Six key insights for C-suite executives

to maximize the ROI of agentic AI

Accenture Strategy

Authors

Rami El Debs

Managing Director—
Accenture Strategy Lead
for Data & AI, Accenture

in

Maxime Havard

Managing Director,
Accenture Strategy

in

Daniel Dobesh

Senior Manager,
Accenture Strategy

in

Madison Stodola

Consultant,
Accenture Strategy

in

Executive Brief

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For the first time, machines can nearly think and act like humans, allowing companies to build AI agents that can augment or replace human labor. This is not just more automation. It's a new economic resource. Those who act now will lead, and those who delay risk irrelevance. This paper outlines six key insights to help C-suite leaders unlock value, avoid missteps and build lasting competitive advantages in the agentic economy – responsibly.

#1

Agentic AI marks a shift in economic history—By enabling capital to augment or substitute labor like never before, AI agents are changing the rules of competition and redefining the balance of economic value creation.

An AI agent is a type of AI that can make decisions, plan for a goal and act autonomously. A multi-agent system is a group of AI agents that work in concert to execute complex actions and deliver outputs.

As an example: A multi-agent system could book your next business trip or family vacation entirely leveraging your work calendar, travel objectives and budget, then proactively update your bookings in real-time based on weather, delays, cancellations, etc. This type of capability already disrupts the travel industry and its multiple stakeholders.

Agentic AI is no less than a new type of capital that companies can leverage to generate value, the same way traditional capital (e.g., tools, machinery, know-how) has been used since the early days of capitalism. Sometimes referred to as "cognitive capital", agentic AI allows businesses to re-think how they balance their factors of production, i.e., labor, natural resources, tangible and intangible assets, in their economic equation (see Figure 1).

Agentic AI is shifting the value equation further toward capital (and those who own and manage it) and away from labor.

Going forward, C-level executives must consider agentic AI as a core value lever in every strategic investment decision. Competitors will.

Figure 1. The agentic economy: A new era of value creation

By enabling CAPITAL to augment or substitute LABOR like never before, AI agents are changing the rules of competition and redefining the balance of economic value creation.

Productivity gains ↑

Economic paradigm	Main value creation constraint	Why
Agentic economy	Capital	AI systems, data and computing power reduce needs for human labor and introduce new products, production methods, markets and organizations
Service / Knowledge economy	Labor	Thoughtful and creative human input fuels the production engine
Industrial economy	Capital	Machines, tools and infrastructure unlock scale
Agrarian economy	Labor	Productivity tied to physical effort

Competitive advantages are shifting toward those who control **agentic capital** and not just traditional "factors of production", i.e., tangible and intangible capital (e.g., tools, machinery, know-how), natural resources or human labor[1].

[1] For classical economists, land (natural resources), labor (human effort), capital (tools, machinery, infrastructure), entrepreneurship (risk-taking and organization of the other factors) are the four inputs (factors of production) used to create value.

Source: Accenture analysis

#2

Agentic workforces will reshape all industries—Agentic AI is the entry point to cyber-physical agentic enterprises in business.

Since the 1950s, the service-based economy has been dependent on thoughtfulness and creativity, making human labor the main constraint to economic value creation. Today, this constraint is changing. By making possible the "conversion" of capital into digital labor, agentic AI enables companies to build "agentic workforces."

A single human assisted by AI agents can now do the job of ten workers with a cognitive leap (human augmentation), and autonomous multi-agent systems can entirely replace human labor at certain tasks (human substitution). These new "agentic workforces" can bring companies major competitive advantages both externally (e.g., new business models, new products and services, innovation capabilities, new customer engagement) and internally (e.g., increased efficiency, effectiveness, speed to value in core processes).

One example is a major airline company that developed, in partnership with Accenture, an agentic travel companion for its customers. This agentic solution can handle more than 40% of all digital queries and bookings for 300,000+ monthly customers.

Another example is a US healthcare insurance company which sought to improve its document processing workflows highly dependent on unstructured data. Traditional machine learning models could classify documents but struggled with extracting information. AI agents were able to reduce processing time per document by 90%, triple daily document volume and send only 2.7% of documents to employees for manual intervention compared to 90% previously.
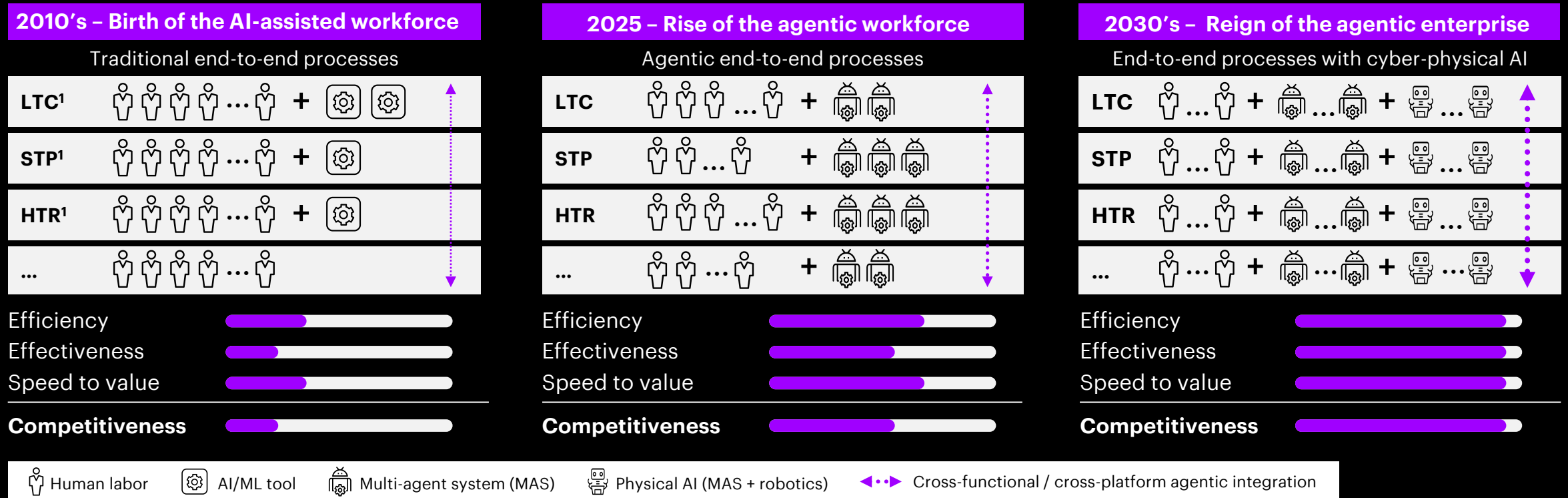
This is just the beginning. In the next few years, leaders will reshape value chains across multiple sectors and demonstrate the superiority of agentic businesses and operating models. Initially, Accenture expects to see competitive advantages coming from the radical transformation of companies' cost base, with the most mature agentic systems developing in middle and back-office domains such as Legal, Finance, HR, Supply Chain, Marketing.

By 2030, winners will have fully embraced the first generation of agentic solutions. Beyond, leaders will be on the path to become "agentic enterprises" where digital labor autonomously plans, acts and coordinates across functions and where humans remain for tasks AI agents cannot fulfill (see Figure 2). Rapid progress in physical AI (machines/robots embedded with autonomous multi-agent systems) will consolidate this dynamic. Businesses that fail to adopt agentic AI today risk being structurally outcompeted by those that do.

Figure 2. Journey to the agentic enterprise

The agentic workforce will reshape all industries—agentic AI is the entry point to cyber-physical agentic enterprises in business. The next three years will set the competitive order of the next decade.

2010's – Birth of the AI-assisted workforce

Traditional end-to-end processes

LTC[1]	
STP[1]	
HTR[1]	
...	

Efficiency
Effectiveness
Speed to value

Competitiveness

2025 – Rise of the agentic workforce

Agentic end-to-end processes

LTC	
STP	
HTR	
...	

Efficiency
Effectiveness
Speed to value

Competitiveness

2030's – Reign of the agentic enterprise

End-to-end processes with cyber-physical AI

LTC	
STP	
HTR	
...	

Efficiency
Effectiveness
Speed to value

Competitiveness

Human labor   AI/ML tool   Multi-agent system (MAS)   Physical AI (MAS + robotics)   Cross-functional / cross-platform agentic integration

[1] Examples of end-to-end value streams with the perspective that back and middle-office functions will be most impacted first. LTC = Lead to cash; STP = Source to pay; HTR = Hire to retire.

Source: Accenture analysis

#3

If the company's agentic AI agenda doesn't excite investors, the ambition is not bold enough—think new business models, new growth engines, 10x productivity gains and entire value streams autonomously coordinated by multi-agent systems.

The biggest mistake C-suite executives can make is to consider agentic AI as just another automation tool. Since the Industrial Revolution, the journey of automation has been to substitute human labor with machines and rule-based solutions. With advances toward more general forms of AI accelerating, agentic AI could bring machines that can nearly think like humans. This offers an opportunity for companies to radically change the status quo. Agentic AI is not about automating tasks—It's about disassembling and reassembling entire workflows using digital labor.

Executives must challenge themselves to find these new value pools by questioning long-standing business models and orthodoxies, control points in value chains and existing operating models. Leaving agentic AI to "continuous improvement" teams—without the strategic mandate to re-invent work—risks missing its full value.

C-suite leaders must be the ones driving their companies' agentic agenda around bold business reinvention objectives. Agentic AI should be leveraged where it "moves the needle" for the firm. Determining where to deploy the agentic workforce is key. Winners will place them where ROI is exponential, while others will waste time and money deploying them everywhere else.

The markets will reward ambitious leaders who can be visionary in defining the future of their industry in the agentic era.

#4

Winners will place agentic AI where it unlocks 10x value, not 10% savings— The starting point is not tech or pilots: It's building an enterprise portfolio of agentic AI opportunities.

Successful businesses evolve around their customers and the revenue they bring. Before jumping into a cost optimization exercise, C-suite leaders must consider how to leverage agentic AI for growth. Executives need to conduct a thorough analysis on how agentic systems can help the company gain market share, reinvent products, services and customer engagement, and create new business and operating models.

Then, companies should focus on how agentic AI will help them reduce their "cost to serve" (OPEX, CAPEX and working capital). Opportunities to deploy agentic AI are everywhere in the company; yet not all processes are created equal when it comes to value creation (see Figure 3). Executives must challenge themselves to find the largest agentic value pools (Tier 1). The identification of high-value "agentic hotspots" is a strategic exercise led by the C-suite.

Business and functional experts equipped with practical knowledge of AI agents can help executives shape a high-value portfolio of agentic opportunities. As an example, after conducting an in-depth analysis with the leadership of a Fortune 500 company's sales, finance and supply chain functions, Accenture identified that 50% of customer touchpoints were manual and transactional, 80% of working capital efficiency leakage came from hold/blocks and collection efforts and 60% of efficiency leakage was driven by manual labor.
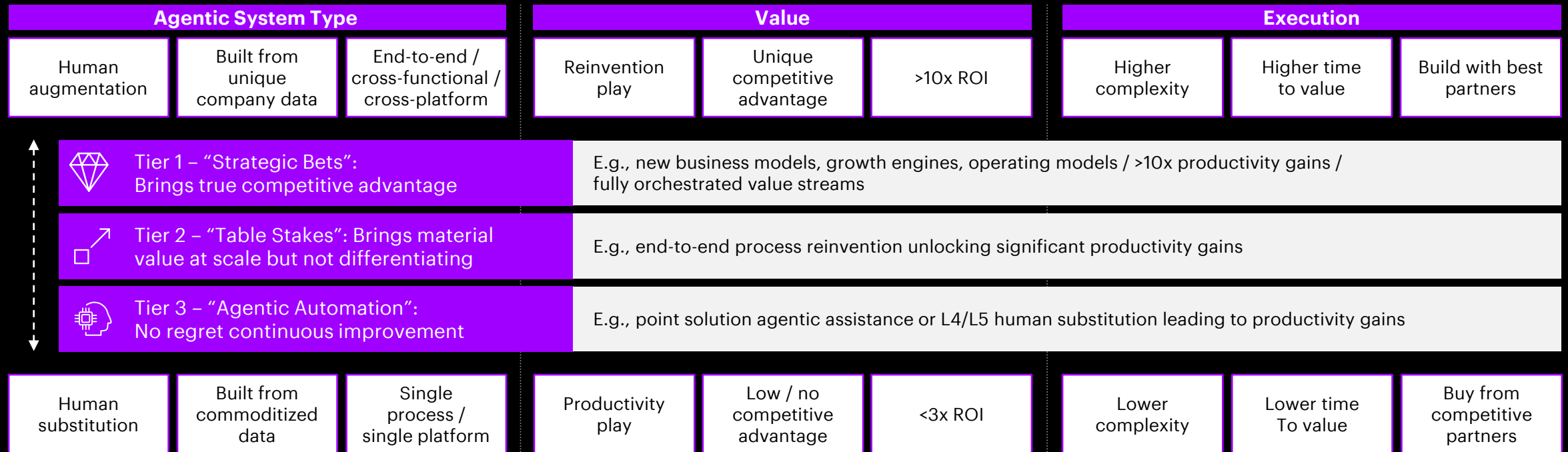
Accenture helped the company identify the agentic hotspots in these functions and design a robust agentic transformation portfolio to reinvent how customer service, credit, collection, sales and fulfillment are done.

Agentic AI allows companies to "hack" how work is performed across end-to-end processes.

9

Figure 3. Shaping the enterprise agentic AI portfolio

Build a value-first agentic AI portfolio combining longer-term reinvention plays and faster productivity plays—
Think new business models, new growth engines, 10x productivity gains and entire value streams run with agents.

Agentic System Type			Value			Execution		
Human augmentation	Built from unique company data	End-to-end / cross-functional / cross-platform	Reinvention play	Unique competitive advantage	>10x ROI	Higher complexity	Higher time to value	Build with best partners

Tier 1 – "Strategic Bets": Brings true competitive advantage	E.g., new business models, growth engines, operating models / >10x productivity gains / fully orchestrated value streams
Tier 2 – "Table Stakes": Brings material value at scale but not differentiating	E.g., end-to-end process reinvention unlocking significant productivity gains
Tier 3 – "Agentic Automation": No regret continuous improvement	E.g., point solution agentic assistance or L4/L5 human substitution leading to productivity gains

Human substitution	Built from commoditized data	Single process / single platform	Productivity play	Low / no competitive advantage	<3x ROI	Lower complexity	Lower time To value	Buy from competitive partners

Executives must challenge themselves to **find the biggest agentic value pools (Tier 1)** by questioning long-standing business models and orthodoxies, control points in value chains and existing operating models.

Source: Accenture analysis

#4 (continued)

Winners will place agentic AI where it unlocks 10x value, not 10% savings—The starting point is not tech or pilots: It's building an enterprise portfolio of agentic AI opportunities.

In the initial "value targeting" phase of the journey, leaders need to be vigilant and not let tech, data and other AI "enablers" distract them from locating value. Strategic decisions regarding enabling capabilities will come soon enough.
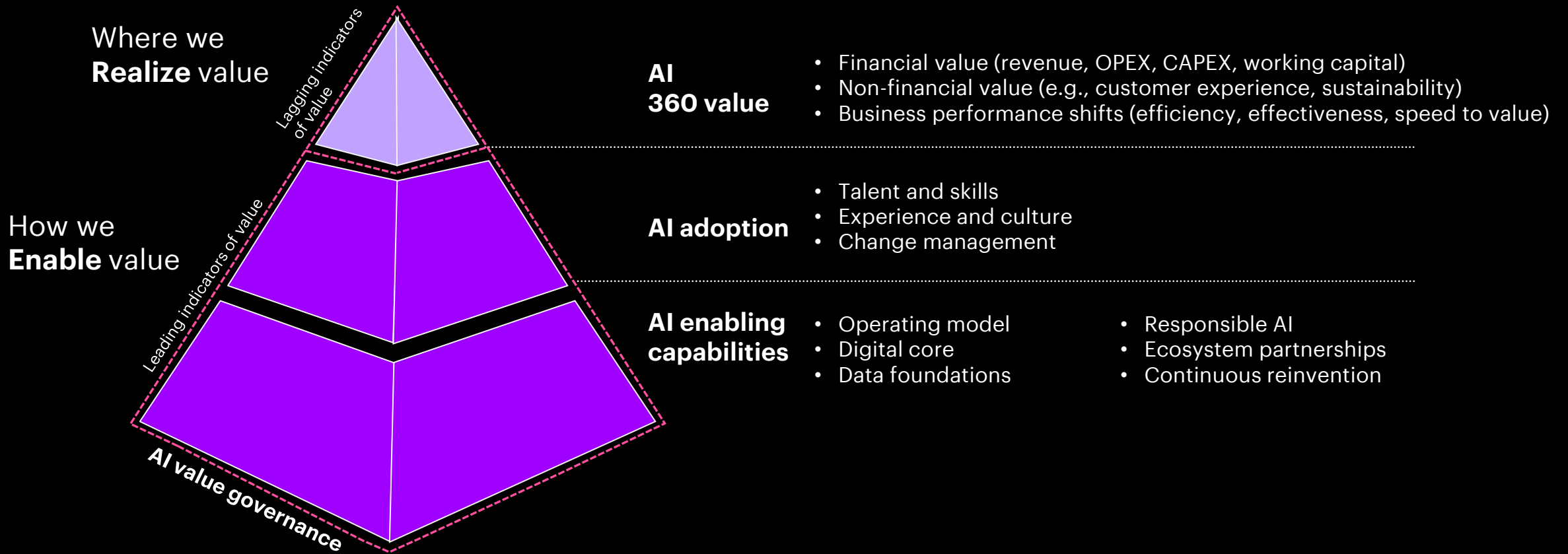
Once AI hotspots are identified, leaders should be careful not to apply agentic AI to processes, tasks or steps that should not exist in the first place. Instead, they should question every requirement, remove all unnecessary steps, simplify and optimize the process before designing agentic solutions.

To ensure AI agents are deployed where competitive advantages are created, leaders need to establish extreme clarity on their industry's new performance frontier and their company's "must-win challenges" and "metrics that matter". Anchoring the agentic journey on a holistic value framework will help prevent executives from making erratic investments that result in high sunk costs and little return (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. AI value realization framework

Leaders will leverage AI to drive true performance shifts in their businesses. Commitment to execution, enabling capabilities and adoption at scale are needed to realize this value.

Where we **Realize** value

Lagging indicators of value

AI 360 value
- Financial value (revenue, OPEX, CAPEX, working capital)
- Non-financial value (e.g., customer experience, sustainability)
- Business performance shifts (efficiency, effectiveness, speed to value)

How we **Enable** value

Leading indicators of value

AI adoption
- Talent and skills
- Experience and culture
- Change management

AI enabling capabilities
- Operating model
- Digital core
- Data foundations
- Responsible AI
- Ecosystem partnerships
- Continuous reinvention

AI value governance

Source: Accenture analysis

#5

With ecosystem partners, race where agentic AI shifts the competitive frontier— Hesitate and risk being left behind in the agentic era.

Once the agentic portfolio is identified, executives are rapidly faced with the "build versus buy" and "now versus wait" questions. Home-grown agentic solutions require significant effort and investments and can create costly technical debt. When is building an agentic system internally the right decision? What are alternative options? Further, keeping up with the pace of progress in the field of agentic AI is challenging. Why pioneer with high learning costs if the solutions become obsolete within a year? Why not wait for ecosystem partners to provide best-in-class systems proven across multiple companies and maintain a fraction of the cost?

These questions should be answered from the perspective of value and competitive advantage. Making a quick move can be the right thing to do but only if the move is part of a clear strategy that justifies the cost of the learning curve. C-suite executives need to move decisively to build in-house systems where a strategic assessment reveals Tier 1 agentic opportunities

("Strategic Bets") – those that can reshape market share, unlock new business models or radically reduce cost to serve. The learning curve is steep, but early benefits in the right areas will outweigh the cost of early mistakes. Companies should mobilize their best resources and partners to create these unique proprietary agentic solutions.

Elsewhere, be smart. Tier 2 ("Table Stakes") or Tier 3 agentic opportunities ("Agentic Automation") should be pursued through ecosystem partnerships or SaaS platform extensions. Let vendors handle the R&D cost. Avoid unnecessary technical debt and focus on internal energy where it counts.
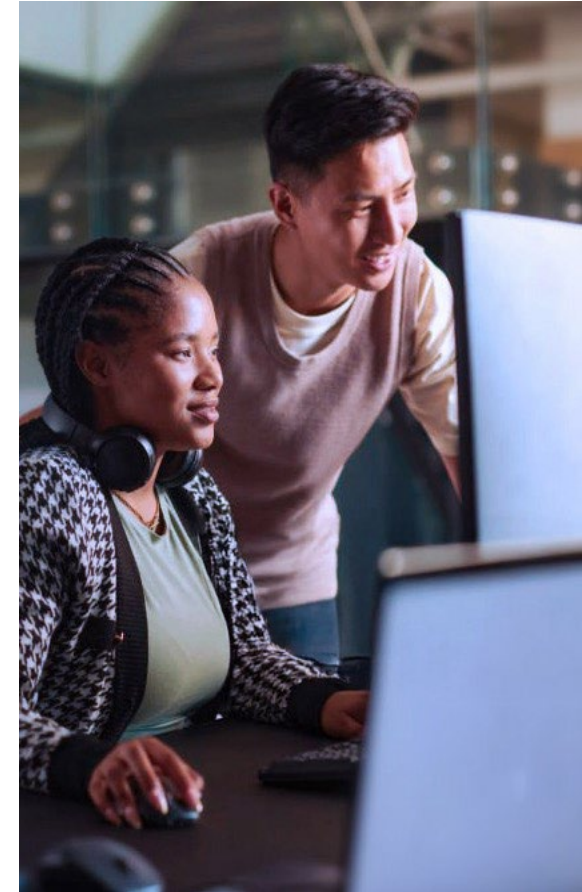
#6

In the early days of agentic AI adoption, the chances of "pilot purgatory" and sunk costs are high—Accenture's "one-two punch" strategy focused on value targeting and enabling capabilities can put ambitious leaders on the right track.

Many companies fail to unlock the value of AI, not because they didn't invest, but because they focused on the wrong areas or lacked the capabilities to scale. Accenture helps bold leaders avoid these pitfalls with a proven "one-two punch" agentic AI strategy that defines where to play and how to win (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Accenture's "one-two punch" agentic AI strategy

C-suite leaders who start with a clear agentic AI strategy—leading with value and powered by the right enabling capabilities—will wire the enterprise to win with agentic scale from the get-go.

Value targeting

01 Value definition	1.1. Define the new performance frontier	Envision how agentic AI will reshape **how business is done** and **performance limits**
	1.2. Set the value frame and strategic priorities	Align on your **must-win challenges** and **AI value framework**
02 Value assessment	2.1. Identify AI value pools and initiatives	Scan end-to-end processes to spot where to **re-architect workflows**
	2.2. Shape the enterprise AI portfolio	Prioritize **"strategic bets", "table stakes"** and **"agentic automation"** balancing reinvention with quick-wins
	2.3. Size the prize, build the roadmap	Translate AI ambitions into clear **ROI stories** and **realistic execution plans**
03 Value tracking	3.1. Track and communicate value	Deploy **real-time tracking** to signal early success and **build momentum**
	3.2. Boost and sustain value	Drive **tailored change effort** to maximize **adoption**

+

Enabling capabilities

1. Enterprise AI Operating model	Set up your C-Suite sponsorship, agentic CoE and **experimentation engine**
2. Digital core	Build an **AI-native tech stack** – LLMs, orchestration layer, Knowledge Brain
	Productize, connect and secure all data to fuel **context-rich insights**
3. Talent and new ways of working	Scale **AI literacy** and **integrated human-machine processes**
4. Responsible AI	Integrate **ethical guardrails** to ensure agents deliver compliant decisions
5. Continuous reinvention	Collaborate with **digital and tech partners** to build and scale faster
	Empower the AI CoE to continuously **optimize agents** and **reinvent processes**

Source: Accenture analysis

Value targeting

Accenture's seven-step approach to agentic AI value targeting at a chemicals manufacturer

1

Vision setting

Define the new performance frontier

? What does the industry look like after adopting agentic AI?

? How does the value chain reconfigure, and profit pools shift? What will be radically different in the way value is generated?

At a large chemicals manufacturer, Accenture articulated a clear vision of the industry's future performance frontier, where agentic processes enable hyper–efficiency, autonomous decision-making and human-machine synergies.

Accenture analyzed the art of the possible across the Lead-to-Cash (L2C) end-to-end value stream. This exercise helped frame the L2C reinvention not as a technology project, but as a strategic effort to unlock revenue growth, customer satisfaction and employee productivity.

2

Value framing

Set the value frame and strategic priorities

(?) What is the right value frame to drive value-based decisions on agentic AI?

(?) What are the "must-win challenges" that the C-suite wants to solve?

(?) What value metrics does the company need to radically improve?

Accenture built a holistic value framework aligned to the company's strategic objectives (financial and non-financial). Then it helped the company define five CEO-backed must-win challenges, including giving field teams one day back, reaching the top quartile in customer satisfaction, halving revenue leakage and delivering a significant G&A cost reduction.

These became the foundation for prioritizing agentic solutions to re-architect the L2C process.

3

Value targeting

Identify AI value pools and initiatives

? How can agentic systems re-invent a business, a function, an operating model or create new products, services and customer engagement models?

? How can high-value AI hotspots be identified across end-to-end processes and platforms?

? How will agentic AI "hack" existing processes?

We reimagined the company's processes by analyzing 20+ agentic hotspots for revenue leakage, rework and cash flow delays.

The team designed agents to transform root-cause resolution, orchestrate billing and preempt disputes, leading up to 80% task automation in select areas, 70% reduction in manual handoffs and significant unlocking of value across G&A, working capital and write-offs.

4

Portfolio design

Shape the enterprise AI portfolio

? Which agentic opportunities should make it into the company's agentic AI portfolio?

? How should Tier 1 agentic initiatives be prioritized for immediate investment?

? What are the criteria for choosing one agentic opportunity over another?

? How to balance reinvention versus short-term value capture?

For the L2C value stream, the team created a portfolio of nine interconnected multi-agent systems falling into three themes: Autonomous agents with predictive capabilities, assistant agents designed to fit complex tasks and foundational agents to support and scale. These agents were prioritized using a scoring model across value, ease of build and strategic fit.

5

Value estimation

Size the prize, build the roadmap

(?) What is the company baseline performance?

(?) How does this translate into cash flow for the company?

(?) What cumulative value and ROI can the CEO communicate to the market?

(?) What non-financial value can agentic AI unlock for customers, employees and society?

Accenture baselined 20+ KPIs across working capital estimating realistic improvement targets for G&A and write-offs and non-financial value levers. A three-year roadmap was built to sequence rollout by urgency and ROI, aiming for an 8–10x return, with a projected $40–50M annualized value at full scale.

6

Value reporting

Track and communicate value

? How should leadership track value realization?

? What leading indicators signal that true performance shifts are happening in the business?

? How to attribute value back to agents?

Value KPIs are now tracked in near real-time via Accenture's value management platform (Momentum) integrated with SAP, Databricks and other systems.

Each AI agent has an assigned product owner and business stakeholder with value realization embedded into the governance model via monthly value checkpoints. This help ensure not only that value is created but also that it is measured, attributed and communicated back to the firm with confidence.

7

Change management

Boost and sustain value

? How can leadership maximize AI adoption?

? How can change management efforts be tailored to different employee groups?

Accenture used a behavioral and data-science-backed approach. The team designed and deployed sample size surveys across business units and mapped archetype mindsets to understand how people are thinking about AI agents. This analysis allowed the team to create targeted communication campaigns and carefully measure key metrics to improve effectiveness.

Accenture's agentic AI enabling capabilities

(the 5 "How" imperatives)

Building trusted enterprise-grade multi-agent systems isn't easy. To succeed, the C-suite needs to establish five essential enablers. Accenture's own marketing agentic transformation proved just how critical these capabilities are.

1

Enterprise AI operating model

Structure to scale agentic AI. Rapid value creation requires clear C-level ownership, defined roles, and strong governance. Like the early internet era, success demands ongoing R&D investments in the organization to evaluate new models and ways of working. At Accenture, the agentic reinvention of marketing was championed from the top with clear separation between business leads and AI innovation teams.

2

Digital core

Architect for scale and intelligence. Long-term value from agentic AI requires the right infrastructure, access to LLMs and a connected "Enterprise Knowledge Brain." In marketing, Accenture built a bespoke agentic architecture layered on its **AI Refinery** platform and knowledge graph – enabling agents to "reason" across campaigns, brand rules and audience insights.

Make data usable, safe and smart. Agentic AI needs clean, connected, and contextual data. For marketing, Accenture unified structured and unstructured data through its SynOps workbench, productized key signals and trained agents to make decisions based on real customer behavior.

3

Talent and new ways of working

Build skills, trust and adoption. Accenture trained 1,000+ of its own marketers in AI literacy and prompt design, co-created new ways of working and embedded AI coaches to support early users. The result: Faster adoption, stronger trust and measurable impact.

4

5

Responsible AI

Continuous reinvention

Design ethically with guardrails. Accenture embedded ethical checkpoints, brand voice controls and transparency logs into every agent. A dedicated governance board reviews output and flags risks ensuring agents act responsibly by design.

Co-create with the best. For its marketing transformation, Accenture partnered with NVIDIA to co-develop agents and validate outcomes, boosting brand value by 25%, cutting manual work by 30% and accelerating speed-to-market by up to 55%.

Keep agents evolving. To stay ahead, agents must adapt. Accenture's AI Center of Excellence continuously monitors, improves and upgrades agentic systems, ensuring long-term performance and leadership as technologies advance.

Why Accenture

C-suite leaders who start with a clear agentic AI strategy anchored in value and powered by the right capabilities will lead their industries through this generational shift. With Accenture, corporate leaders won't just keep pace; they'll define it. The agentic AI revolution is underway. The winners are already building.

Now is the moment to act.

About Accenture

Accenture is a leading global professional services company that helps the world's leading businesses, governments and other organizations build their digital core, optimize their operations, accelerate revenue growth and enhance citizen services—creating tangible value at speed and scale. We are a talent- and innovation-led company with approximately 791,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries. Technology is at the core of change today, and we are one of the world's leaders in helping drive that change, with strong ecosystem relationships. We combine our strength in technology and leadership in cloud, data and AI with unmatched industry experience, functional expertise and global delivery capability. Our broad range of services, solutions and assets across Strategy & Consulting, Technology, Operations, Industry X and Song, together with our culture of shared success and commitment to creating 360° value, enable us to help our clients reinvent and build trusted, lasting relationships. We measure our success by the 360° value we create for our clients, each other, our shareholders, partners and communities. Visit us at **www.accenture.com**.

About Accenture Strategy

Accenture Strategy works with boards, CEOs and C-suite executives to create 360° value for all stakeholders by defining and answering their most strategic business questions—including growth, profitability, technology-driven transformation, mergers and acquisitions (M&A), operating models and sustainability—with insights from AI and data science, combined with deep industry and function expertise. For more information, visit us at **www.accenture.com/strategy**.

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