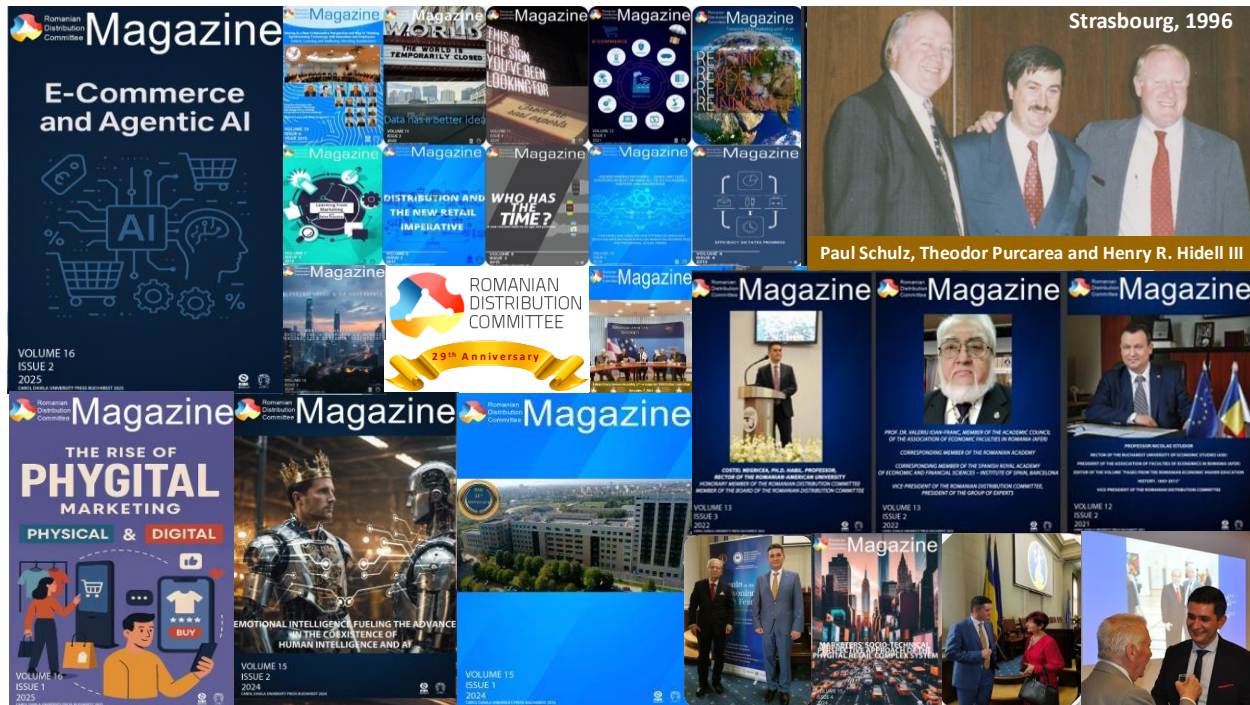


**Editorial: Leaders' Progress on the AI Implementation Path, Continuously Learning to
Agilely Adapt to Evolving Market Trends and Customer Expectations, and
Questioning the Questions**



As a first step in starting evolving is to recognize the adaptability paradox, and overcoming it depends on your people's values and the formulated vision (Cawood, 2024; Brassey and De Smet, 2023), let us underline from the very beginning a quote to remember from the leadership expert John C. Maxwell: *"The pessimist complains about the wind. The optimist expects it to change. The leader adjusts the sails."* Adaptability, viewed from the perspective of purpose and benefits, is furnishing leaders (who are depending on a set of interdependent traits, beginning with thinking strategically) to deal effectively with difficult situations (Jain, 2025).

The accomplished global executive advisor Louisa Loran (2025), who is also a valuable book author (*"Leadership Anatomy in Motion: Empowering You to Lead Through Technology and People"*, Fast Company Press, October 21, 2025), recently highlighted that focusing on what truly drives value (moving from being actively engaged in an activity, and being in control) is essential in the middle of uncertainty and rapid technological change. And to advance on that path to true transformation, it is recommendable to ensure long-term direction with actions' alignment, cultivating a team culture and environment having collaboration as a core value (rising chosen projects' value), and making informed decisions (determining information trustworthiness and usefulness) by carefully examining all relevant potential benefits against potential disadvantages.

According to the Vice President Analyst for Data, Analytics & AI at Gartner, Carlie Idoine (2025), competent leadership and responsible AI deployment must be closely connected by organizations as consistent requirement including within the context of European Union's AI Act, AI literacy being strategic literacy, strategic intelligence being required by executive-level AI literacy so as to ensure AI deployments with long-term business priorities' alignment. Also, Professor Jonathan Armstrong (2025), an acknowledged expert on AI, recently confirmed that AI literacy (defined by European Commission as "the skills, knowledge, and understanding required to interact with AI responsibly") is a legal requirement according to European Union's AI Act (specifically Art. 4), and recommended, beyond other aspects, to both lessen the gravity of AI misuse and to strengthen AI compliance based on a well-planned AI literacy programme.

The leading platform for customer-centric AI for customer experience (CX), Quiq (2025), a CX leaders' major opportunity to drive essential business outcomes and build customer trust and loyalty is represented by Agentic AI (which "exhibit autonomous reasoning, proactive and goal-directed behavior, and a sense of self or agency"), whose adoption is about people (not just about technology), any Agentic AI initiative success depending on CX leaders' ability to create the right team culture. Fundamental AI concepts are shown in the figure below.

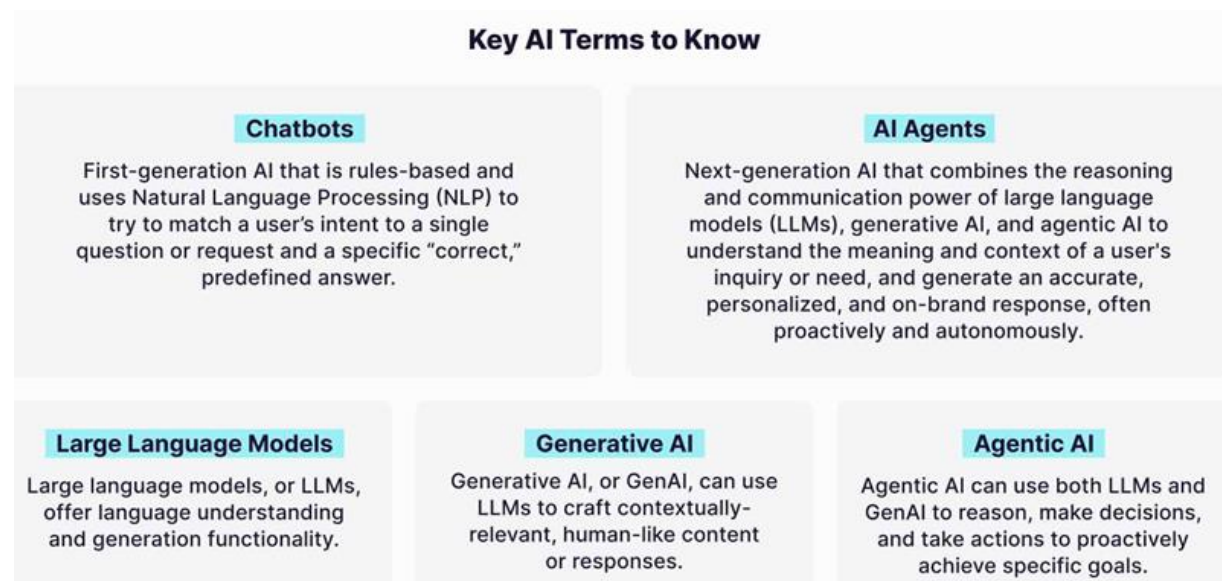


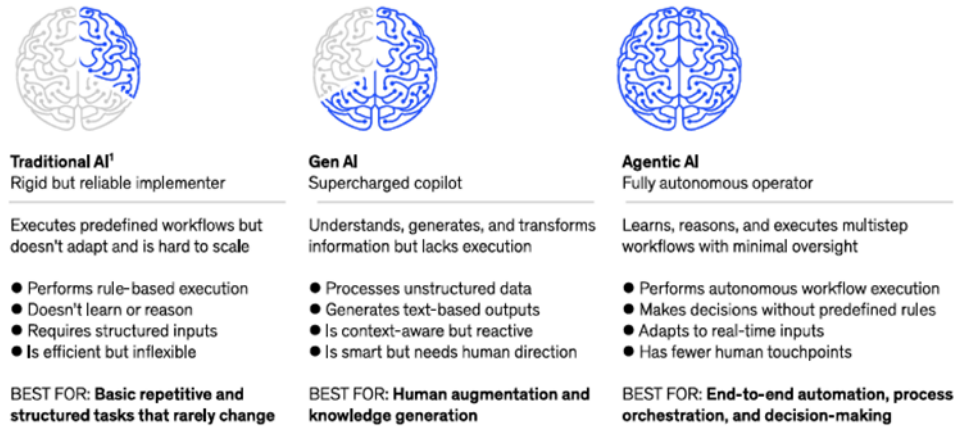
Figure no. 1: Key Terms to Know

Source: Quiq, 2025. *Managing the Change Before the Change. How to Get Your Company on Board with Agentic AI*, p. 3 (work cited)

On the other hand, to select and use the most suitable Agentic AI equipment (as new both technology layer, and operating model) to achieve the best results, it is important to consider AI capabilities' evolution, as shown by McKinsey & Company (Berruti et al., 2025) in the below figure. It was underlined within this framework that AI agents must be treated as corporate citizens, by rethinking from an E2E perspective how decisions are made by AI, ensuring the vigorous growth and flourishing of both AI and human agents based on new management (and cost) structures' creation.

Although AI agents are exciting, it's important to bring the right tool for the job.

Evolution of AI capabilities



¹Comprises traditional automation tools, such as natural language processing, optical-character recognition, and robotic process automation.

McKinsey & Company

Figure no. 2: Although AI Agents are exciting, it's important to bring the right tool for the job

Source: Berruti, F., Hämäläinen, L., Cheta, O., Anant, V. and Lewandowski, D., 2025. When can AI make good decisions? The rise of AI corporate citizens. McKinsey & Company, June 4, p. 2 (work cited)

According to CB Insights (2025), from e-commerce to industrials, AI Agents are moving forward into workflows across verticals, AI agent landscape growing considerably, and the new battlefield for the next wave of AI agents being Voice AI. Also, AI Agent offerings of the Amazon, Microsoft, and Google (the main global cloud providers) are expanded across development tooling (the software development lifecycle being streamlined), hosting (digital assets being made available to users via the network), orchestration (automating both the management and coordination of complex IT systems and workflows), interoperability (built with different frameworks and platforms). And as immediate business risk can be created by AI Agents' failure, hallucination, or unpredictable behavior, a major challenge in the above-mentioned landscape remains AI agent reliability (autonomous systems' consistent ability to accomplish intended tasks without causing unanticipated consequences).

Recently speaking about AI adoption by US grocers (AI being already a powerful force), the CEO at advisory firm Food Sport International, Suzy Monford, showed that if regarding Agentic AI only 20% of retailers are actively executing it, 30% of them are testing AI-driven platforms, while another 30% of retailers are just in the AI discovery and research phase (Feger a, 2025). She also added that Agentic AI (compared with GenAI that produces a lot of results) is about taking action, doing actually a job, and the in-store experience could be reshaped by Agentic AI through (for instance) category management and merchandising, promising in perspective "to be able to... see how the customer is responding to your planogram in real time."

Research findings from a recent report from HubSpot and SurveyMonkey (2025) revealed a growing trust gap despite the accelerating AI adoption, consumer trust (only 19% of consumers feeling excited about AI globally, while 34% feeling concerned, 30% skeptical, and just 29% impressed) around AI use being a must for brands. With regard to leaders' adaptability to the AI landscape, it is worth mentioning that 68% of respondents feel prepared (that includes 32% feeling very prepared and 36% feeling somewhat prepared), the strongest AI readiness being in marketing (77% of leaders), followed by CX (72%), and sales (59%).

Coming back to consumer trust in AI, it is also worth noting that among GenAI users worldwide, according to a January 2025 data from Accenture, the second most preferred source for purchase recommendations is GenAI (following physical store and being followed by social media and online marketplace, friends and family, search engine, and retailer/brand website or app), and compared with retailer/brand websites or apps' use almost double of consumers/users being likely to use GenAI (Feger b, 2025).

According to the Founder of Eglobalis and the European Customer Experience Organization, the global strategist and C-suite adviser Ricardo Saltz Gulko (a, 2025), there is much more to learn about AI's potential, AI adoption needing to be viewed as a continuous journey of innovation, enabling and supporting growth, and making improvements to business's existing elements. Organizations' competitive advantage growing as AI matures can be guaranteed going on that way of evolution in motion, preparing their workforce accordingly (to effectively use and benefit from AI), with AI models based on structured and contextualized data, as well as with committed leadership developing clear policies and continuously identifying, assessing, and prioritizing risks, succeeded by mitigation strategies' implementation. Saltz Gulko (b, 2025) also brought to our attention that in the age of intelligent systems leaders need a balanced approach in responding to situations rapidly and decisively, prioritizing effectively, and focusing on quality (measuring AI's success by customer outcomes and team trust, as well as by long-term loyalty, not only by reducing actual expenditures), both improving CX (after testing and adapting), and redefining serving and connecting based on powerful AI tool introduced as a result of careful planning and intent.

Looking at the challenging coming times as a continuous opportunity to learn and improve, let us close by bringing to our savvy readers' attention some other significant approaches for strategically navigating these times, including as workforce evolution:

- If Padigar et al. (2024) provided managers with advice that value creation can be hindered by eliminating constructive friction, and recommended them to enhance CX by ensuring opportunities' identification to infuse rewarding and preference-based friction (balancing friction decrease and value optimization in their CX designs), Genesys (2025), a reputed leader for omnichannel CX and contact center solution, highlighted that to win in today's competitive CX it is extremely important for brands to benefit of AI-powered experience orchestration, maintaining this way the same progress with rising customer expectations;

- Within the context of AI disruption transforming the nature of work, to have young people prepared for the AI workplace, overcoming confusing transition from school to a career (Goger, Amin and Yancey, 2025), implies a focus on strategically co-investing in ecosystems and addressing navigation gaps, equipping them not only with information and skills, but also with networks and resilience;

- According to Anthropic (2025), being still in the AI-driven economic transformation's early stages, business leaders, public, and public policymakers' actions take now will shape the coming years. Today's patterns of highly concentrated use might still evolve towards a broader distribution, including enabling new forms of economic value creation;

- The persistence (based on social learning and continuous adaptation) of vibe marketing's directly connection to large-scale experimental setups whose creative power is destined to expand being set free by an AI-empowered marketers' new generation (Brinker, 2025; Isenberg, 2025; Yale School of Management, 2025; Valerie, 2025; Voleti, 2025);

- No doubt, Human-AI relationship is becoming more complex, increasing, for instance, AI agents' capability to impact AI-users relationships' deepening (Kirk et al., 2025) or increasing the intensity of discussions on topics such as the role played by AI in our social and emotional world and what is to be done to keep human connection essence as it is (Andersson, 2025);

- According to Drucker Forum Program Outline and Key Questions, AI is one of the reasons we do need a "next" leadership (Global Peter Drucker Forum a, 2025), one of the big overarching themes within the Global Peter Drucker Forum, November 5-7, 2025 Vienna being "The human-technology nexus **Can we use AI to lead better – how to lead AI workers – leading the way to the next society?**" (Global Peter Drucker Forum b, 2025);

- And as both practical experience and systematic investigation (being interconnected) are essential, their importance depending on the context, leaders must be careful about how they ask questions related to solving a problem they are facing. This is because if the framing of the problem is, for instance, too narrow, the question asked may be wrong, and even if the answer may seem good, it is still the wrong answer to the wrong question (De Smet and Koller, 2025). This is why it is advisable to question the questions, inviting to a constructive debate that allows to counteract the reformulation effect starting from challenging the definition of the problem you are facing. Which is also valid in the case of capitalizing on the increasing use of GenAI and Agentic AI.

Theodor Valentin Purcărea

Editor-in-Chief

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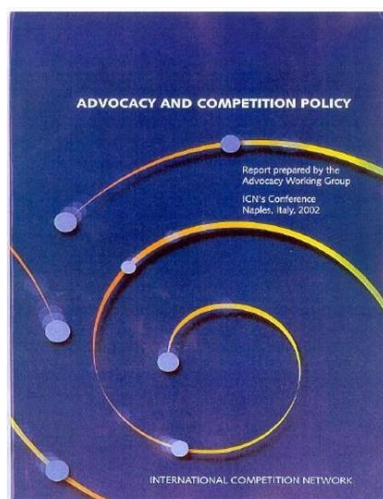
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