Microsoft

AI Agent Go to Market Playbook

Validate, build, and publish on Microsoft Marketplace



A concise guide for product leads, founders, and solution architects.

AI agents—software systems that operationalize decision logic and task automation—are helping software development companies modernize static software into scalable, adaptive workflows. For software development companies, this shift brings both excitement and uncertainty. Teams are eager to build with agents, yet still face foundational questions about what to build, how to validate demand, and how to take an AI solution to market with confidence.

This guide provides a structured overview for software companies looking to create and commercialize AI agents. You'll learn how to validate your AI agent idea, build confidently using Microsoft's AI platforms, and publish through the Microsoft Marketplace to reach global customers. Combining business-validation frameworks with technical guidance, this playbook helps teams evaluate risk, streamline development workflows, and explore paths towards commercialization.

Stage 1

Validate your AI agent idea

Goal: Confirm real customer need, business viability, and Marketplace fit before building anything.

Use the Marketplace Lean Canvas

Fill out the one-page Marketplace Lean Canvas to articulate:

Problem
What specific, painful and costly problem does your agent solve? For whom?

Solution
What your agent does in simple, outcome focused terms.

Customer segments
Target roles, industries, or teams.

Unique value proposition
Why your approach is better or different.

Revenue model
Subscription, usage-based, or other Marketplace supported pricing.

Cost structure
Cloud costs, AI model usage, storage, support, maintenance.

Key metrics
Adoption, accuracy, time saved, support deflection, etc.

Channels
Marketplace is one recommended channel, alongside websites and partner networks.

Unfair advantage
Data, expertise, integrations, IP, or speed.

This step forces clarity and reduces the risk of building something unusable or unsellable.

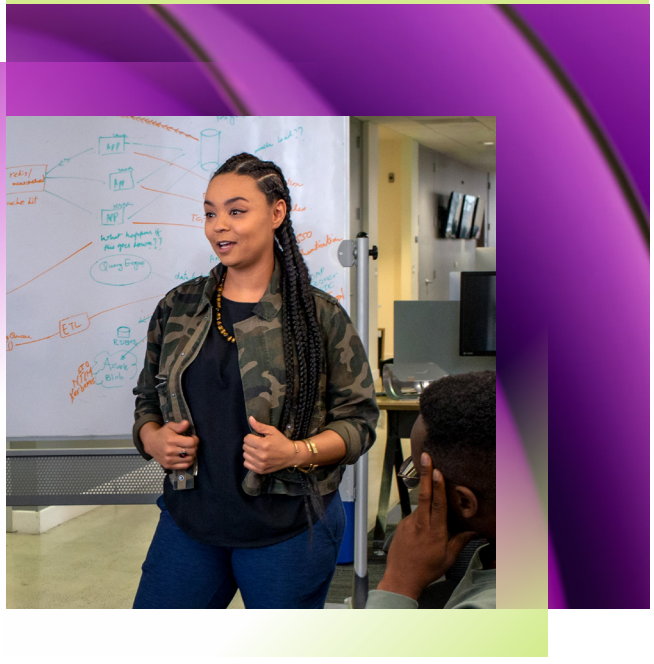
Estimate ROI with the Marketplace Value Calculator

Use Microsoft's calculator to model:

- Customer economics
- Marketplace fees
- Benefits for software companies (credits, tools, support)

The calculator helps teams evaluate ROI and unit economics upfront using real assumptions. If the economics fall short, the concept can be adjusted early, reducing downstream development risk.

Stage 1 Output
A validated problem, target customer, value prop, business model, and pricing hypothesis.



Stage 2

Design and Build Your AI Agent

Goal: Build a simple, working minimum viable product (MVP) using Microsoft's AI and cloud stack.

Prototype Quickly

Use Microsoft's Quick Start Development Toolkit:

- Deployable reference architectures
- Sample code for common agent patterns
- Pre-built templates for Azure Functions, Container Apps, Search, and OpenAI

Start from a sample closest to your scenario and customize to avoid reinventing infrastructure.

Build with Microsoft Foundry

Foundry includes:

- Unified SDK for Azure OpenAI, Cognitive Services, and third-party models
- Tools for prompt engineering, evaluation, and debugging
- Features designed to support governance, identity integration, and security-aligned configurations
- Deployment tooling intended to simplify publishing to serverless or Kubernetes environments

Focus on agent behavior and data while Foundry handles orchestration and infrastructure.

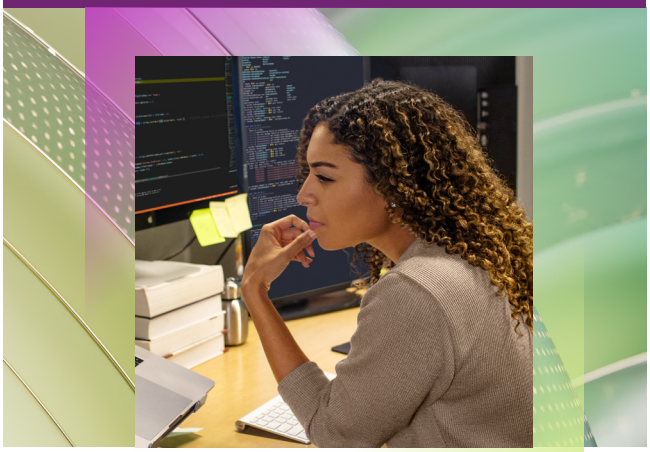
Follow Modern Cloud Patterns

Your MVP should include:

- **Azure App Service / Functions** for hosting
- **Azure OpenAI** for LLM reasoning
- **Vector store** (AI Search or Cosmos DB) if using retrieval augmented generation (RAG)
- **Azure Storage** for files
- **Azure Key Vault + Managed Identities** for secrets/security
- **API Management** (if exposing APIs to customers)
- **App Insights + Log Analytics** for monitoring

Build small, test often, and avoid premature complexity.

Stage 2 Output
A functional MVP demonstrating core value with secure, Azure-aligned architecture.



Stage 3

Prepare for Marketplace

Goal: Ensure your solution meets technical, security, and packaging requirements.

Use App Advisor

App Advisor provides guided checklists for:

Architecture
Scalability, statelessness, multitenancy, managed identities

Security
Encryption, network isolation, private endpoints, compliance

Operational readiness
Monitoring, support model, deployment reliability

Offer packaging
Choosing SaaS vs. Managed Application, pricing, trials

This is your "pre-certification" step.
Address gaps now to avoid delays later.

Finalize Offer Packaging

Clarify:

Offer type

SaaS → You host the service

Managed App → Customer deploys to their Azure subscription

Pricing
Simple tiers or consumption; match value delivered

Support + SLA
What customers can expect at each tier

Trials
Free or time limited to drive adoption

Customer-facing documentation
Quick start, architecture overview, support plan

Stage 3 Output
A complete, Marketplace-ready package: architecture, pricing, documentation, and compliance.



Stage 4

Publish and transact

Goal: Launch your solution globally through Marketplace.

Publish via Partner Center

Steps:

1. Create partner account + Marketplace seller profile
2. Select offer type (SaaS or Managed App)
3. Enter listing details (title, summary, description, keywords)
4. Upload logo and screenshots
5. Configure pricing, trials, and plans
6. Add terms of use and privacy policy
7. Set up technical integration (SaaS fulfillment or ARM template)
8. Submit for validation and certification

Once approved, your solution becomes available in the Marketplace, where customers can discover and transact with it through supported purchasing flows.

Optimize for conversion

- → Get a free, fast personalized AI-powered listing review
- → Use keywords your buyers would search
- → Highlight business outcomes, not just features
- → Clarify expected setup time
- → Add crisp visuals

Stage 4 Output
A live, transactable Marketplace listing ready for customer acquisition.



Stage 5

Scale and co-sell

Goal: Grow adoption using Microsoft's ecosystem and incentives.

Enroll in offers for software companies

Unlock benefits:

- Free Azure credits
- Architecture reviews
- Marketing visibility
- Access to Microsoft partner managers

Pursue co-sell readiness

Co-sell gives you:

- Microsoft sellers promoting your offer
- Access to enterprise customers
- Deals accelerated through Azure consumption commitments

Expand and improve

- Monitor Marketplace analytics for traffic, conversions, and usage
- Collect customer reviews to boost visibility
- Publish updates through Partner Center
- Explore adjacent use cases or new SKU variants
- Localize listings for high-performing regions

Stage 5 Output
A scalable, enterprise-ready AI agent offering designed to support growth through Marketplace distribution and co-sell motions.



Conclusion

In this guide, we covered the key stages of the Marketplace journey:

- **Validating your idea early** using tools like Lean Canvas and the Value Calculator to test demand and clarify value.
- **Building quickly and efficiently** with the Quick Start Toolkit and Foundry to accelerate development.
- **Preparing your solution for launch** by aligning on pricing, packaging, and readiness with support from App Advisor.
- **Publishing a transactable offer** through Partner Center to make it easy for customers to buy and deploy.
- **Scaling after launch** by leveraging offers for software companies and co-sell programs.

Together, these steps provide a practical framework for moving from concept to scale while staying focused on real customer needs.

Continue exploring

Discover how to take AI agent concepts from design to scalable, monetizable solutions.

Learn more >

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