

A C-SUITE FIELD GUIDE

New to Agentic AI?

Six parts. One clear picture. Everything a non-technical leader needs to ask a sharp question in the room.

Six parts make an AI system **agentic**.

- 01** The Model — the brain
- 02** Memory — what it remembers
- 03** Tools — the hands
- 04** Planning — the steps
- 05** Orchestration — the manager
- 06** Guardrails — the brakes

40%+

of agentic AI projects will be cancelled by the end of 2027.

Gartner press release, June 2025. Most cancellations trace back to a missing or unclear rule for what the agent was allowed to do alone.

6%

of organizations can show AI made a real difference to profit.

McKinsey State of AI: Global Survey 2026. 80% feel more productive. Only 6% can prove it on the balance sheet.

The one-line test. "What happens after it answers?"

CHATBOT

Answers, then waits for the next question.

AGENT

Checks a system, takes an action, reports back.

The six parts, in plain words

01 The Model

Thinks. Breaks a goal into steps.

02 Memory

Remembers past steps and real facts.

03 Tools

Connects to real systems to act.

04 Planning

Orders the steps, adjusts on failure.

05 Orchestration

Manages several agents or tools at once.

06 Guardrails

Decides what needs a person to check first.

Three levels of autonomy, safest first

1

Look and tell

Checks a system, reports to a person. Never acts alone.

2

Look, draft, and wait

Prepares an action. A person approves it before it goes out.

3

Look and act

Takes the action itself. Reserve this for cheap, reversible mistakes.



A model that only talks can only get a sentence wrong. An agent that acts can take the wrong action, faster than a person can catch it.

Why the brakes matter more than the brain

Five questions for your next agent pitch

- **What systems can it actually touch?**
- **What happens if it gets a step wrong?**
- **Who has to approve it before it acts?**
- **How long has it run on real work, not a demo?**
- **What does it do when it is not sure?**

You do not need to master agentic AI to lead it.

You need six words and one hard question: what happens after it answers? Save this, share it, or send it to whoever on your team keeps calling every chatbot an "agent."



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