Building the Agentic Enterprise

Insights from Charles Lamanna, EVP of Agents and Business Applications, Microsoft

2026

Past AI (Information Retrieval)

Chat-based discovery and research tools

Current AI (Action-Oriented)

Calendar management and file operations

Advanced AI (Content Generation)

Application building and workflow automation

The Shift from Chat to Action

- AI has transitioned over the past 100-120 days from passive chat to action-oriented agents managing calendars, files, and generating applications [1]
- Microsoft Copilot co-work now enables automated workflow execution, such as declining 17 meetings simultaneously with context-aware decision making
- Organizations are moving beyond chat to agent-driven automation that completes tasks end-to-end with minimal human intervention

Charles Lamanna's Personal AI Workflows

17 meetings

declined in one automated action [1]

- Calendar management AI analyzes meeting trade-offs and auto-executes cleanup workflows [1]
- Teams share interactive mini web apps pulling live employee and funding data for real-time decisions
- Customer briefing agents synthesize telemetry, Azure data, and CRM into unified views for all

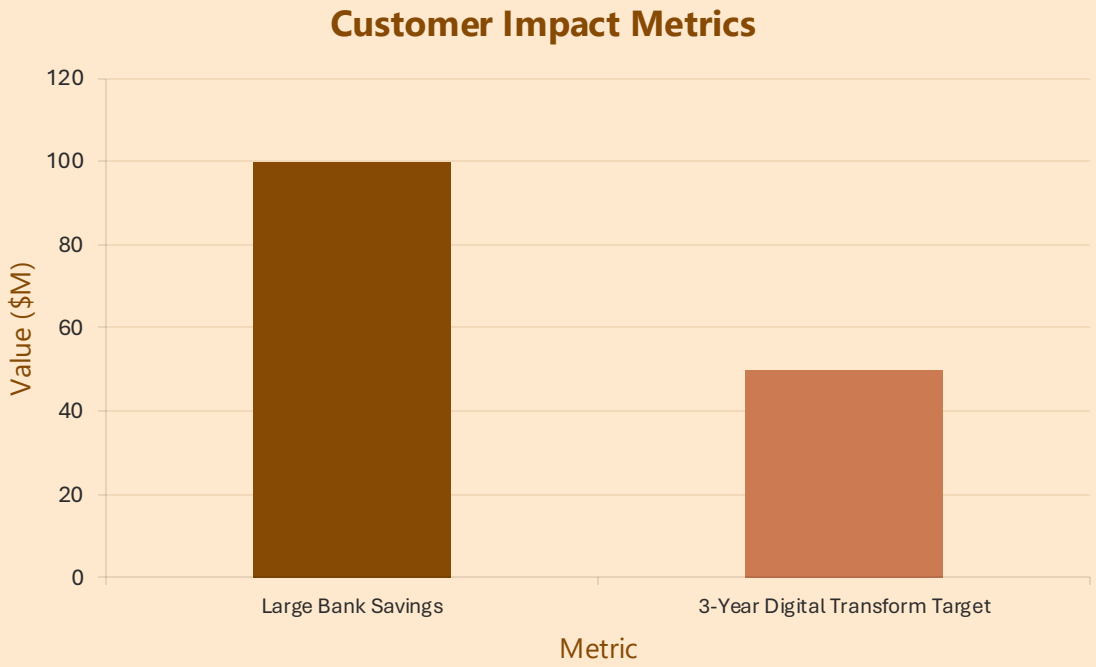
The Two-Sided Adoption Strategy

Bottom-Up Enablement

- Deploy strong AI tools broadly across entire workforce to enable grassroots innovation and experimentation
- Provide best-in-class AI access to all employees, not just managers or specific roles, to level the playing field
- Companies successfully embracing AI transformation have universal access to AI tools with agents across the organization

Top-Down Focus

- Identify 3-5 business-critical AI projects with direct executive ownership and tracking from CEO level
- Avoid spreading resources across 250+ projects - successful companies maintain sharp focus on handful of high-impact initiatives
- Track projects against existing business metrics like engineering productivity, field resource efficiency, and finance automation



Source: Building the Agentic Enterprise - Charles Lamanna - w...

Proven Customer ROI Examples

Early adopters are achieving breakthrough results in months that previously required years of digital transformation

- Large bank achieved hundreds of millions in savings while improving customer satisfaction for engagement operations [1]
- Financial institution delivered in months what traditional programs would require 20 years to accomplish
- Productivity improvements: 40% faster app loads and 25% fewer support tickets through AI-driven workflows

Measuring Success with Business Metrics

"Zero value in tracking agent deployment counts" [1]

"CEO-level metrics already define success" [1]

- Resist the temptation to create new AI-specific metrics - companies already have established KPIs for revenue growth, customer satisfaction, retention, and cost reduction [1]
- AI initiatives should directly accelerate existing business metrics tracked by CFO, CRO, CIO, and CTO rather than introducing new measurement frameworks
- Cost-conscious organizations focus on reducing cost to serve, while innovation-driven companies prioritize breakthrough products in pharma or subscriber growth in banking and telecom
- Agent count represents a vanity metric with no business value - focus instead on tangible outcomes and bottom-line impact

The Path to Autonomous AI Agents

- Aim for fully autonomous agents as the goal, similar to manufacturing automation where continuous processes minimize waste [1]
- Start by building evaluation framework for current process without AI - establish realistic baseline expectations
- Record human approval rates when AI makes recommendations, removing emotion through data-driven comparison

Baseline Eval

Create evaluation framework with 1,000 representative examples for current non-AI process

AI with Human Review

Insert AI recommendations with human approval and track approval rates

Data-Driven Decision

Compare AI+human accuracy versus baseline to justify full automation

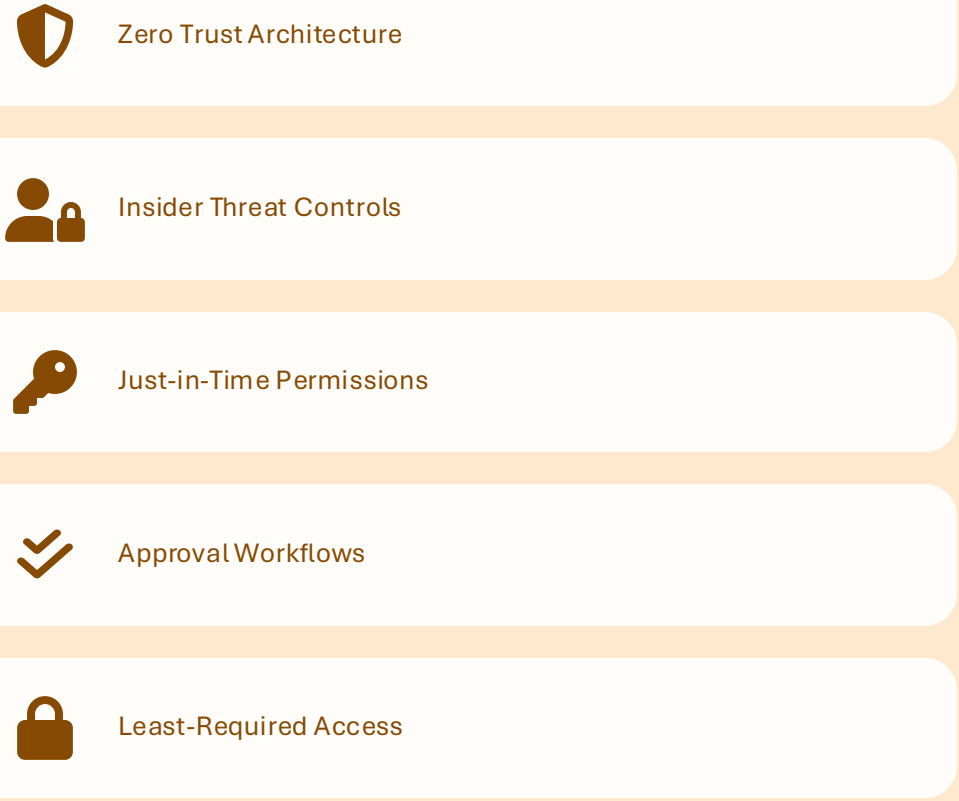
Full Automation

Deploy end-to-end automation when AI consistently outperforms previous process

Security and Zero Trust for AI Agents

> **"AI agents are the most gullible, easily phished employees"** [1]

- Treat AI agents as the most vulnerable insider threat - more susceptible to social engineering than any human employee [1]
- Implement just-in-time permissions and approval workflows for high-value actions like refunds exceeding specific thresholds
- Apply existing zero trust architecture to AI agents rather than creating entirely new security paradigms
- Never grant god-level permissions - layer the same safeguards used for privileged human accounts



Team Structure Revolution in Software Engineering

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Direct code written by humans on production teams [1]

-40%	-25%	2.5X
App load time improvement in 3 months [1]	Support ticket volume reduction [1]	Pull requests per engineer increase [1]

*Mature product teams using **coding agents** achieved **40% faster load times** and **25% fewer support tickets** by automating the full cycle from customer issue to pull request*

The Future Workforce Model

Team Composition Changes

- Some Microsoft products now operate with all engineers plus one designer and zero product managers due to high velocity enabled by coding agents [1]
- Teams gathering anonymized product feedback directly from users through channel feeds rather than traditional product management hierarchy
- Roles shifting toward architect and system design positions rather than direct code implementation, with more senior overall team composition

Token Budget Economics

100–1000s

dollars per engineer daily token budget [1]

25%

more pull requests YoY at GitHub [1]

- Job candidates now negotiate token budgets as critical requirement - engineers accustomed to agentic workflows will not accept limited AI access [1]
- Token budgets of hundreds of dollars per day per engineer become economically justified when fully-loaded engineer costs reach half million dollars and AI drives 3X efficiency gains
- Token budget planning replaces traditional resource allocation - essential infrastructure investment like Excel for financial analysts

The Agentic Transformation Timeline

18-24 months ago

Code completion in IDEs like VS Code

Recent past

Chat interfaces and lightweight coding agents

Current (2026)

Command-line agentic coding with zero human-written code

Next 12 months

Computer use agents with mouse and keyboard control unlocking legacy systems

End of 2026

Agentic work patterns reach every business function and discipline

- Software engineering progression from code completion to full agentic workflows occurred over 18-24 months - same transformation coming to all office work [1]
- Computer use capabilities enabling agents to control mouse and keyboard will unlock legacy systems without APIs within next 12 months
- Engineers not using GitHub Copilot CLI or Claude Code are operating in a different profession - same reality coming to FP&A and budgeting

References

Video Source

Building the Agentic Enterprise - Charles Lamanna @ GeekWire AI Summit

Charles Lamanna, Executive Vice President of Agents & Business Applications at Microsoft, speaks with GeekWire co-founder Todd Bishop in a fireside chat on building the agentic enterprise

Recorded at Agents of Transformation, a GeekWire AI summit held March 24, 2026, at Block 41 in Seattle

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