AI BASICS // AI AGENTS

AI agents: the future of work is here

The next step in the evolution of AI, and what it means for the people doing the work.

> **Travis's short version:** AI has long been about the human in the loop: we give an input and the AI helps generate an output. Now AI agents operate autonomously, making decisions, taking action and improving over time. And experts shouldn't see that as a threat, but as a chance to build the next generation of intelligent tools.

From human in the loop to autonomous agents

For a long time AI has been about human-in-the-loop applications: humans provide an input, and the AI assists in generating an output. Now we're seeing a shift to AI agents that operate autonomously, making decisions, taking action and even improving over time.

Traditional AI tools	AI agents
Humans provide an input, and the AI assists in generating an output.	Operate autonomously: they make decisions and take action without needing human input at every step, and improve over time.

Think of an AI agent like a highly skilled assistant that learns from interactions, improves over time and can execute complex tasks independently.
Think of it like an intern who over time becomes fully independent, except instead of years, an AI agent can improve in weeks or even days.

What the research says about productivity

There's a lot of debate about AI's role in productivity, and some misconceptions about its impact on work. A study from Stanford and MIT found that AI assistance increased worker productivity by **15% on average**. Less experienced workers saw huge gains in speed and quality. The most experienced employees barely improved, and even saw a slight drop in quality.
What does this tell us? Not that AI is bad for experts, but that AI optimises workflows differently. It boosts efficiency for people who are still learning, while those who already know the job inside and out don't necessarily see the same benefits.

The opportunity for experienced people

Here's the real opportunity: AI shouldn't replace experts, it should be **built by them**. Rather than fearing AI, industry veterans can help train AI agents on their own workflows and turn their expertise into scalable, intelligent systems. Subject matter experts shouldn't see AI as a threat, but as a chance to build the next generation of intelligent tools.

Six main types of AI agents

Agent type	What it does
Customer agents	Handle support queries and personalise those interactions.
Employee agents	Help automate workflows and boost productivity.
Creative agents	Generate content and help in design work.
Data agents	Analyse trends and make sense of more complex data.
Coding agents	Help develop and debug software.
Security agents	Help detect threats and enhance cyber security.

Each of these is transforming industries in its own particular way. That's the subject of a few upcoming videos.

A question for you

Where do you see AI agents making the biggest impact? Imagine the AI agent you'd want for your workflow: what would it do, and how would it enhance your work rather than replace it?

The bottom line

AI agents are a shift from assisting with outputs to acting on decisions. The evidence suggests the biggest gains so far go to people still learning, which is exactly why experienced people have a chance to shape these tools. **Next in the series:** the evolution of AI agents and their real-world applications.

Want to talk this through for your business?

Book a free 15-minute call. We'll look at your situation and give you a straight answer, with no jargon and no sales pitch.

Let's Chat

Opens the request form on our website. Free, no obligation.