Microsoft

The Agent Readiness Framework: Pillars & Practices

Five pillars to guide agent scaling across the enterprise

Contents

Agent readiness looks different for every organization. This framework outlines best practices across five readiness pillars that may help support the scaling agents across the enterprise. The guidance is informed by the Microsoft commissioned Agent Readiness Survey of 500 decision-makers and influencers who are exploring and adopting agentic AI.

Take the assessment at: Aka.ms/Agentreadiness

Executive Summary

Agentic AI has the potential to reshape how organizations operate by accelerating decisions, optimizing processes, and unlocking new sources of value. However, realizing these benefits requires more than advanced technology. It calls for readiness: aligning people, processes, and platforms to clear business outcomes.

Defining Agent Readiness

Agent readiness is an organization's ability to design, deploy, and integrate AI agents effectively and at scale relative to enterprise objectives.

Understanding the Agent Readiness Framework

The agent readiness framework integrates both strategic vision and operational execution across five key pillars. Together, these pillars provide leaders with a practical structure to evaluate their current capabilities and pinpoint what's needed to scale effectively. By prioritizing readiness across each dimension, organizations can embrace agentic AI adoption with greater clarity, confidence, and momentum.

2.5x

Organizations that self-identified as having higher agentic AI readiness reported scaling AI and agents at a faster pace than those less prepared in the Agent Readiness survey[1].

[1] Microsoft Agent Readiness Survey, September 2025

Methodology

To assess organizational readiness for designing, developing, deploying, and scaling agentic AI solutions, Microsoft surveyed 500 decision-makers and influencers across 13 countries and 16 industries.

500
Decision-makers and influencers

13
Countries

16
Industries

40%
North America

40%
Europe

20%
Asia Pacific and Emerging Markets

The sample includes organizations with 1,000 to 100,000+ employees and $1 billion to $50 billion+ annual revenue. Geographically, the study covered North America (40%), Europe (40%), and Asia Pacific and Emerging Markets (20%).

All participating organizations reported familiarity with AI and had begun implementing foundational strategies and tools to support enterprise-scale adoption.

Note: All findings are based on self-reported data from survey participants. As with any survey, results may be subject to self-reporting bias and should be interpreted in context.

Survey respondents answered 25 questions, each mapping to the five agentic pillars. Scores were aggregated and weighted to create a **Strategy Readiness** score (Business and AI Strategy Alignment, Business Process Mapping) and **Execution Readiness** score (Technology and Data Foundation, Organizational Readiness and Culture, Governance & Protections), which together produced an **Overall Agent Readiness Score**.

Additional methodology details are available in the appendix.

Understanding the Agent Readiness Framework

Overall Agent Readiness Score

Strategy Readiness Score | **Execution Readiness Score**

5 Agent Readiness Pillars

Business & AI Strategy

Align agents to business priorities to support relevance and enable potential impact.

Business Process Mapping

Document and contextualize workflows to help agents operate within defined parameters and support business goals.

Technology & Data

Build integrated architectures and high-quality data environments to enable agentic AI use cases.

Org Readiness & Culture

Reimagine team structures and invest in workforce skills to support responsible integration of agentic AI systems.

Security & Governance

Establish controls and accountability to help promote safe, secure, and responsible use of agentic AI systems.

25 Agent Readiness Components

AI Vision	Process Documentation
Cross-Functional Approach	Tool Requirements
Essential Investment	Workflow KPIs
Defined KPIs	Workflow Monitoring
Agent Strategy	Re-Design for Agents

Integration	Talent Strategy	Governance Model
Data Quality	Training and Upskilling	Executive Sponsorship
Knowledge Sources	Leadership Communication	AI Safeguards
Data Governance	Innovation Culture	Compliance Monitoring
Data Accessibility	Change Management	Security and Performance Testing

Note: All findings are based on self-reported data from survey participants. As with any survey, results may be subject to self-reporting bias and should be interpreted in context.

The Findings

The Agent Readiness Survey identified four segments - Achievers, Visionaries, Operators and Discoverers - based on their readiness scores.

The chart maps survey respondents by their strategy and execution readiness scores, highlighting those four distinct segments of agentic AI maturity.

Agent readiness matrix

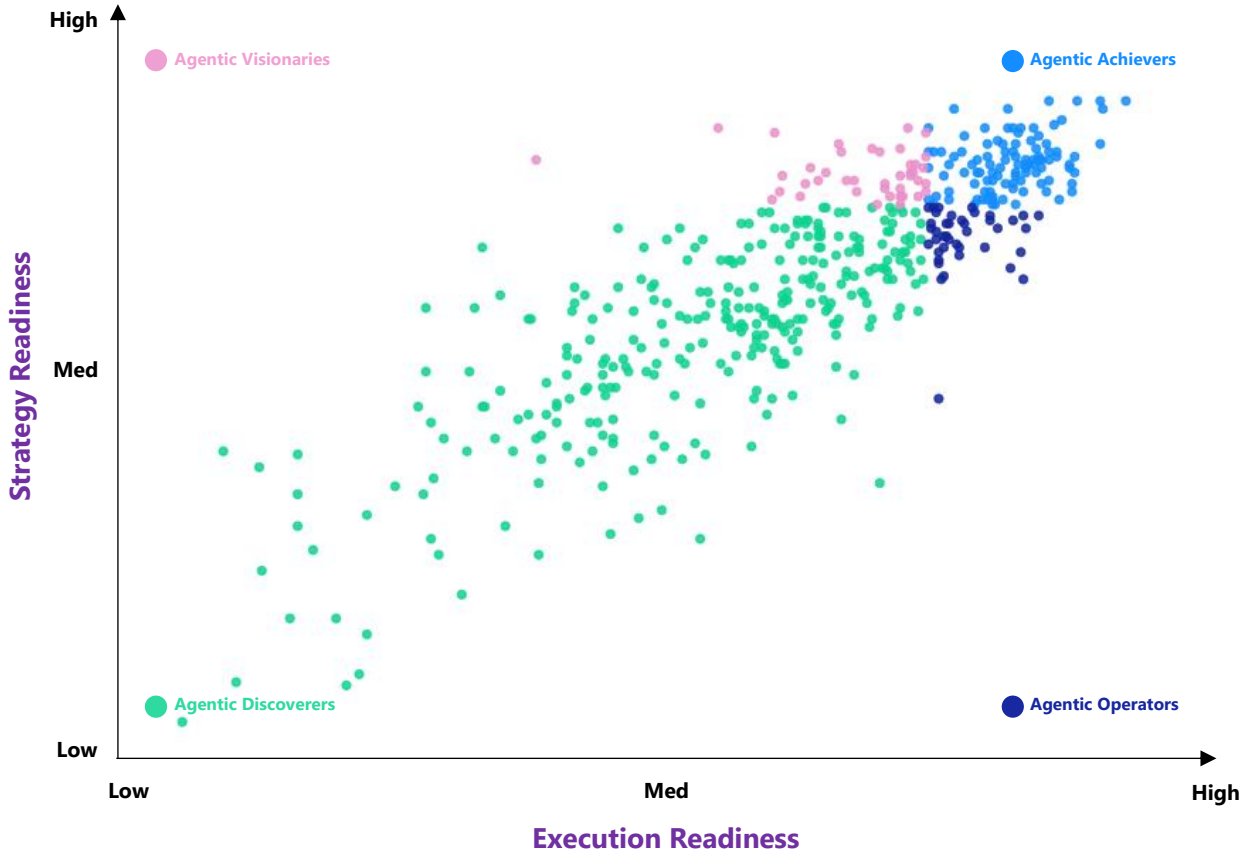

Figure 1: Source: Microsoft Agent Readiness Research, 2025

Note: All findings are based on self-reported data from survey participants. As with any survey, results may be subject to self-reporting bias and should be interpreted in context.

Segment		Percentile
	**Achievers** High Strategy High Execution	70th percentile or higher on both strategy readiness and execution readiness
	**Visionaries** High Strategy Low Execution	70th percentile or higher in strategy readiness; below 70th percentile in execution readiness
	**Operators** Low Strategy High Execution	70th percentile or higher in execution readiness; below 70th percentile in strategy readiness
	**Discoverers** Low Strategy Low Execution	Below 70th percentile on both strategy and execution readiness

Agentic AI readiness by segments

Organizations surveyed show varying levels of readiness across five key pillars[2].

- Achievers lead across all five pillars, with the highest readiness in Organizational Readiness, and Culture and Technology & Data Foundation**.**
- Visionaries show strong strategy alignment and business process mapping but lower execution scores, particularly Technology & Data Foundation.
- Operators perform well on execution-related pillars, including Technology and Data Foundation, and Organizational Readiness & Culture, while scoring lower on strategy alignment.
- Discoverers consistently report the lowest readiness levels, with scores remaining at the lower end across all pillars.

[2] Microsoft Agent Readiness Survey, September 2025

Note: All findings are based on self-reported data from survey participants. As with any survey, results may be subject to self-reporting bias and should be interpreted in context.

Average Readiness Percentile by Pillar		 **Discoverers** Low Strategy Low Execution	 **Operators** Low Strategy High Execution	 **Visionaries** High Strategy Low Execution	 **Achievers** High Strategy High Execution
Strategy	Business & AI Strategy Alignment	25%	58%	80%	86%
	Business Process Mapping	26%	53%	84%	84%
Execution	Technology & Data	28%	79%	54%	87%
	Organizational Readiness & Culture	26%	74%	52%	89%
	Security & Governance	26%	72%	59%	86%

Agentic Achievers explained

Organizations in this segment demonstrate strong alignment across strategy and execution. According to self-reported survey data, they tend to outperform their peers across all five agent readiness pillars and are taking a holistic approach to preparing people, processes, and platforms for agentic AI adoption[3]. This alignment suggests they're ahead in integrating AI and agents, which may position them to capture benefits linked to **Frontier Firms**—organizations leading with human-led, agent-operated models[3].

[3] Microsoft Agent Readiness Survey, September 2025

Note: All findings are based on self-reported data from survey participants. As with any survey, results may be subject to self-reporting bias and should be interpreted in context.

Agent readiness

Business & AI Strategy

Align agents to business priorities to support relevance and enable potential impact.

Business Process Mapping

Document and contextualize workflows to help agents operate within defined parameters and support business goals.

Technology & Data

Build integrated architectures and high-quality data environments to enable agentic AI use cases.

Organization Readiness & Culture

Reimagine team structures and invest in workforce skills to support responsible integration of agentic AI systems.

Security & Governance

Establish controls and accountability to help promote safe, secure, and responsible use of agentic AI systems.

To better understand how agentic Achievers accelerate adoption, the analysis focused on the five pillars to identify drivers and practices for organizations earlier in their journey.

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Pillar One: Business and AI Strategy

Ensure agentic projects serve strategic business objectives.

Effective agentic AI adoption starts with a clear strategy that drives execution and aligns with business goals. Organizations working toward readiness in this area often describe creating enterprise-wide agentic roadmaps, securing executive sponsorship, and funding projects based on business cases designed to support measurable outcomes.

Key takeaways

Anchor in KPI
Build an enterprise-wide AI / agentic roadmap with milestones and metrics, and link agent initiatives to KPIs, revenue, and cost reduction.

Fund with intent and measure ROI
Investment should flow to business-critical, measurable use cases. Require business case validation and standardize ROI measurement frameworks.

Secure sponsorship
Establish a cross-functional AI / agentic center of excellence to govern and scale impact.

The Future of AI is Agentic

The future of AI isn't just generative—it's agentic. But agentic AI is only useful if it can deliver meaningful outcomes. The key is getting the strategy right.

The **Business and AI Strategy** pillar is designed to help AI agents become core business contributors, moving beyond pilot projects.

The year of the Frontier firm

Frontier firms are exploring how agentic AI can reshape business models, reimagine operations, and unlock new sources of competitive advantage.

Frontier Firms are human-led, agent-operated organizations that buy intelligence on top, put it to work like an employee, and compound it like interest[4]. Many build libraries of reusable agents and agent skills, aiming to connect initiatives with measurable business objectives. By doing so, these organizations can use agents to help address capacity gaps, augment human teams with new skills, and enable the workforce to focus on higher-value work.

According to Microsoft's Work Trend Index 2025 survey, **more than 80% of leaders** surveyed believe it's time to rethink strategy and operations, and **more than 80%** expect agents to be moderately or extensively integrated into their AI strategy within the next **12–18 months**[4].

Yet, the Microsoft Agent Readiness Survey[5] reveals a readiness gap: just over **one in three organizations** reported agentic investment as essential for achieving long-term business goals, and only about **one in five** have a defined deployment strategy for agents[5].

Most of these focused and well-prepared organizations fall into the Agent Readiness segment of Agentic Achievers—leaders in strategic and executional readiness—who are holistically aligning their people, processes, and platforms to enable agent deployment.

[4] Microsoft: 2025 Work Trend Index Annual Report
[5] Microsoft Agent Readiness Survey, September 2025

Note: All findings are based on self-reported data from survey participants. As with any survey, results may be subject to self-reporting bias and should be interpreted in context.

Why some agentic AI strategies stall—and how to drive them forward

Even with all the right components in place, many organizations run into familiar roadblocks when aligning their business and agentic AI strategies. Here are the most common and how to overcome them.

Siloed initiatives

Without a unified strategy and strong cross-functional communication, organizations risk duplicative efforts and missed opportunities for scale. According to the Microsoft Agent Readiness Survey, Achievers recognize that AI isn't effective in silos. **More than 50%** take a unified, cross-functional approach to AI strategy **compared to just 15%** of Discoverers[6]. Establishing a Center of Excellence can help break down silos by providing structure for design, prioritization, value tracking, and governance.

Talent and skill gaps

When technology outpaces people's skills and adoption, readiness gaps can emerge. To help address this, consider investing in skilling employees on AI, setting clear capability targets, and enabling broader access to AI agent development through natural language tools like Copilot Studio.

Difficulty proving value early

It's common for organizations to struggle to show impact in the early stages of adoption. **Fewer than 30%** of enterprises surveyed reported having advanced ability to track AI initiatives against clear business outcomes[6]—making it hard to validate success. In Accenture's "Making Reinvention Real with Gen AI" about one-third of executives reported scaling solutions, yet fewer than one in five saw significant enterprise-level value[7]. To overcome this, focus on business-critical pain points with validated business cases and measurable outcomes. Prioritize use cases that directly affect financial or customer metrics and set KPIs upfront to demonstrate value early.

Shifting business priorities

As business strategies evolve, static AI roadmaps can lose relevance. Building an AI and agent strategy that is agile and iterative, with regular reviews to ensure goals remain clearly defined and testable, helps organizations stay aligned with changing priorities.

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[6] Microsoft Agent Readiness Survey, September 2025

[7] Accenture: "Making reinvention real with gen AI"

Note: All findings are based on self-reported data from survey participants. As with any survey, results may be subject to self-reporting bias and should be interpreted in context.

Cultural resistance

Resistance to change is often a form of feedback, signaling areas where communication, trust, or involvement may need attention. Rather than ignoring pushback, organizations can use it as an opportunity to improve adoption.

When employees see peers recognized for responsible, high-impact use of agents, confidence in adoption tends to grow. Internal communities and champion networks focused on agentic innovation can help amplify quick wins, share best practices, and make adoption more visible. Recognition and peer-led stories can help turn uncertainty into momentum and reinforce that agents are designed to support, not replace, people.

Example

- **Microsoft's Copilot Champs** is an internal community of peer advocates and early adopters who test Copilot features, share success stories, mentor colleagues, and spotlight responsible usage.
- **Microsoft's Agent Marketplace and Agent Store** are catalogs where employees can discover, reuse, and share prebuilt agents, like an app store but for agents.

Five practices that separate leaders from followers

The agent readiness survey highlights that Achievers are more likely to treat agentic AI as a strategic lever for rapid scaling, agile operations, and accelerated value[8]. Five practices stand out as differentiators:

Set a clear AI & agentic vision and roadmap. **Over 70%** of Achievers' leadership reported communicating an AI vision aligned with their enterprise business strategy[8].

Best practice: Create an enterprise-wide agentic roadmap that aligns directly to business KPIs and accounts for cultural transformation and change management.

[8] Microsoft Agent Readiness Survey, September 2025

Note: All findings are based on self-reported data from survey participants. As with any survey, results may be subject to self-reporting bias and should be interpreted in context.

Secure strong executive sponsorship. Championing agentic AI across the enterprise, spotlighting new initiatives, and encouraging teams to be accountable for results are practices often observed in organizations pursuing AI transformation. That commitment empowers rapid innovation and experimentation against the mandate.

> ***Best practice:*** Establish an AI/Agentic Center of Excellence to govern, track, and measure agentic initiatives and ROI.

Intentional funding. In organizations advancing agentic AI, funding tends to be deliberate and tied to impact—not scattered across disconnected initiatives. Organizations should validate business cases and assess returns before allocating resources, focusing on business-critical workflows that deliver clear value.

> ***Best practices***
>
> - **Prioritize workflows that are cross-functional**, high-impact, and built with reusable patterns to maximize scalability.
> - **Implement stage-gated funding** tied to validated business value, ensuring resources scale only when impact is proven.

Embed responsible AI as a non-negotiable. Scaling agentic AI without responsibility can increase risks related to compliance, reputation, and trust.

> ***Best practices***
>
> 1. **Establish a responsible AI framework** with principles for fairness, transparency, privacy, and accountability.
> 2. **Embed risk-management practices** such as model monitoring, human-in-the-loop guardrails, and audit mechanisms into every agent lifecycle.
> 3. **Leverage responsible AI tools**—such as impact assessments, transparency dashboards, and oversight playbooks—to operationalize trust at scale.

Note: All findings are based on self-reported data from survey participants. As with any survey, results may be subject to self-reporting bias and should be interpreted in context.

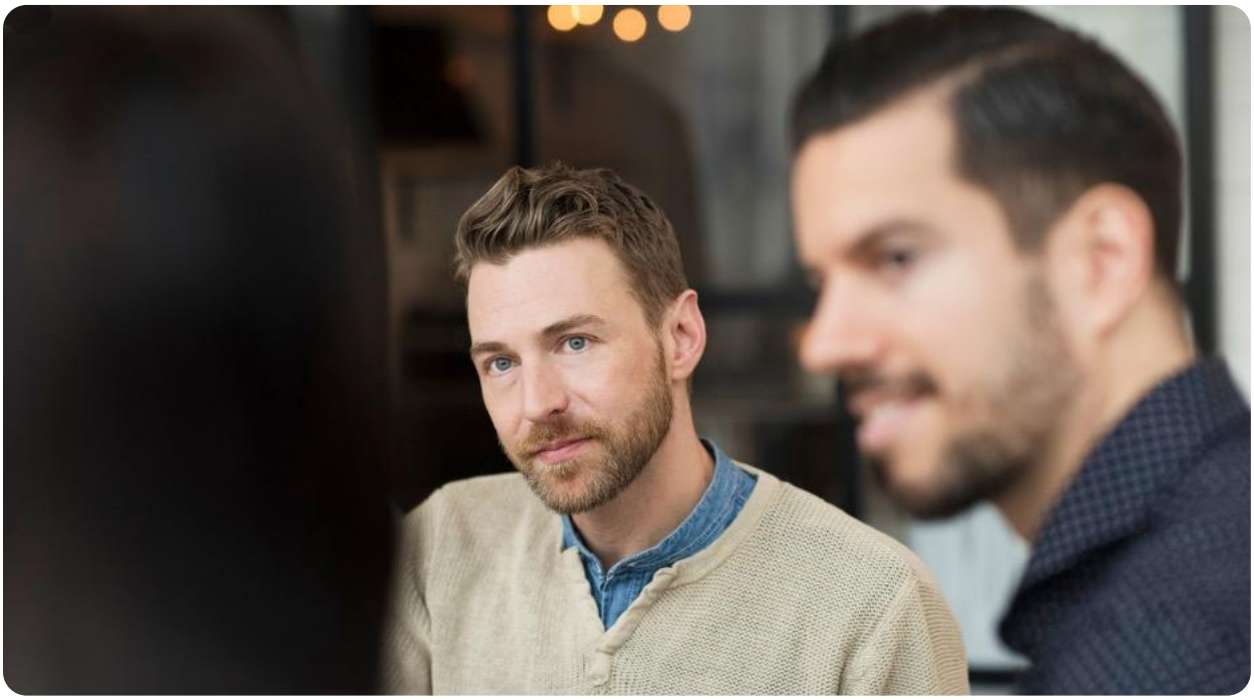
Measure what matters. Proving impact at scale requires intentional measurement—not just activity tracking. Among Achievers, **over 60%** report tracking the value of AI initiatives using clear financial and operational business outcomes according to the Microsoft Agent Readiness Survey[9]. Metrics like cost-to-serve, cycle time, revenue per seller, and CSAT provide early signals of adoption and business impact.

> ***Best practice:*** Establish a standardized measurement framework that applies across all AI and agentic programs, ensuring results are comparable and tied directly to business KPIs.

Aligned AI is AI that delivers value

Organizations that integrate agentic AI into their strategic roadmap have the opportunity to transform how they work. Building agentic readiness starts with identifying high-value use cases, funding them as you would any core initiative, and tracking measurable outcomes to ensure progress is clear.

The only question is who will move first.



[9] Microsoft Agent Readiness Survey, September 2025

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Pillar Two: Business Process Mapping

Document and modernize business processes to unlock visibility and value.

Agents are only as effective as the processes they run. Poorly documented or outdated workflows could lead to errors, compliance risks, and wasted investment. Leading organizations map end-to-end workflows, embed business rules and context, and continuously update processes to help agents operate with accuracy, compliance, and measurable impact.

Key takeaways

Map what matters
Target high-volume, high-value workflows and document every workflow step, dependency, and rule.

Add business context
Document the "why", or target goals, behind processes (e.g. outcomes, SLAs, and compliance so agents deliver results aligned to enterprise goals).

Continuously refine
Treat process documentation as a living asset, updating with performance data and feedback to keep agents accurate, relevant, and effective.

Designing for Success

Before acting on business processes, agents need to know and understand them. Without clear, accurate, and contextualized workflows, even the most advanced AI agents may fail by executing the wrong task, following outdated procedures, or delivering inconsistent outcomes. Poorly documented processes can limit efficiency and create compliance risks, trust gaps, and wasted investment.

Business Process Mapping can serve as a blueprint that helps guide agents on what to do, how to do it, and why it matters. It can link workflows to business goals, embed context, and provide the clarity agents need to operate more effectively.

Get it right, see the rewards

Organizations that modernize and contextualize processes before deploying agents may realize benefits such as:

- **Speed-to-market:** According to the 'Reinventing enterprise models in the age of generative AI' report by Accenture[10], redesigning processes based on understanding where time is spent and what results are achieved could compress organizations speed-to-market by as much as 25 to 55 percent[10].
- **Growth at scale:** Insights from Accenture's 'Making Reinvention Real with Gen AI' report indicate that organizations adopting modern AI-led processes may be positioned to achieve up to **2.5x higher** revenue growth, **2.4x greater** productivity, and **3.3x more** success at scaling high-value gen AI use cases—based on surveyed organizations[11].

The effectiveness of agentic AI can be influenced by the quality of underlying workflows. Clear and modernized processes may help agents operate more efficiently and contribute to better alignment with business goals.

[10] Accenture: "Reinventing enterprise models in the age of generative AI"
[11] Accenture, September 2024: "Accelerating reinvention to support growth with AI-powered operations"

Note: All findings are based on self-reported data from survey participants. As with any survey, results may be subject to self-reporting bias and should be interpreted in context.

Where organizations struggle most

The Agent Readiness Survey highlights three barriers slowing enterprise progress, affecting all maturity levels—from Discoverers defining workflows to Achievers refining automated processes.

Undocumented processes. Build a process inventory and dependency map before deploying agents. Agents need a map to know which systems to access, what data points to use, and what outcomes to target. Yet **only 22%** of organizations surveyed reported they've captured data and data dependencies[12].

Without a foundational understanding of business workflows, agentic AI systems may be limited in their ability to support automation and operational efficiency. In Microsoft's Agent Readiness Survey, more than **nine in ten** respondents identified as "Discoverers" reported not having documented even their most critical business workflows[12]—suggesting that agents are often deployed without a clear operational model. In contrast, about **six in ten** Achievers reported tracking the technologies, tools, and applications used across workflows[12]. This can help with monitoring performance and collecting ongoing feedback to inform continuous improvement.

Unclear standards. Document workflow-level KPIs that link directly to strategic goals and ensure agent outputs can be measured against business value. Without defined success metrics, agents risk optimizing the wrong outcomes. Microsoft's Agent Readiness Survey indicated that **more than 40%** of Achievers report having success metrics clearly defined for each workflow[12]. Defining success metrics early in the process may help organizations focus their agentic AI efforts and evaluate outcomes more effectively.

By contrast, Discoverers report having less clarity on the impact of specific business processes, with **four out of five** surveyed stating they do not capture success metrics for each workflow[12]**.** This gap between intent and execution can make scaling more difficult—even when leadership commitment is high.

Static documentation. Process documentation can't be one-and-done. Treat documentation as a living asset and embed continuous monitoring, feedback loops, and change governance to keep it current. This can also help teams continue to audit the

[12] Microsoft Agent Readiness Survey, September 2025

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processes and reevaluate the purpose and role of agents to keep them accurate, working, and relevant. Outdated workflows can introduce compliance and performance risk. **Just over 20%** of organizations surveyed say they have mechanisms to monitor and collect workflow-level performance data on an ongoing basis[13].

Overall, these insights point to the importance of process clarity and context in supporting agent success.

Getting started with best practices

Well-documented business processes are often seen as a foundation for process transformation. To support this effort, organizations may consider four key moves:

1. Map and assess workflows

Target high-volume, high-cost workflows as prime candidates for agent automation. Document each step, input, dependency, system, and output.

> ***Best practice:*** **Consider process mining tools** to spot bottlenecks, remove variations, and drive standardization.

2. Add context, not just steps

Context can help agents better interpret tasks and align with business goals. Capture business rules, target outcomes, SLAs, and compliance requirements alongside the workflow.

> ***Best practice:*** **Build "decision trees"** that define logic and highlight where human approvals or escalation are required.

[13] Microsoft Agent Readiness Survey, September 2025

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3. Apply process intelligence

Break processes into granular steps to evaluate time, cost, and frequency, and identify where agents can deliver the most impact.

> ***Best practice:*** **Prioritize repeatable, high-frequency tasks** that are well-suited for agentic automation, then redesign workflows to support effective collaboration between people and agents.

4. Standardize ownership and access

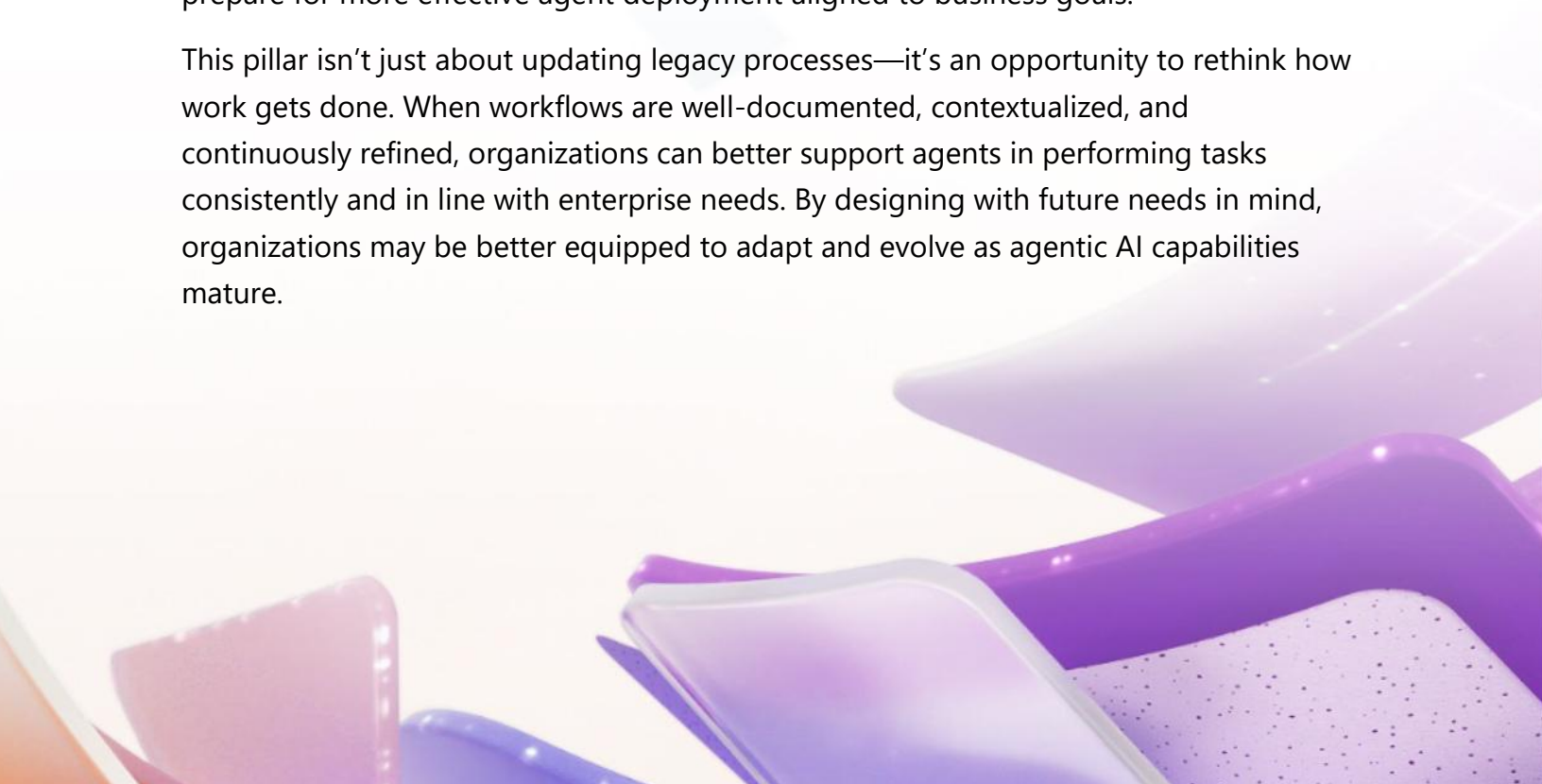
Maintaining consistent and accessible processes can help documentation stay current and relevant. Assign process owners and governance structures to keep documentation current and aligned to business goals.

> ***Best practice:*** **Store workflows in a central repository** accessible enterprise-wide so agents can work from approved blueprints.

From blueprint to breakthrough

Without clear and current business process mapping, organizations may face challenges when deploying agents such as misalignment with business priorities or reliance on outdated workflows. Focusing on documentation and context can help organizations prepare for more effective agent deployment aligned to business goals.

This pillar isn't just about updating legacy processes—it's an opportunity to rethink how work gets done. When workflows are well-documented, contextualized, and continuously refined, organizations can better support agents in performing tasks consistently and in line with enterprise needs. By designing with future needs in mind, organizations may be better equipped to adapt and evolve as agentic AI capabilities mature.



Pillar Three: Technology and Data

Establish the technical and data foundation needed to deploy AI agents at scale.

A robust technology and data backbone supports agentic AI by enabling integration across workflows, access to high-quality data, and the potential to deliver business value. Without unified, scalable, and secure infrastructure, agents may be limited in their ability to operate effectively. Many leading IT teams are re-architecting around platform-led models, modular APIs, and governed data fabrics to enhance agility, build trust, and support business objectives.

Key takeaways

Adopt a platform-led approach
Centralize AI capabilities on enterprise platforms with out-of-the-box capabilities to develop, govern, reuse, and scale securely.

Get data enterprise-ready
Implement enterprise-wide data standards and owners, and refresh cadences to ensure data is current and trusted.

Secure and scale integration
Build modular, interoperable agents to deliver cross-enterprise impact.

A Strong Foundation is Non-negotiable

Fragmented systems and poor integration can limit scalability and impact. The **Technology & Data** pillar focuses on cloud-native architecture, robust data pipelines, and safeguards to support agentic AI at enterprise scale.

Solid foundations enable scale

When technology is fragmented, agents can struggle to operate effectively. Unified platforms and governed data fabrics help create the conditions for success, enabling agents to work across systems and support integrated workflows. Investing early in a strong backbone positions organizations to move from pilots to enterprise-grade solutions to unlock greater potential value.

Common pitfalls that block agentic value

Microsoft's Agent Readiness Survey indicates that while interest in AI is high, foundational readiness—particularly in scalable technology and data systems—remains a work in progress for many organizations[14].

Integration gaps: Many organizations still operate with fragmented systems; **only over half** of those identified as Achievers report being able to effectively integrate AI tools into their existing IT environments. In comparison, less than 10% of Discoverers report being able to integrate AI into existing systems[14].

API-driven architecture: Without them, agents may lack access to real-time data and be limited in their ability to drive decisions or insights. Building interoperability into the foundation can help organizations move from isolated pilots to enterprise-scale solutions.

Data-ready discipline: While most organizations recognize the need for high-quality data, few are fully data-ready. **Less than 30%** of those surveyed report having established data standards and classifications to ensure high quality and reliable data[14]. Without clear ownership, governance, and refresh cadences, data can become outdated or contradictory—leading to faulty recommendations and compliance risks.

[14] Microsoft Agent Readiness Survey, September 2025

Note: All findings are based on self-reported data from survey participants. As with any survey, results may be subject to self-reporting bias and should be interpreted in context.

Among the enterprises surveyed, just one in four have clearly assigned data owners or refresh cadences[15]. Achievers are twice as likely as others to have defined owners for maintaining knowledge sources to keep them current and trustworthy for agent performance[15].

Treating data as a managed asset—rather than a byproduct—can help lay the groundwork for effective agentic AI. Ensuring data is standardized, current, and accessible across the enterprise may support more scalable and impactful outcomes.

Fragmented data: Simply having data isn't sufficient. When it's siloed, inconsistently accessible, or difficult to search, agents may struggle to operate effectively. According to Microsoft's Agent Readiness Survey[15], **fewer than 25%** of organizations reported their data is accessible across teams for AI use cases—suggesting that many agents may still be working within data silos.

Unifying data through governed, API-accessible systems may help organizations overcome common barriers and explore new opportunities for agentic AI. Tools like Microsoft Fabric can support efforts to consolidate, standardize, and secure data.

Getting started with best practices

Technology readiness

- **Design for integration and scalability:** Build modular, API-first architectures that enable agents to interoperate across applications and systems, supporting agility and faster time to value.
- **Adopt a well-architected cloud:** Balance agility, cost, and resilience with a cloud foundation that could help democratize access to computing power and support AI innovation.
- **Embed continuous model governance:** Rather than building every model from scratch, consider leveraging pre-built models and fine-tuning them for your business context. Select an agent platform with governance, scalability, and compliance-supporting features that integrate into your existing AgentOps processes.

[15] Microsoft Agent Readiness Survey, September 2025

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Data management

- **Establish clear ownership and refresh cadences:** Assign accountability for datasets, define refresh schedules, and monitor quality through dashboards.
- **Unify access to data:** Implement a data fabric or lakehouse (e.g., Microsoft Fabric) to make structured and unstructured data consistent, synchronized, and accessible for AI and agent use cases.
- **Build security and responsible AI into every layer:** Incorporate guardrails, bias evaluations, and red-teaming to help reduce vulnerabilities and promote trust in agentic models.

Strategic levers that make a difference

Aligning your technology stack and data architecture isn't simple, but there are a few high-impact moves your organization can make to lay the groundwork for agents at scale.

- **Adopt a platform-led approach:** One way organizations may improve consistency and scalability is by taking a platform-led approach rather than relying solely on application-specific solutions. A centralized agentic platform can make it easier to develop and govern agents with reusable components and monitoring tools that support enterprise needs.
- **Promote continuous improvement:** Stagnant data and AI systems quickly lose relevance. Foster a "test and learn" culture by regularly refreshing data practices, strengthening security, retiring underperforming agents, and reinvesting in high-value use cases aligned with business objectives.
- **Foster collaboration and innovation:** Successful initiatives rely on partnership across IT, data, and business teams. Form cross-functional groups that share accountability for adoption, performance, and ongoing innovation.
- **Invest in upskilling:** Enterprise-wide upskilling in data literacy, prompt design, and AI use cases equips employees to contribute directly. With low/no-code platforms such as Microsoft Copilot Studio, business users can design, test, and deploy agents themselves.

Laying the groundwork for success

Breakthroughs in AI and agents begin with the basics: resilient infrastructure, connected data, and clear governance. These steps create the conditions for progress and help organizations unlock the potential of AI across their enterprise. Building that foundation today sets the stage for innovation, collaboration, and new business possibilities tomorrow.

Pillar Four: Organizational Readiness and Culture

Preparing your people, structures, and culture is important for building trust and enabling successful agent adoption at scale.

While technology plays an important role, people and organizational practices are central to realizing long-term benefits from agentic transformation. Many organizations prioritize trust, governance, and collaboration between humans and agents as part of their readiness journey, aiming to foster productivity, adoption, and sustainable impact.

Key takeaways

Build trust as a foundation
Embed responsible AI guardrails and communicate openly about where agents augment vs. where humans decide.

Close skills gaps
Launch enterprise-wide upskilling for leaders, frontline staff, and makers. Empower champions to model adoption.

Redesign for collaboration
Structure teams so people focus on judgment, relationships, and innovation while agents take on repeatable, high-volume work.

Empowering Agentic AI: The Human Advantage

Agents alone don't transform organizations—people do. Without trust and cultural alignment, even advanced AI agents may fall short. Frontier Firms treat agentic AI as "intelligence on tap,"[16] embedding it into daily workflows through human-agent collaboration and workforce empowerment.

Organizational readiness: Getting it right matters

To deliver value at scale with agentic AI, organizations could benefit from going beyond technical readiness to focus on cultural and workforce preparation.

According to Accenture's Technology Vision 2025, **77%** of executives surveyed believe the true benefits of AI will only be possible when built on a foundation of trust[17], which could be achieved through awareness, education, strong data protection, or clear governance.

The hidden challenges holding organizations back

Technology can enable agents, but without trust, ownership, and cultural readiness, progress can often slow. Readiness maturity is shaped as much by people and organizational factors as by technology. According to findings from Microsoft's Agent Readiness Survey, organizations identified as Achievers (those reporting structured change management, leadership sponsorship, and workforce reskilling) reported scaling AI initiatives at a faster rate—**approximately 2.5 times**—than Discoverers still experimenting with isolated pilots[18] .

The survey also highlighted four common gaps that can slow progress, along with practices organizations are using to address them:

Overlooking quick wins: When organizations quickly jump into complex agent builds without rethinking work and skills, they may miss opportunities for early wins. According to Microsoft's Agent Readiness Survey[16], **approximately 50%** of respondents identifying as Achievers reported having a clear talent strategy that defines future jobs, roles, and skills to support an AI-driven business, **compared to 38%** of Operators and

[16] Microsoft: 2025 Work Trend Index Annual Report
[17] Accenture Technology Vision 2025
[18] Microsoft Agent Readiness Survey, September 2025

Note: All findings are based on self-reported data from survey participants. As with any survey, results may be subject to self-reporting bias and should be interpreted in context.

9% of Visionaries[19]. This gap could mean organizations will need to define what jobs, roles, and skills are required to support their AI-driven business in parallel to deploying agents.

Solution: Consider developing a talent strategy early—one that anticipates how work will evolve—and begin with pilots in priority workflows (e.g., service requests, onboarding). Pilots can help validate requirements and build organizational confidence for scaling.

Excitement without follow-through: While more than 30% of organizations self-reported that leaders clearly communicate the importance of AI and the use of AI solutions[19], communication alone may not drive change. The survey also reported that **more than 40%** of Visionaries reported strong leadership engagement, but **less than 30%** indicated consistent follow-through on change plans[19].

Solution: Assign senior leaders to sponsor key initiatives and link success metrics to adoption and business objectives.

Inadequate training: Findings from Microsoft's Agent Readiness Survey indicate that **less than 30%** of respondents reported having an AI-aligned talent and training strategy in place[19]. Nearly 80% of organizations identifying as Discoverers reported that they lack defined upskilling plans[19], which may make it harder to accelerate adoption—especially for those planning later agent launches. These insights could suggest that structured workforce enablement across business and IT functions can play an important role in readiness.

Solution: Consider approaching AI training as more than technical upskilling—position it as part of a broader business transformation. Pair this with structured training before launch that includes practical use cases, responsible AI practices, and clear escalation paths to build confidence and support adoption.

[19] Microsoft Agent Readiness Survey, September 2025

Note: All findings are based on self-reported data from survey participants. As with any survey, results may be subject to self-reporting bias and should be interpreted in context.

Skilled talent gaps: Survey findings also show that **less than 10%** of Discoverers reported having established AI-skilled talent pools, compared to more than half of Achievers[20]. Without defined AI talent pools, organizations may face challenges sustaining adoption and driving innovation.

Solution: Identify and enable AI-skilled roles—such as agent champions, responsible AI stewards, and prompt engineers—and integrate them into design teams and Centers of Excellence.

Practical guidance to get you started

Demonstrate executive sponsorship: Adoption often starts with visible leadership support. Consider identifying accountable leaders across IT, data, and business functions to help champion agentic initiatives and encourage adoption. Visible sponsorship can signal strategic importance, help unlock resources, and foster alignment.

> ***Best practice:*** **Tie sponsorship to adoption and ROI-related metrics** to keep accountability visible and share leadership's vision for AI fluency to build transparency, buy-in, and trust.

Reevaluate your talent strategy: New ways of working may require new structures. It can be helpful to assess the capabilities, roles, and responsibilities your workforce will need to succeed with agentic AI.

> ***Best practice:*** **Explore redefining team structures** to clarify the human/agent split (e.g., humans orchestrate strategy and review, agents execute repeatable workflows). Identify capability gaps and develop role-specific skilling programs. Consider embedding AI fluency into leadership, frontline, and maker roles.

[20] Microsoft Agent Readiness Survey, September 2025

Reward community champions: Champions can demonstrate what's possible and inspire adoption. Early adopters who responsibly build new workflows and insights can serve as catalysts for change.

> ***Best practice:*** **Recognize and reward early adopters** who responsibly use agents to create new workflows and insights. Position them as mentors to support peers and foster a "test and learn" culture within clear guardrails. You might also explore creating a Center of Excellence to showcase new builds and reusable use cases.

Create new talent pools: Agentic AI often benefits from both broad fluency and deeper expertise. Consider offering structured, evolving training on designing, testing, and deploying agents through low/no-code platforms.

> ***Best practice:*** **Explore rolling out agentic learning programs** to expand fluency across the workforce while developing specialized talent pools. You might also validate and share agent use cases through low/no-code tools like Copilot Studio and showcase these examples to help teams understand how they can integrate agents into daily workflows.

Acknowledge the transition: AI adoption can shift roles, responsibilities, and daily work—and that change may create uncertainty. Preparing employees for this transition can help build confidence and engagement.

> ***Best practice:*** **Develop an adaptable, phased change management approach** that connects new ways of working to business priorities. Address workforce concerns proactively and highlight potential benefits, such as reducing repetitive tasks and enabling more meaningful work.

Prepare your people as carefully as your platforms

Organizational readiness and culture often play a significant role in agentic AI adoption. Building trust, skills, and ownership can help organizations realize more value from their investments.

This can include strengthening leadership visibility and accountability to support adoption, addressing skills gaps through structured training and talent development, and encouraging adoption by empowering champions and communities. Managing change in phases is also important to help employees feel confident and engaged throughout the process.

Pillar Five: Security and Governance

Embed responsible AI governance and protections early to help support safe, enterprise-wide adoption.

Scaling agents without governance can increase risk so many organizations are exploring ways to integrate responsible AI into their operating models. This may include establishing risk frameworks, monitoring mechanisms, and clear escalation paths. Balancing speed with safeguards can help organizations build trust and manage adoption responsibly.

Key takeaways

Embed responsible AI frameworks
Apply frameworks for fairness, transparency, and oversight from the start.

Govern at scale
Use tiered governance models (sandbox → team → enterprise) to accelerate innovation with control.

Monitor and adapt
Continuously audit agent performance, retrain models, and reevaluate/redesign those that underperform.

Governance for the Agent Era

Agents have the potential to reshape how work gets done. At the same time, without appropriate safeguards, they can introduce risks such as security breaches, misuse, or loss of trust.

The **Security and Governance pillar** focuses on structures and guardrails that could help organizations deploy agentic AI responsibly, securely, and in alignment with enterprise values. When approached thoughtfully, governance can support innovation by balancing speed with safeguards—helping organizations scale with confidence while managing compliance obligations.

Interest and investment in agentic AI continues to grow, yet many organizations report gaps in governance. According to Accenture research[21], **42% of organizations** surveyed said they need help developing policies, governance, and risk-management processes for AI. Clear governance practices can help organizations navigate evolving regulations and adopt AI responsibly.

Five common governance gaps

Effective governance and robust protections can help organizations scale agentic AI with greater confidence. As adoption accelerates, many enterprises can continue to rely on ad-hoc or legacy frameworks that may not fully address the speed and complexity of AI innovation. Based on Microsoft's Agent Readiness Survey, more than half of respondents identified as Achievers report having a well-defined governance model for AI initiatives[22], while **less than a third** of all organizations surveyed indicated the same[22].

The survey identified five areas where governance could be improved:

1. **IT vs. business misalignment:** Business pushes for speed; IT pushes for safety. Without a central governance body bridging the two, deployments may stall or launch without adequate safeguards.

[21] Accenture: "Data readiness in the age of generative AI", Page 8.
[22] Microsoft Agent Readiness Survey, September 2025

Note: All findings are based on self-reported data from survey participants. As with any survey, results may be subject to self-reporting bias and should be interpreted in context.

2. **Unclear ownership:** Agents can be launched without clear accountability. Without executive sponsors responsible for updates and audits, value may go untracked and risks unmanaged. Based on Microsoft's Agent Readiness Survey, **more than half** of respondents identified as Achievers reported having designated executive sponsors for AI initiatives [23], compared to fewer than **one in five** "Discoverers"—suggesting that accountability may support scale.

3. **Reactive compliance:** Governance efforts often begin after risks or failures emerge, rather than being built proactively into deployment frameworks. The survey reports roughly **one in four organizations** have activated a framework for monitoring AI usage[23]. Achievers reported communicating responsible AI principles across their organizations at rates several times higher than Discoverers[23]. Without proactive compliance measures, organizations may struggle to establish mature governance and risk focusing solely on basic risk avoidance. When compliance is reactive, teams may deploy agents without oversight, increasing the likelihood of duplication, compliance gaps, and security risks.

4. **Inconsistent safeguards:** Security, fairness, and transparency policies can vary by business unit or geography. The survey reported that **fewer than one in five** respondents identified as "Discoverers" reported deploying AI safeguards at scale[23], and about **half of Achievers** said they have safeguards in place[23]. These measures can help monitor volume, access, and usage to reduce risk. Survey findings indicate that roughly six in ten Achievers report having monitoring solutions to support compliance with Responsible AI principles, compared to fewer than one in three Operators[23]. Without active monitoring and consistent safeguards, businesses may face unauthorized or irresponsible use of agents.

5. **Premature agents:** Like any new technology, agents require configuration and testing before deployment. Skipping readiness checks may expose organizations to failures or breaches. The survey found about **one in four** organizations reported conducting performance and security tests before deployment[23]— highlighting potential gaps in readiness and risk management.

[23] Microsoft Agent Readiness Survey, September 2025

Note: All findings are based on self-reported data from survey participants. As with any survey, results may be subject to self-reporting bias and should be interpreted in context.

Avoiding these pitfalls often requires ownership, transparency, and cross-functional guardrails. When governance is implemented effectively, it can help enable trust and support adoption at scale.

Getting started with governance best practices

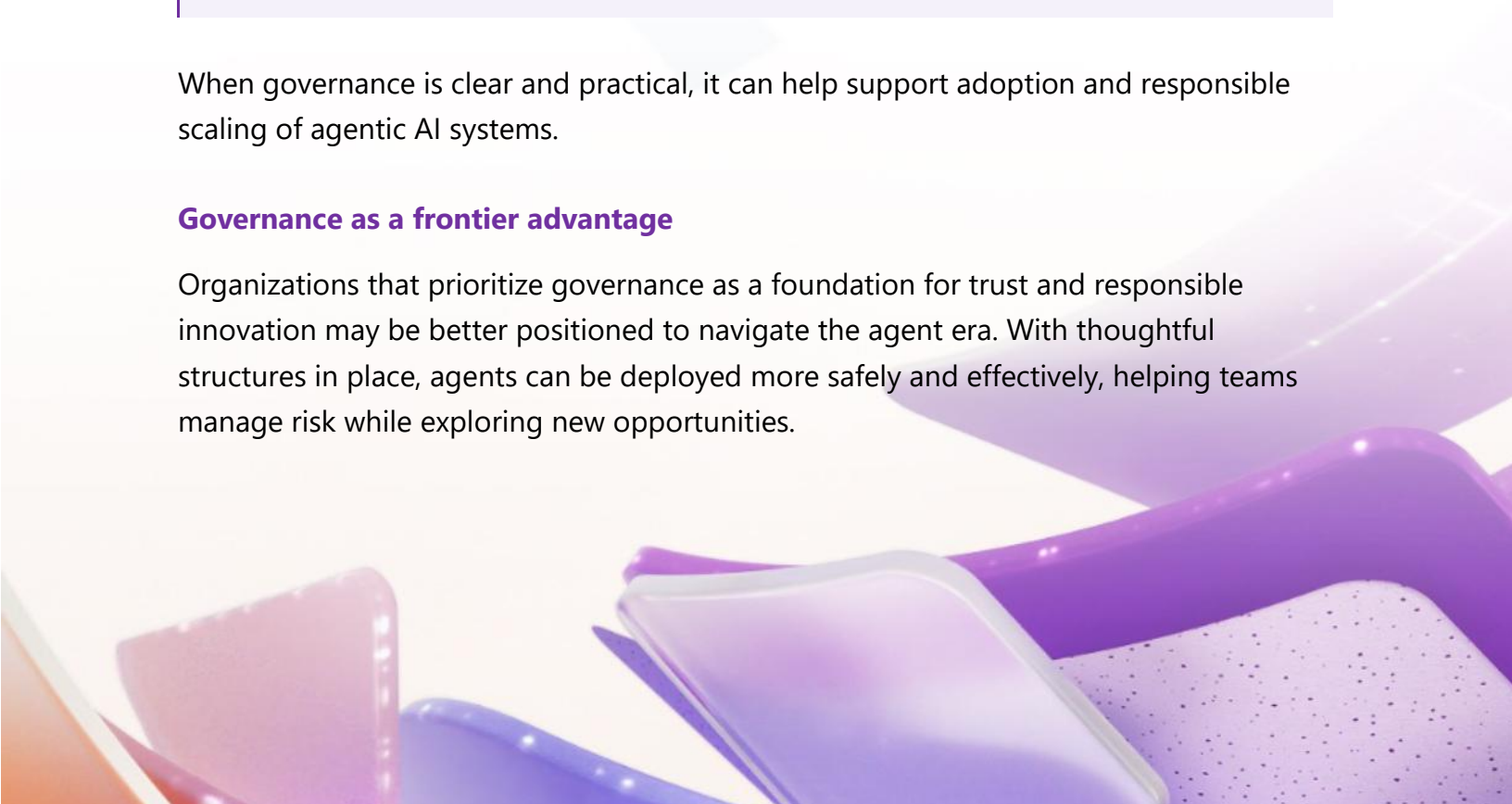
Scaling agents responsibly could mean balancing innovation with oversight. Here are four practices that may help your organization scale responsibly:

- **Embed governance early:** Consider integrating governance into the design phase. This could include aligning agents to business KPIs, conducting impact assessments for bias, security, and privacy, and involving a cross-functional board to oversee new initiatives.
- **Match oversight to autonomy:** Oversight can be tailored to the autonomy of each agent. Defining autonomy tiers—from assistants to operators—may help apply appropriate levels of monitoring, reviews, and safeguards.
- **Enable innovation with guardrails:** Safe experimentation can be supported by enabling teams to test in sandboxes, pilot proven agents, and progress those that meet Center of Excellence criteria.
- **Build trust through transparency:** Consider registering each agent with a clear owner, tracking usage and ROI through dashboards, and reporting relevant business metrics such as time savings or customer experience indicators—where appropriate and supported by data.

When governance is clear and practical, it can help support adoption and responsible scaling of agentic AI systems.

Governance as a frontier advantage

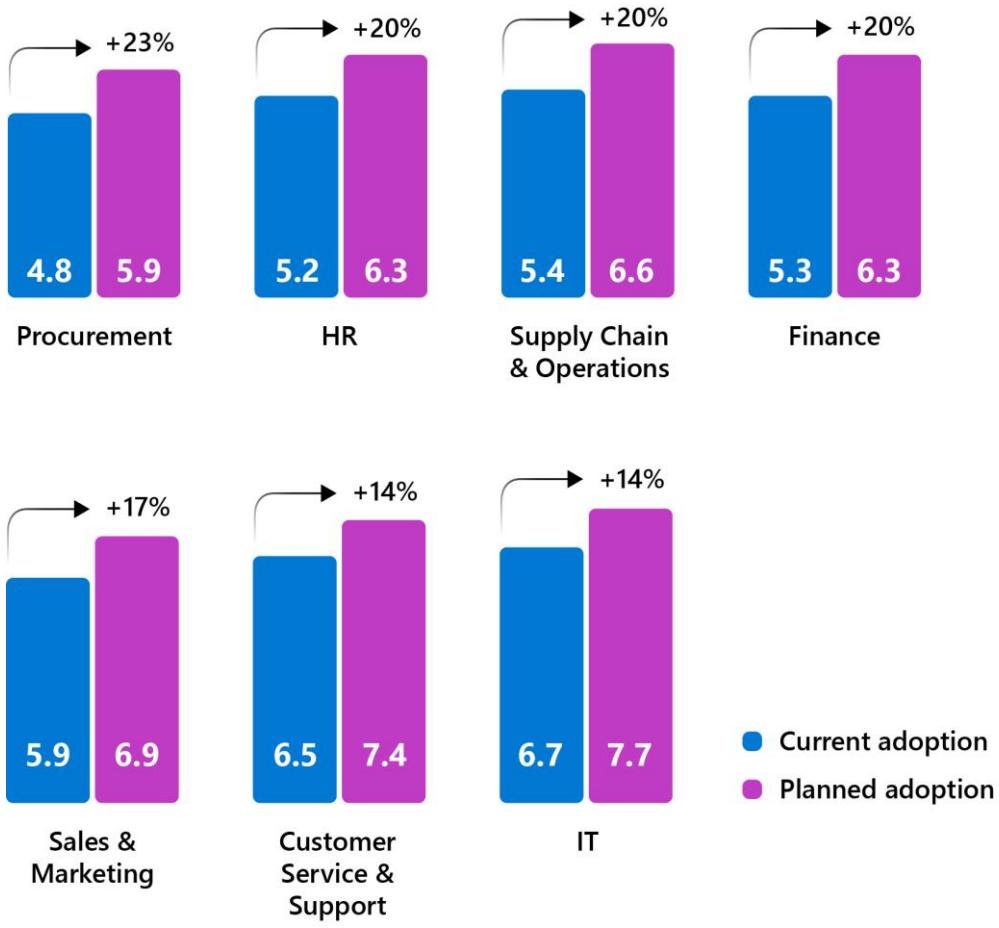
Organizations that prioritize governance as a foundation for trust and responsible innovation may be better positioned to navigate the agent era. With thoughtful structures in place, agents can be deployed more safely and effectively, helping teams manage risk while exploring new opportunities.



Getting Started: Agent Use Cases

The following use cases reflect the most common areas of current and planned agentic AI adoption as reported in the survey[24].

Current vs. Planned Agentic AI Adoption by Function



Self Reported degree have the following areas of your business adopted AI and Agents? (0 being No Adoption, 10 being Highest Adoption + N/A/Not Sure option).

[24] Microsoft Agent Readiness Survey, September 2025

Note: All findings are based on self-reported data from survey participants. As with any survey, results may be subject to self-reporting bias and should be interpreted in context.

Agent examples

Function	Agent name	Capability	Potential Impact Metrics
 **Customer service and support**	Knowledge Metadata Agent	Speed up knowledge management with automated tagging, classification, and version control	Manual effort and search accuracy
	Customer Satisfaction Prediction Agent	Predict satisfaction and recommend interventions	CSAT, escalations and retention
	Personalized Cross-Sell/Upsell Agent	Automatically identify customer preferences/patterns and deliver hyper-personalized recommendations to human agents	Conversion rate, sales velocity and average cost per sales rep
 **Sales and marketing**	Respond to RFP Agent	Analyze requirements and auto-generate tailored proposals	CTR, conversion, and speed to market
	Campaign Performance Analysis & Insights Agent	Track and optimize campaigns in real time	Improve CTR, conversion, and speed to market
	Market Landscape Research Agent	Gather and analyze internal and external data to develop market insights and competitive intelligence, and generate actionable sales recommendations	Time to insights, competitive intelligence and business agility

Check out the Microsoft Scenario Library for more agent use cases

Agent examples

Function	Agent name	Capability	Potential Impact Metrics
IT	IT Help Desk Agent	Answer policy questions, manage ticket status, update support documentation	Employee satisfaction and IT management costs
	Root Cause Agent	Identify and address IT issues proactively	Accuracy and development cycles
	Machine Configuration Agent	Automatically scan and suggest optimization actions for end-user devices and cloud connections for performance, security, and compliance	Device performance uptime, mean time to identify, and user productivity
Finance	Balance Sheet Reconciliation Agent	Ensure accurate balance sheets by detecting variations and automating corrections	Financial close, operational efficiency, and error reduction
	Collectors Agent	Prioritize accounts, orchestrate communications, and provide targeted recovery actions to improve cash flow through AI	Collection cycle, dispute resolution time, and overdue balances
	Spend Anomaly Agents	Detect fraud, duplicate invoices, and unusual patterns	Cash flow and recovery

Check out the Microsoft Scenario Library for more agent use cases

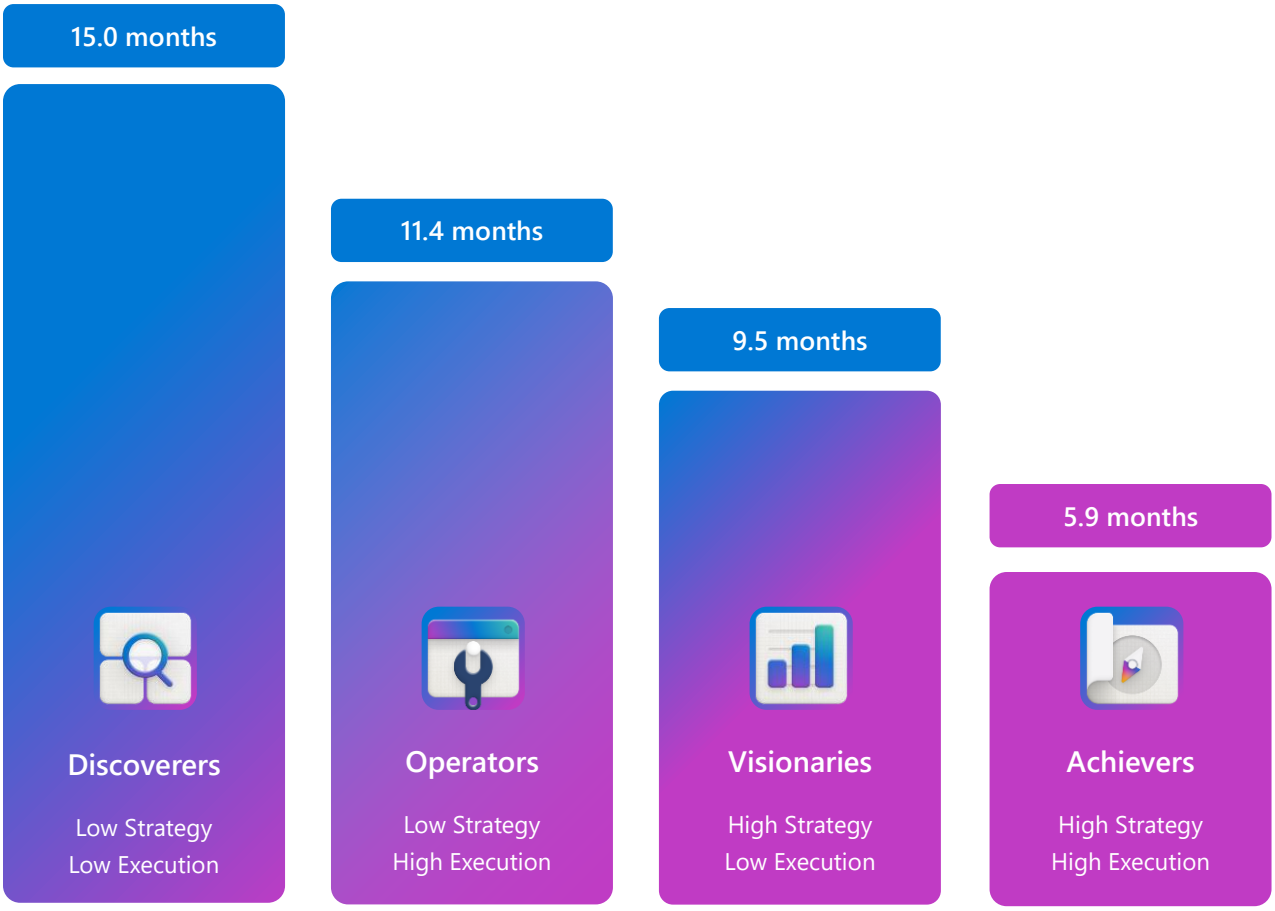
Conclusion

Agent readiness can be the difference between pilots that stall and transformations that scale. Organizations that treat agentic readiness as a strategic priority may be better prepared to move beyond experimentation and pursue enterprise-wide impact.

In this survey, Achievers—those reporting higher strategy and execution readiness—self reported scaling agents roughly **2.5x faster** than Discoverers[25].

By aligning strategy, business processes, strengthening data and technology foundations, fostering cultural adoption, and embedding governance, businesses can create the conditions for AI agents to deliver measurable value at speed and scale.

Average Self-Reported Timelines for Deploying AI Agents Beyond Pilots, by Agent Readiness Segment



[25] Microsoft Agent Readiness Survey, September 2025

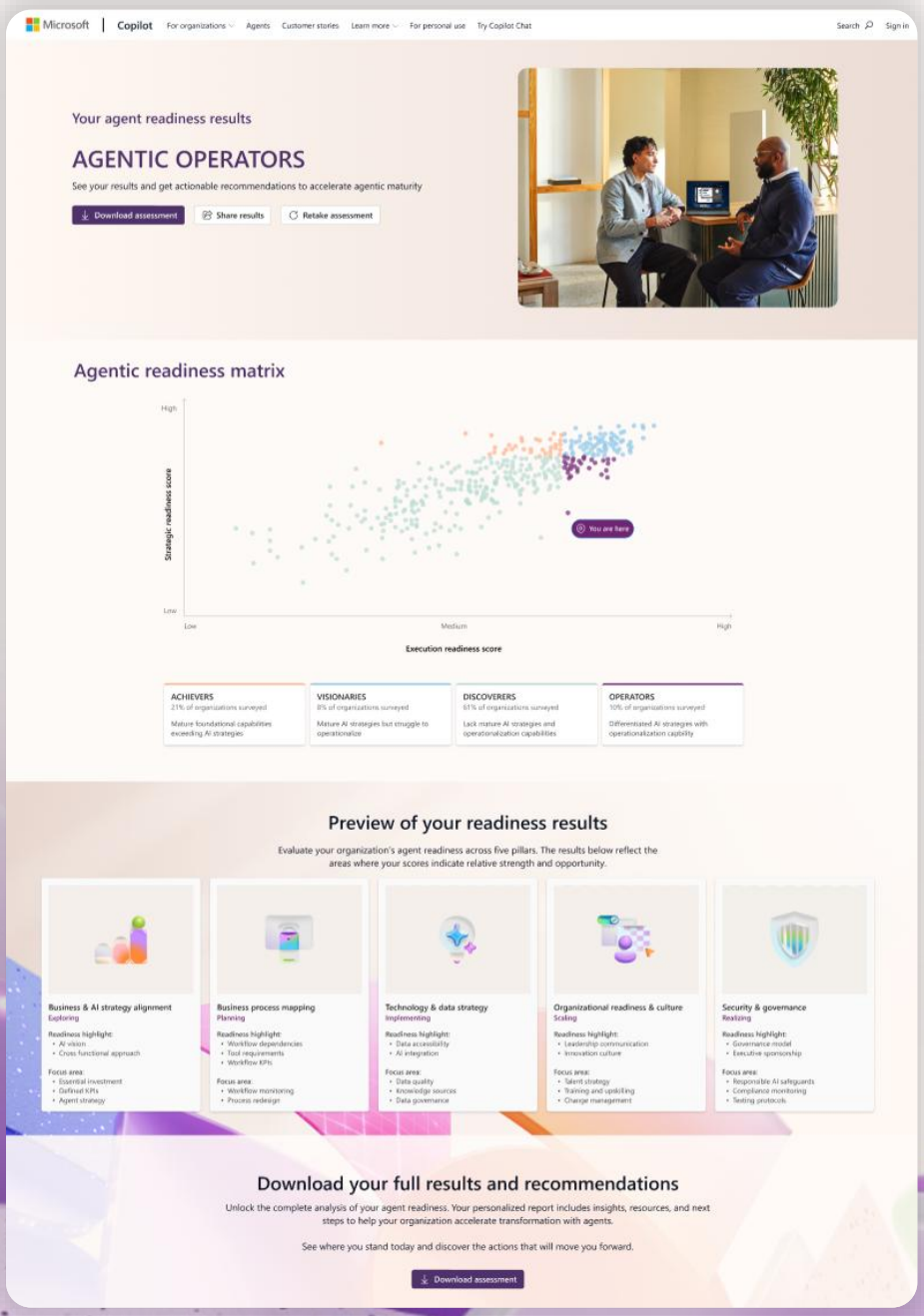
Note: All findings are based on self-reported data from survey participants. As with any survey, results may be subject to self-reporting bias and should be interpreted in context.

Looking ahead, investing in these five pillars is one path organizations can consider to help them adapt, innovate, and grow in an AI-driven world. The opportunity remains open to those ready to shape what comes next.

Take the Agent Readiness Assessment

Start your readiness journey. Assess your agent maturity and uncover highlights and focus areas across strategy, technology, processes, culture, and governance.

Download your results in ~10 minutes



Take the assessment at: Aka.ms/AgentReadiness

Take the next step on your agent readiness journey

1. **Explore** how AI agents are changing the way you work

   AI Agents for Individuals and Businesses

2. **Discover** agents in the Microsoft Marketplace

   Microsoft Marketplace

3. **Learn** how to build agents

   Build agents, your way

4. **Get started** with AI agents adoption resources

   AI Agents Hub

Additional Resources

AI and Business Strategy

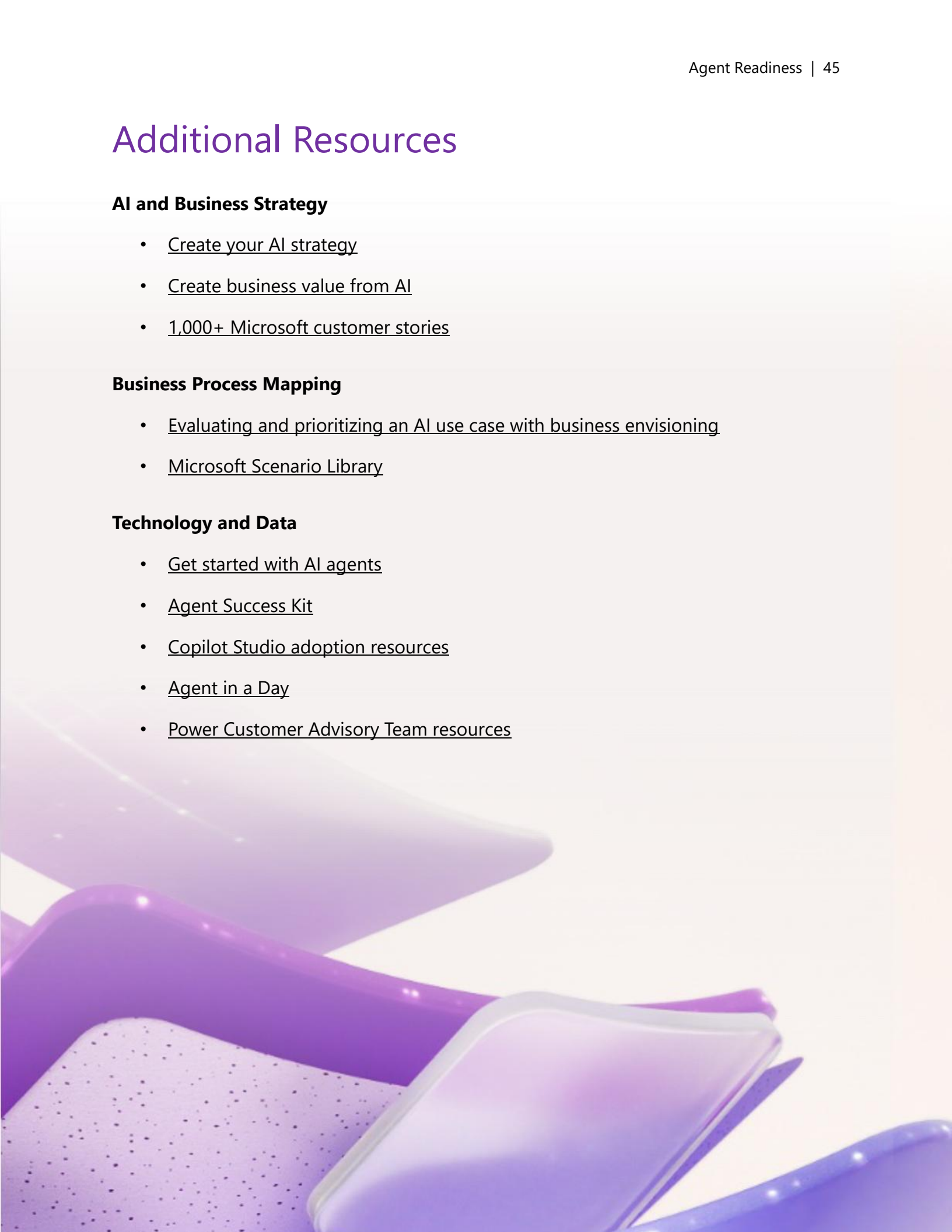
- Create your AI strategy
- Create business value from AI
- 1,000+ Microsoft customer stories

Business Process Mapping

- Evaluating and prioritizing an AI use case with business envisioning
- Microsoft Scenario Library

Technology and Data

- Get started with AI agents
- Agent Success Kit
- Copilot Studio adoption resources
- Agent in a Day
- Power Customer Advisory Team resources



Organizational Readiness and Culture

- Establish a training and upskilling strategy for makers
- AI learning paths
- Copilot Studio Agent Academy

Security and Governance

- Security for AI
- How to secure AI
- Administering and Governing Agents
- Establish an AI Center of Excellence
- How Microsoft Digital (IT) is Responding with an AI Center of Excellence
- Responsible AI: Ethical policies and practices

Appendix | Detailed Survey Methodology

Step one

Twenty-five questions were mapped to each of the five agent readiness pillars. Respondents rated their agreement on a 1–5 scale, with 5 indicating strong agreement and 1 indicating no agreement.

Step two

Scores for each question were averaged to create pillar-level scores: Business and AI Strategy Alignment, Business Process Mapping, Technology and Data Foundation, Organizational Readiness and Culture, and Security and Governance.

Step three

Scores for each of the five pillars were then averaged to create two composite scores—**Strategy Readiness** (Business and AI Strategy Alignment, Business Process Mapping) and **Execution Readiness** (Technology and Data Foundation, Organizational Readiness and Culture, Security and Governance). These were combined to produce an overall agent readiness score for each respondent.

The survey population was segmented by industry, company size, revenue band, and geography to identify differences in readiness across contexts. Comparative analysis was used to map patterns of strength and opportunity across the five domains.

Findings were benchmarked against the global survey population to contextualize results and highlight where certain organizations are advancing more quickly.

Note: All findings are based on self-reported data from survey participants. As with any survey, results may be subject to self-reporting bias and should be interpreted in context.