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AI Agent Strategy: Human Augmentation vs In-The-Middle, vs Agentic?

- **Market Size**
  - $29B to $65B in agent spending, 2026 to 2027. Gartner
  - The agentic share of total AI value has already climbed from 17% in 2025 to 22% in 2026, and is on track to reach 39% by 2030. BCG
  - By 2028, an Average Global Fortune 500 Enterprise Will Have Over 150,000 Agents in Use. Gartner
  - 89% expect AI agents to expand workforce capacity, augment teams, or create new roles. Creatio.
- **Deployment**
  - 25% have deployed multi-agent systems, up from 6%. KPMG
  - 49% have defined high-risk use cases where autonomous decision-making by AI agents is not permitted. KPMG
  - 87% of customers want access to a human. Gartner
  - 70% will abandon vendor-custom-built agentic AI by 2028. Gartner
- **Resiliency**
  - 26% can't detect rogue agents. EY
  - 87% burn Hours Re-Verifying Context for AI Agents. Collibra with The Harris Poll
  - Only 5% say their business processes are highly prepared for AI agents, and 43% of leaders expect agentic AI to significantly disrupt their workforces in the coming 12 months. Deloitte



Human augmentation

L1 — **Operator:** The user is in charge at all times and the agent provides support on demand. The authors say the "copilot" metaphor fits this level.

L2 — **Collaborator:** The user and the agent can both plan, delegate, and carry out tasks. The user can take control of the agent's work at any time.

Human-in-the-middle

L3 — **Consultant:** The agent takes the lead on planning and execution. The user gives feedback, preferences, and direction rather than working hands-on.

L4 — **Approver:** The user gets involved only when the agent hits a blocker it can't resolve, such as a failure, missing credentials, or a consequential action that needs sign-off.

Agentic automation

L5 — **Observer:** A fully autonomous agent that plans and executes over long time horizons and makes all decisions itself. Users can monitor activity logs, but their only control is an emergency off-switch.

Source: Kevin Feng, David W. McDonald, and Amy X. Zhang, Levels of Autonomy for AI Agents, 25-15 Knight First Amend. Inst. (July 28, 2025).