

SMART WORKFORCE AI | WHITE PAPER

Human + Agent Delivery

A practical model for assembling skilled people and governed agents around a client situation.

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How should an organization combine skilled people and AI agents without losing accountability, evidence, or client trust?

The useful unit of AI capability is increasingly a delivery cell: people who can frame, decide, design, and work with a client, supported by agents that accelerate analysis and production within defined boundaries. The cell is accountable for a client outcome, not for generating activity.

This white paper is an evidence-informed point of view. It synthesizes published standards and research with practitioner observations of enterprise design and delivery. It does not present proprietary survey results, commissioned vendor research, or market forecasts.

Who this is for

Executives, fractional leaders, consultants, architects, delivery leads, and analysts who are responsible for turning AI ambition into accountable work.

The central position

The wrong way to introduce agentic work is to treat it as an autonomous substitute for skilled delivery. Clients still need people who understand the situation, can make trade-offs visible, and can take responsibility for what is put in front of a sponsor or operating team.

The better model pairs specific human roles with specific agent roles. The human owns the work. The agent has an approved job, data boundary, evaluation method, escalation path, and handoff expectation. This makes the contribution useful, inspectable, and capable of improvement.

Four questions to examine

01 | Define the outcome

Start with a client situation and a useful deliverable: a decision brief, gap map, architecture, workflow, control pack, or delivery roadmap. The unit of work is an outcome, not access to a person or an agent.

02 | Name the human owner

Assign a delivery lead, FDE, architect, or specialist who owns the interpretation of evidence, client communication, consequential decisions, and final handoff.

03 | Give agents bounded roles

Use agents for structured research, evidence handling, comparison, drafting, evaluation support, and repeatable workflow steps. Define what each agent may access, produce, recommend, or escalate.

04 | Retain evidence and supervision

Keep source context, review activity, quality criteria, exceptions, and changes visible enough for the client and delivery team to understand how a material output was produced.

What leaders and practitioners can do next

- + Design a delivery cell around a client outcome before selecting tools or assigning profiles.
- + Write an agent role canvas covering purpose, data boundary, authority, evaluation, and escalation.
- + Require a human owner for every material client deliverable.
- + End each engagement with a reusable artifact and a handoff to the people who will own the work next.

Working principle

Use repeatable structures to make the right questions visible. Adapt them to the client, the evidence, the level of responsibility, and the consequences of getting the decision wrong.

How to read this paper

Smart Workforce AI white papers are designed as practical research briefings. The analysis is intended to support discussion and design work; it is not legal, regulatory, investment, or implementation advice. Readers should test the implications against their own obligations, architecture, data, and operating context.

Selected reference sources

- Microsoft, 2026 Work Trend Index: Agents, human agency, and the opportunity for every organization, 2026.
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Editorial standards

Every public paper identifies its author and publication date, separates observation from recommendation, and avoids vendor placement fees. Where a claim depends on a current source, the source should be reviewed before a decision is made.

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