believe their roles will change say they will become more strategic and creative – with agents handling repetitive tasks, pattern recognition, and intensive data processing.

“When you go to a physician today, a human being evaluates a lot of information and looks for patterns to recognize,” said **Dr. Paramjit Chopra, CEO and founder of MIMIT Health and CIMSS Innovative Solutions**. “AI can help with this pattern recognition by processing a lot of data very quickly. But the ‘why’ and ‘what’ of actually treating patients is what humans will have more time to do.”

Managing repetitive tasks is one of the top uses for agents today. People who don’t use agents spend nearly 40% more time on admin compared with those who do. This frees up employees to learn new skills and transition into more rewarding roles, leading to higher job satisfaction and faster career growth.

People who don’t use agents spend almost 40% more time on admin compared with those who do.



As companies explore the expanding role of agentic systems, it’s clear that early adopters earn a significant competitive edge with their employees. “Early adopters of autonomous agents will not only benefit from productivity gains but will also have an advantage when it comes to attracting and retaining top talent,” said **Greg Vert, AI for Human Capital Leader at Deloitte**. “High-performing creatives, engineers, scientists, and others will seek out organizations with agentic AI capabilities as a way to balance their time toward more engaging and fulfilling work activities, while also improving overall well-being. Human capital will remain a critical asset for organizations in the future, and AI agents will provide a differentiator in the battle for scarce and high-performing talent.”

CHAPTER 2

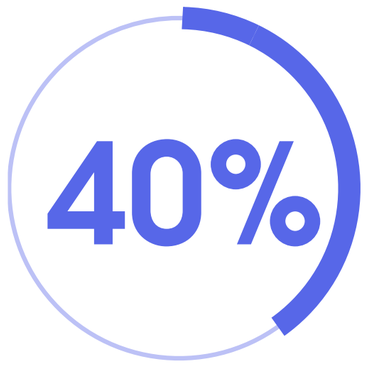
Agents will significantly outperform general-purpose chatbots and copilots

Companies must invest in a digital labor platform that reduces the learning curve for employees who have been slow to adopt AI.

Adoption of non-specialized AI tools has stalled in many markets after a meteoric rise that, at first, seemed limitless – but agents promise to be the solution that reignites enthusiasm about this technology.

Generative AI took the working world by storm when LLMs went mainstream with the launch of OpenAI's ChatGPT in late 2022. These programs were marketed to companies as an exciting productivity solution that would help desk workers answer questions, write, translate, code, and more. The number of employees trying AI tools grew steadily through early 2024, and during this initial wave of AI adoption, workers eagerly integrated these tools into their daily routine, hoping to unlock new levels of productivity.

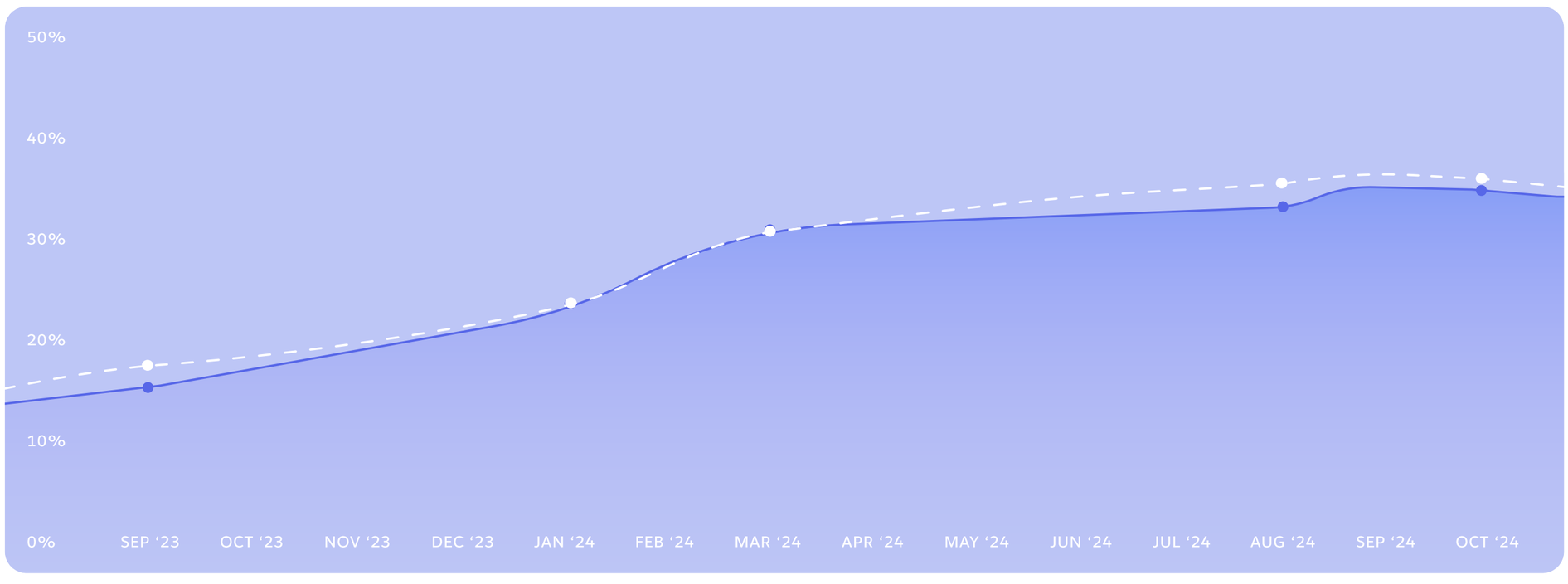
However, this trend has begun to shift. Although the U.S. was the earliest adopter of AI technology, the first hint of a slowdown came in the third quarter of 2024, when the number of new workers trying AI tools began to stall. We're now seeing that this is a global pattern.



of employees use AI at work, but growth has plateaued.

There's a clear plateau where early adopters in nearly every country have hit a wall, with the exception of Brazil, Singapore, and India, whose knowledge workers operate in uniquely tech-heavy workforces. People who work at companies that are "tech laggards" have much lower adoption than early adopters – achieving only 24% AI usage at work and 48% overall.

AI ADOPTION RATES



> **While AI may have been over-hyped at first, most people are under-hyping it in the long term. The most important thing to do is to start playing with it. Companies need to create intelligent user experiences that really drive value for their customers that will scale long-term.**
>
> **Michael Peeler**
> Head of GTM Analytics
> and Engineering
> IBM

One of the primary reasons for the slowdown in engagement may be that, after the initial wave of excitement, workers have grown uncertain about how to incorporate AI into their daily tasks. Only 17% of workers are very confident about how to effectively integrate AI into their workflows, resulting in hesitation to fully employ these tools. This is compounded by a few barriers:

Executives say that concerns about data security and accountability are the top two blockers for AI and agent implementation.

45% said their companies have not published guidelines for how to use the technology.

83% of workers do not have a very clear understanding of how to integrate AI into their workflows.

CIOs have told us that many business users have been experimenting with unsanctioned consumer-grade tools that are not built for work. Our research backs this up, showing that generalist AI tools have not automatically delivered sweeping productivity gains, leading users to try them but eventually revert to the manual ways of working they're accustomed to. This mirrors the Gartner Hype Cycle, where high expectations give way to disillusionment before breaking through to the promised potential of more productivity.

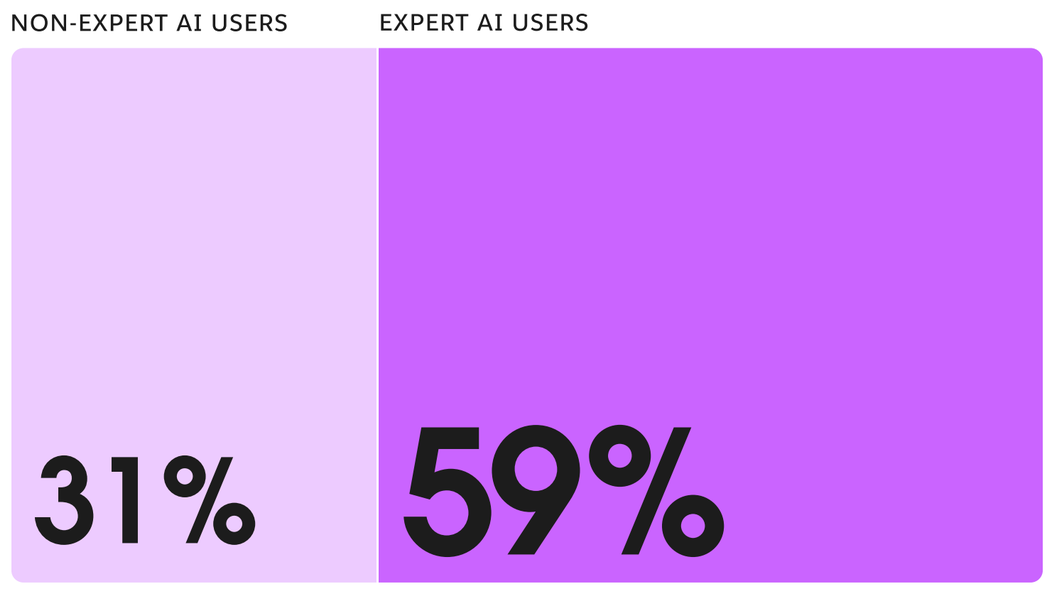
We're seeing that some unique blockers are holding back full adoption of this technology. Most workers think they would spend the time AI saves them on more administrative work – such as sending emails and attending meetings – instead of deep, strategic work. Of those who do use general-purpose AI tools, 62% report they are saving three hours or less per week.

Autonomous agents, which can operate independently and handle complex tasks, offer a solution to the ambiguity and anxiety surrounding AI. With clear use cases for specific jobs, autonomous agents can reignite excitement and drive productivity in the workplace. Expert AI users are extremely bullish about how much agents will be able to do for them, and they are significantly more likely to believe that major parts of their job could be replaced by AI.

Clearly, companies need a new approach if they're going to make their AI productivity dreams a reality.

However, it's crucial to note that they see this as a welcome change and are three times as likely as their non-expert counterparts to say that they'll have the license to focus on more strategic and creative work. They also imagine agents being more deeply ingrained into teams than the average employee does. For example, they're almost twice as likely to envision themselves as manager of a team of agents (59% vs. 31%).

Expert AI users are almost twice as likely to envision themselves as a manager of a team of agents.



> **Autonomous agents will significantly enhance productivity by performing or augmenting more complex end-to-end work activities. Unlike the first wave of generative AI tools that offered general or incremental support, these agents can take on domain-specific job responsibilities with minimal human intervention. For instance, a recruiter AI agent could handle tasks such as writing job postings, managing requisitions, sourcing candidates, and scheduling interviews, allowing human recruiters to focus on higher-value activities such as building meaningful connections with candidates and enhancing the talent brand. This shift could save hours instead of minutes per day, marking a substantial leap forward in workforce productivity.**
>
> **Greg Vert**
> AI for Human Capital Leader
> Deloitte

Truly transformative technologies like AI tend to look more like marathons than sprints, and the experts we spoke to said it's normal for early adopters to pause before catching a second wind. "While AI may have been over-hyped at first, most people are under-hyping it in the long term," said IBM's Peeler. "The most important thing to do is to start playing with it. Companies need to create intelligent user experiences that really drive value for their customers that will scale long-term."

However, enthusiasm for AI's potential remains high, with many survey respondents saying they expect laggards to catch up in the near future.

"AI is everywhere, so there's a lot of hype around it," said **Libby Kempson, Head of IT Operations and Technology Experience at Envato**.

"In another six months or another year, it's going to be triple what it is now. It doesn't replace human creativity, but it does take away the mundane administrative activities employees don't want to sit there doing and empowers them to do engaging work."

Mel Spinks, IT Operations and Technology Experience Manager at Envato, agreed: "AI is not going away. Companies need to move fast so they don't get left behind."

CHAPTER 3

Choosing not to invest in a digital labor platform is risky business

Businesses that don’t support their employees with agents will find it increasingly difficult to keep pace with their competitors.

There is a significant gap in AI readiness among workers. Only 12% of workers reported that they have been offered extensive training in AI, while 62% said their employer either doesn’t offer training or they haven’t seen any available.

Global employees receiving AI training

12% of workers reported that they have been offered extensive training in AI.

62% said their employer doesn’t offer training (or they aren’t aware of any).

As a result, the vast majority of employees have spent less than five hours total learning how to use AI, and half have spent no time at all on employer-sponsored training. This lack of training leaves most workers in the dark about how to incorporate AI into their work. Eighty-three percent of respondents said they don’t have a clear idea of how they’ll use AI in the next year.

Agents offer a solution. Unlike general-purpose LLMs and copilots – which require employees to learn new skills like prompting – agents require less training for new users to be effective because they’re built for specific tasks and can take action on their own. While some upskilling is still required, agents are easier to use out of the box than other new technologies and thus have a lower startup cost for new adopters. That’s one reason why AI experts using agents are a whopping five times as likely to have a clear idea about how AI will help them accomplish their goals in the next year.

To their credit, leaders are catching up, with 94% planning to invest in AI and 84% planning to invest in agents over the next year.



of executives are planning investment in AI over the next 12 months.

‘“Organizations that invest early in training and enabling their workforce to effectively use AI in their day-to-day work find themselves ahead of the curve with a powerful competitive advantage, quickly realizing both top-line and bottom-line impacts,” said **Carissa Kilgour, Deloitte’s AI for Workforce Leader**. “When organizations prioritize workforce trust, skills development, and transparency, they create a force-multiplier effect – increasing efficiency and innovating for growth.”

Half of our respondents indicated that they either don’t know their company’s AI policies or that their company doesn’t have any.

This lack of clarity creates a significant barrier to effective AI adoption: When employees are unsure about the guidelines and expectations surrounding AI use, they are one-third as likely to integrate these tools into their daily workflows (22% vs. 68%). Despite these challenges, it’s important to note that workers aren’t resistant to AI. In fact, three out of four desk workers feel an urgency to become AI experts and say that a prospective employer’s ability to provide and enable workers on AI tools is a factor in their job search. According to Salesforce research, 63% of global workers say more human involvement would build their trust in AI. This enthusiasm presents a golden opportunity for companies to invest in comprehensive AI training programs.

“If companies want to lean into AI, they should spend more time and effort educating employees, and just walking through use cases, because the potential view is to see that training as not adding value, but it is intrinsically linked to actually realizing the AI value,” said **Rob Lara, Deputy Director of the Office of the CIO at ManTech**. “I think in the next year, no more than two, we’ll actually know if the money spent was worth it. But it needs to be more than just the techies who use it. Widespread adoption across the enterprise is crucial to driving the AI impact.”

To seize this moment, companies must take a proactive approach to AI training by offering extensive and engaging education programs. Training should be tailored to different roles within the organization, providing practical, hands-on experience with AI tools. By doing so, companies can empower their employees to confidently integrate AI into their workflows, driving productivity and innovation.

> **Asking the right questions and knowing how to manage agents is going to become an essential skill. People who get really good with prompt engineering are going to excel at being managers because it’s the same skill set. If you can articulate a need to an intern well enough that gets you a good result, you’ve done prompt engineering. Everyone is going to become a manager because they’re going to have a virtual staff of agents. The people who can do this well are the ones who are going to have a significant stake in the future.**
>
> **Mark Christianson**
> Senior Manager of Digital Workspace and AI Strategy
> ezCater

Don’t DIY your AI

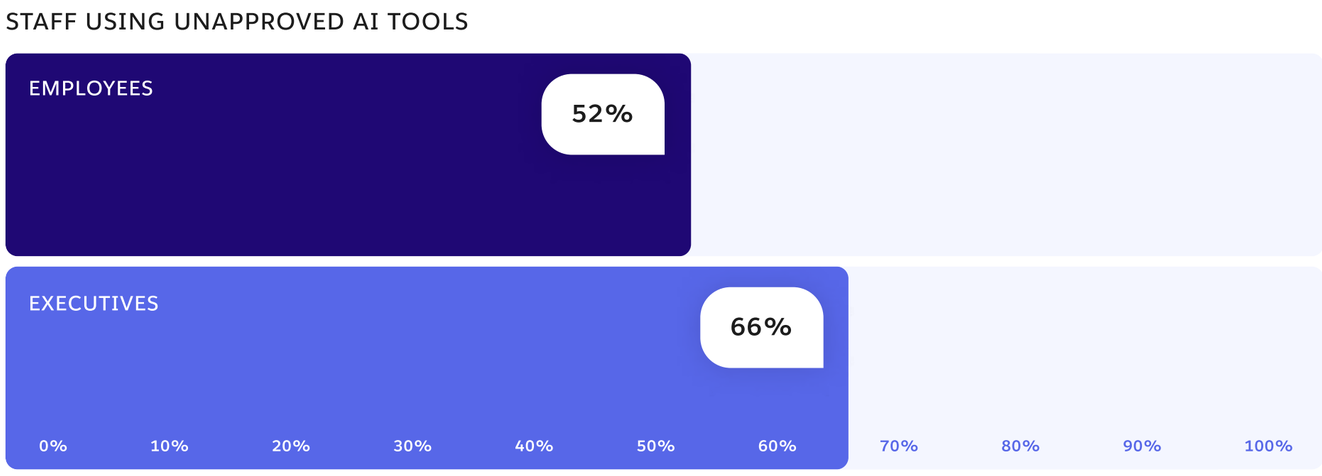
Workforces should be cautious about turning to DIY solutions. When individual employees use unsanctioned AI tools, they can’t get the most out of what AI can do for them, because general tools don’t have access to their company’s internal knowledge and context. And on the institutional level, businesses that try to create their own AI systems from the ground up are likely to rack up a staggering amount of tech debt.

“It’s very difficult to find the top-notch talent to develop a bespoke system,” said **Kevin Chung, Chief Strategy Officer at Writer**, a generative AI platform.

“It’s also really hard to maintain this stuff. Imagine an organization trying to maintain their own open-source LLMs and then having to update them regularly, which will probably break their applications. It’s expensive and hard to resource.”

There’s also the issue of regulatory compliance. About half of the workers reported that the AI tools they use are not officially sanctioned by their companies, which could expose them to security and liability risks. This issue is even more pronounced among executives, who are one and a half times as likely as rank-and-file employees to knowingly use unsanctioned tools. This is also where accountability questions crop up: If AI makes a mistake, who’s responsible?

About half of employees say their usage of AI tools at work is not approved by their employers.



Many experts say that it’s important to remember that people are driving this technology and are accountable for the content and quality of the deliverables. “You don’t get to take your hand off the steering wheel here,” said **Miftah Khan, SVP of Professional Services and Chief AI Strategist at Plative**. “I like to think of AI like those exoskeleton suits warehouse workers wear so they can lift really heavy stuff. It gives them superpowers, but they’re still driving it, and they’re responsible for what happens.”

Managing agents requires a cultural transformation within your organization

Working effectively with agents doesn’t just involve improvements to a company’s tech stack; it requires a shift in how workers think about their roles in comparison to the tools they’re using. “Asking the right questions and knowing how to manage agents is going to become an essential skill,” said **Mark Christianson, Senior Manager of Digital Workspace and AI Strategy at ezCater**. “AI agents unlock a whole new workforce. Everyone is going to become a manager with a virtual staff of AI agents, and the people who can do prompt engineering well will be most successful.”

In a world where agents could outnumber employees, the role of the manager will also evolve. Managers will need to become facilitators and coaches, helping their teams navigate the new landscape of work and maximize the potential of AI tools. It's critical for leaders to model this behavior and encourage their employees to experiment. **Mick Costigan, VP of Salesforce Futures**, recommends that teams pilot different use cases to discover what's useful to them so they can incorporate these in their workflows. "You should have some portion of people who are innovating and thinking about and experimenting with AI but can also inject intelligence in their existing workflows and help people do what they're already trying to do."

> **We want them to recognize that there are different tools for different jobs and also to recognize that this industry is so new and evolving that we didn't want to lock ourselves into one vendor or one tool. We've got learning programs run by our Canva University team that give people free rein to play and experiment.**
>
> **Samantha Garrett**
> Senior System Engineer
> Canva

Executives must establish formal policies and show their employees why AI skills are strategically important. This means setting guidelines for using AI tools and making sure all employees understand AI's benefits and potential. By fostering a culture of transparency and support, companies can alleviate the anxiety and ambiguity that come with adopting new technologies. The experts we spoke to underscored the importance of taking it one step at a time. "Small experiments are a great way to start working with agents," said Vishrut Malhotra at Rexera. Using AI agents to make phone calls was one area where Malhotra's team made faster progress than they first imagined. Their initial experiments turned out to be extremely successful – and if they hadn't tried it on a small scale, it would have been a hard sell to spend additional resources on agents. "Find folks on your teams who are tinkerers, who are open to experimenting," Malhotra said. "They'll be creative, they'll find a solution, and they'll share it with others."

Some companies, such as Canva, are taking an ecosystem approach to how they adopt AI across their company. "We had this question: Do we give everyone one tool or do we want to give people some choice?" said **Samantha Garrett, Senior System Engineer and Internal AI Solutions Team Leader at Canva**.

Investing in AI training also has long-term benefits for employee retention and recruitment. As younger job seekers increasingly prioritize employers that offer opportunities for AI enablement, companies that invest in training will be more attractive to top talent. This not only helps build a skilled workforce, it also positions the company as a forward-thinking leader in the industry. By investing in their workforce, companies can bridge the gap between AI's promise and its practical application. This investment will drive immediate productivity gains and ensure long-term success in the rapidly evolving landscape of work. The time to act is now, and those who do will enjoy a significant competitive edge.

"AI adoption is going to be linked to the efficiency of a team," Garrett said, "and I believe we may see the extent of people's use of AI tools being directly linked to their performance, value, and productivity as employees."

CHAPTER 4

The best place to deploy agents is inside a work operating system — where teams are already collaborating

To create a limitless digital workforce, agents need to become teammates in a secure, conversation-first platform that contains all of your people, tools, and contextual data in one place.

The way we work today is fundamentally broken, and employees are overwhelmed. Most enterprise applications aren't connected, causing data silos and leaving workers to flit between an average of 10 or more applications just to find the information they need to do their work. The impact of this fractured landscape is staggering, as half the workers we surveyed said they are "constantly" working via email, and people say 38% said their work is spent on low-value tasks, leaving time and money on the table.

A true work OS serves as a conversational interface where humans and agents become teammates — and is connected to all their data, workflows, and apps so teams can achieve their goals.

This focus on busyness over productivity means that even though 63% of workers are using some form of automation, only 12% say their workplace is implementing it in a "very effective" way. To be successful, companies will need to adopt a work operating system that integrates AI agents into their workflows.

As a conversational platform, Slack's work operating system is the most natural place to deploy agents to search, act, and collaborate with humans. And the best way to use agents in Slack is Agentforce, the digital labor platform for enterprises, which lets anyone build and customize trusted, autonomous agents to support their customers and employees around the clock. With Agentforce in Slack, businesses can bring people together with all of their data, enterprise apps, workflow automation, and agents in a single command center.

> **We understand that embedding our AI apps and agents in the flow of work will transform employee productivity. Slack's conversational data combined with structured, enterprise data adds context that make agents powered by Writer more grounded and better at taking action.**
>
> **Kevin Chung**
> Chief Strategy Officer
> Writer

Connecting agents to your employees, apps, and data is key to their success

If the past decade has been defined by fragmentation – of apps, information, and attention – the future of work should look like its opposite: a fully integrated ecosystem where people can talk to their tools just like they talk to each other. To transition successfully into the era of "AI everywhere," businesses will need to centralize their people, apps, and data in a flexible work OS that's designed to orchestrate work between human and digital workers across all the projects and processes that make your business run.

That's exactly how file-sharing company Box is using Slack. "You go to a single, conversational interface in Slack and you can interact with humans and AI," said **Aaron Levie, Box's CEO**. "Agents are doing the work, and we've dreamt of that for decades in computing, and now we're finally seeing it."

To stay competitive, every organization is going to need a centralized digital home for their newly augmented workforce. Businesses won't be able to meet their full potential if their people, agents, and data are scattered.

On average, workers say they are switching between apps more than 10 times a day and losing 100 minutes to refocusing. Work is more efficient when it's unified and accessible to everyone, which is why it's mission-critical that companies host agents and workers in the same platform. Workers are already beleaguered by swivel-chairing between tools, and this is especially true for expert AI users, who are 1.6 times as likely as non-experts to report that frequent app switching is a major blocker to their productivity. Slack solves this. It allows people to work in one place with AI agents, and it connects all your teams with the apps and data they need to work efficiently, with customizable solutions for every job. Slack's conversation-first platform pulls in your organization's historical data to make Agentforce more contextually insightful and accurate, leading to more relevant agent responses.

On average, people switch between apps more than 10 times, wasting 100 minutes a day.

“Slack is the solution that allows people to work in one place with AI agents just like any other teammate, and it connects all your teams with the apps and data they need to work efficiently, with customizable solutions for every job,” said **Kaylin Voss, Salesforce’s EVP of Data Cloud and Agentforce**. “Slack’s conversation-first platform pulls in your organization’s historical data to make Agentforce more contextually insightful and accurate – leading to more relevant agent responses."

Inside Slack, trusted autonomous agents can automate tasks, provide real-time insights, and support complex decision-making while their human co-workers can focus on more strategic, creative work. “At Writer, we understand that embedding agents in the flow of work will transform employee productivity. Slack’s conversational data combined with structured, enterprise data adds context that makes Writer’s AI applications and agents more intelligent and better at taking action,” said Chung at Writer.

> **You go to a single, conversational interface in Slack and you can interact with humans and AI. Agents are doing the work, and we’ve dreamt of that for decades in computing, and now we’re finally seeing it.**
>
> **Aaron Levie**
> CEO
> Box

In Slack, agents become teammates and take action quickly

Customers can build, customize, and deploy employee-facing agents in Slack using Agent Builder and out-of-the-box templates that handle specific use cases. This is the biggest opportunity for Slack to drive agent use with every employee across every line of business. Once deployed, employees can interact with agents just like any other teammate: adding them to channels, mentioning them, replying to them in threads, and even DMing them directly. Employees can also prompt the agent with follow-up questions so it can explain its reasoning, which prevents hallucinations and helps build trust. New Zealand-based McLeod Cranes is preparing for a future with Agentforce where a customer service agent can support the business with faster decision-making and more efficient processes. These agents interact with teams conversationally, so they can provide the employees with key operational insights, such as the availability of cranes, operators, and equipment. “With agents, I can see a future where we’ll be able to respond faster and more accurately, making our dispatch process seamless,” said **Scott McLeod, Managing Director at McLeod Cranes**. “Agents will help us get the right information at the right time, so we can operate more efficiently and deliver better service to our customers.”

Slack agents are also transforming translation and localization. Straker, a global leader in translation technology, is redefining how businesses like IBM manage localization at scale. With translation agents embedded in Slack, Straker enables companies to streamline large-scale translation workflows, making localization faster, more precise, and collaborative.

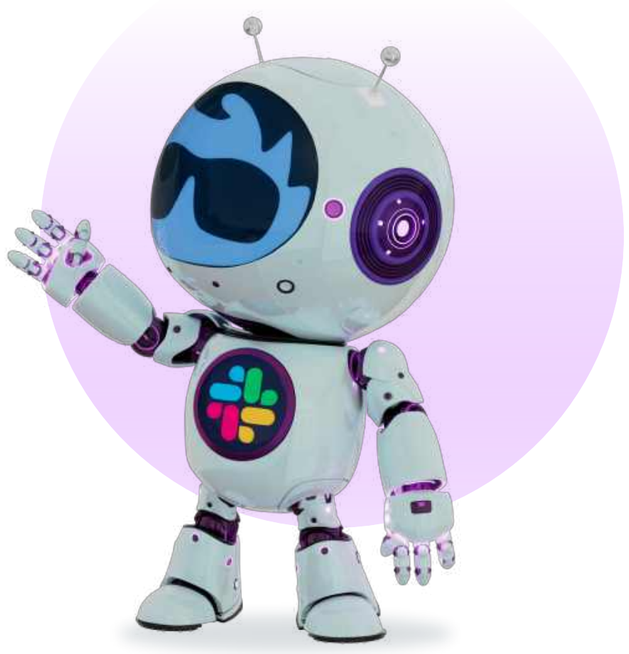
"Our vision for translation agents is simple: make it easier for businesses to connect with the world. By combining human expertise with AI and embedding these workflows right in Slack, at Straker we're breaking down barriers to communication. It's about helping teams work faster, collaborate seamlessly across borders, and deliver culturally relevant content at a lower cost. Ultimately, it's about making global collaboration feel effortless," said **David Sowerby, Chief Revenue Officer at Straker**.

Agentforce is built on strict trust and security standards

The Einstein Trust Layer was built to help you safely deploy AI and agents across your business. For every Agentforce interaction, the Einstein Trust Layer works behind the scenes to protect the privacy and security of your data and to promote the safety and accuracy of every response. Salesforce never uses customer data to train LLMs, and all of its products adhere to strict trust and security standards:

1. **Agent guardrails:** Customers are in control of what data agents can access in Slack, and create guardrails that keep agents on task and prevent unwanted behavior.
2. **Secure LLM gateways:** Agents use foundational LLMs safely by preventing third-party LLMs from retaining or monitoring your customer and enterprise data.
3. **Zero data retention:** After the LLM generates a response and sends it back to Agentforce, it forgets all of that data thanks to our zero-data-retention agreements, because your data is not our product. Our data-masking techniques prevent the LLM from seeing or processing sensitive data, like the names of companies and people.
4. **AI monitoring:** Agentforce will constantly monitor, analyze, and detect harmful language embedded in responses. We're running toxicity scoring models in the background to identify potentially problematic content.

With Agentforce in Slack, teams and companies of all sizes can access and scale a digital workforce that delivers higher productivity, lower costs, and increased revenue across their operations.



The bottom line

Leaders have a short window of opportunity to decide how their organizations will implement AI and agents.

If companies don't invest in a digital labor platform, app creep could become AI creep – which will force teams to spend the bulk of their time on governance, monitoring, and incident response across an ever-expanding data landscape. But there's another option: Leaders can embrace the digital labor era, a new paradigm for work where humans work alongside AI agents to unlock opportunities for growth.

Here are the four most important takeaways from this report:

01 Autonomous AI agents with clearly defined roles are set to significantly boost productivity by integrating into business processes and working alongside humans, allowing workers to focus on high-value tasks.

02 This comes at a crucial time, when the adoption of general-purpose LLMs and copilots is plateauing due to a lack of trust, support, and training.

03 Companies must invest in platforms that simplify AI adoption for employees, addressing the gap in AI readiness and training, to compete in a rapidly evolving market.

04 Agentforce, Salesforce's digital labor platform for enterprises, offers the solution by empowering organizations to deploy and customize AI agents within the work operating system where teams are already working every day: Slack.

Learn how to get started with Agentforce in Slack today!