

WHITEPAPER

# The Autonomous Business Services Revolution

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**Josh Kahn**

SVP and GM, Core Business Workflows

# Forward

Tomorrow's leading enterprises won't scale by throwing more labor at processes or adding more point solutions —they'll scale by adding intelligence.

For GBS and shared services leaders, this paper introduces Autonomous Business Operations: a new way of working that overcomes the manual grind of yesterday.

For employees, it means faster access to the information and help they need. For business leaders, it means stronger business outcomes at dramatically lower cost.

**Scale the old way and you get more grind. Scale with ServiceNow Autonomous Business Operations and you unlock growth.**



## Josh Kahn

SVP and GM,  
Core Business Workflows  
ServiceNow

## Meet the author

Josh Kahn leads ServiceNow's Core Business Workflows business, helping global enterprises transform how HR, Finance, Legal, Facilities, and Supply Chain operate on a single platform powered by AI.

Since joining in 2016, Josh has scaled multiple businesses at ServiceNow, including Creator Workflows into the company's second \$1B+ workflow. With leadership experience at EMC, Veritas/Symantec, Netscape, Accenture, and several startups.

Josh brings decades of perspective on how technology reshapes work, and how leaders can turn disruption into opportunity.

# Contents

Introduction	4
History doesn't repeat, but it often rhymes	4
From automation to autonomous operations	6
The role of humans is evolving—not disappearing	7
The cross-functional advantage	8
Autonomous procurement	9
Autonomous finance	10
Autonomous human resources	11
Autonomous global business services (GBS)	12
From AI to autonomous business operations—with ServiceNow	14
Conclusion: Welcome to the autonomous enterprise	15

# Introduction

Agentic AI isn't just the next phase of automation—it's the foundation of Autonomous Business Operations. This ServiceNow perspective explores how Agentic AI is reshaping line-of-business processes—and the deep impact it will have on employees, functional leaders, and the organizations they power.

## History doesn't repeat, but it often rhymes.

Consider the switchboard operator—once essential to modern business, then made obsolete by technology. But that shift didn't eliminate work; it redefined it. It unlocked productivity gains and opened doors for a new workforce—primarily women—to take on more impactful roles.

Today, we stand at a similar inflection point, one where technology doesn't just automate tasks, but sets the stage for a new model of business operations. Autonomous operations reimagines how companies operate, how people engage with work, and what roles humans will play in delivering value.

This isn't just automation—it's a redefinition of work itself. This scale of change brings both opportunity and uncertainty. For business leaders, the challenge is adapting operating models to meet the pace of AI. For employees, it's understanding how their roles and skills fit in a rapidly evolving workplace.



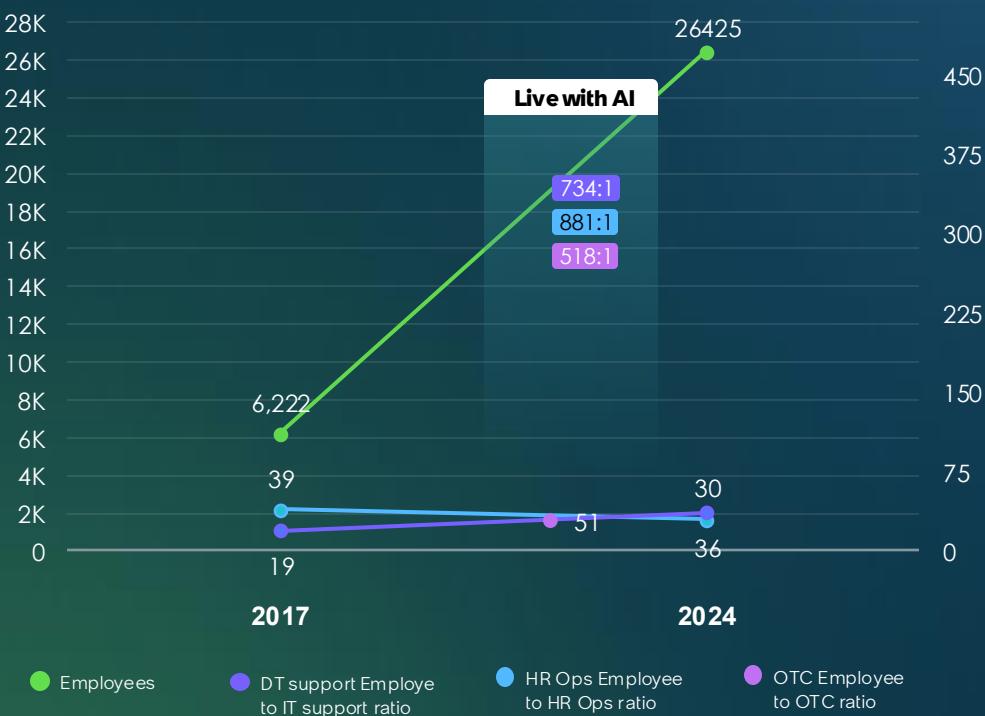
# We're not just building the platform—we're running the business on it."

—Nate Aschenbach  
VP Global Business Services, ServiceNow



## We're supporting employees at scale

ServiceNow growth – employees compared to support personnel



In 2023, AI improved support ratios without added headcount—powered entirely by ServiceNow's own platform.

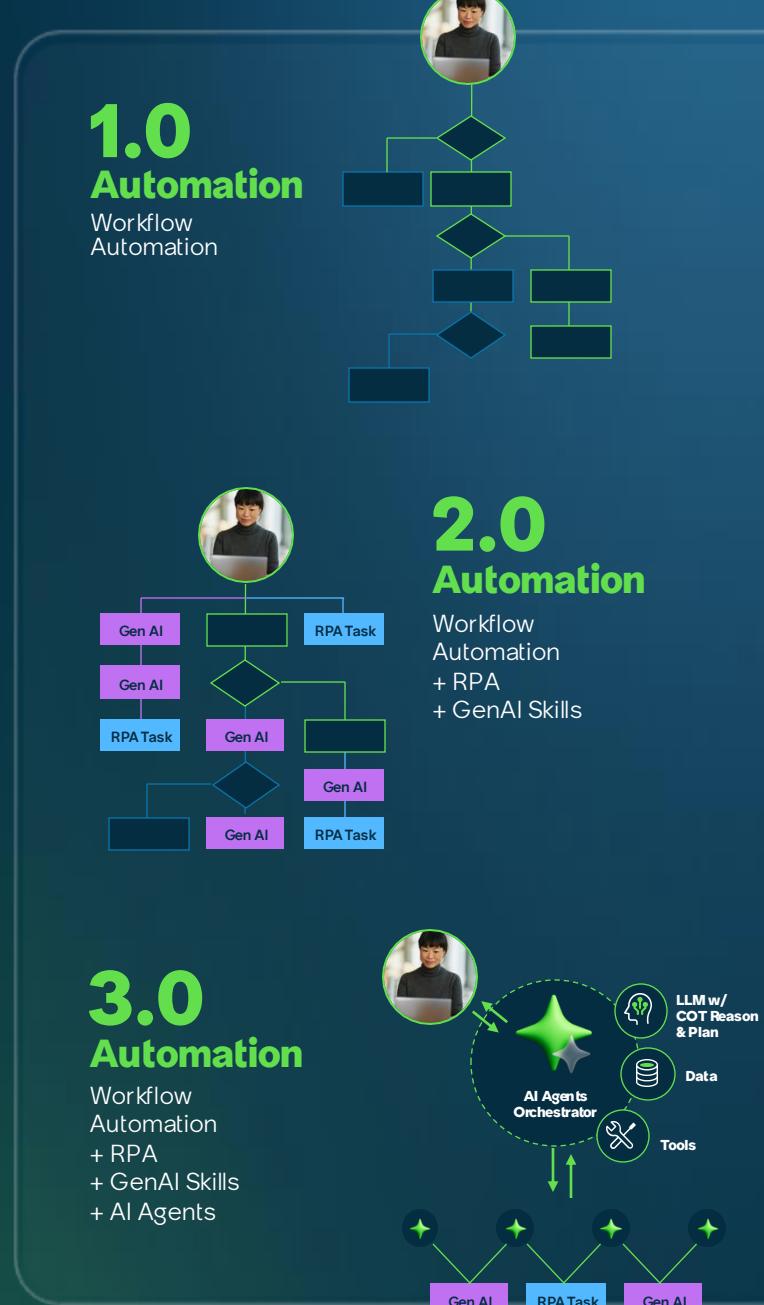
# From automation to autonomous operations

For decades, automation was solely about efficiency, using tools to reduce effort, speed execution, and cut cost. Agentic AI is about autonomy. Together, they enable Autonomous Business Operations, where processes don't just run faster, they run themselves.

Automation 1.0 introduced isolated tools that delivered targeted efficiencies. Then came Automation 2.0—process orchestration. Systems were connected, workflows streamlined, and execution accelerated. But the structure of work remained the same: people still filled out forms, triaged tickets, and chased approvals.

Agentic AI marks the next evolution—**Automation 3.0**. It's not just smarter automation—it's an entirely new paradigm. Existing workflows and playbooks now become the training ground for AI agents that participate in operations—gathering data, enforcing policy, recommending actions, and escalating issues often with minimal or no human intervention.

**It's essential to recognize that these capabilities don't exist in isolation. The future of enterprise automation depends on the ability to support all three levels—task, process, and agentic—so organizations can scale transformation at the pace that's right for them.**



# The role of humans is evolving—not disappearing

As orchestration matures, AI agents won't just manage workflows—they'll begin to create them. End-to-end agentic workflows are emerging, freeing people to focus on what only humans can do: strategic thinking, judgment, relationship building, and creativity.

That doesn't mean people fade into the background. In an autonomous operating model, they move to the cockpit, guiding outcomes instead of chasing tasks.

With repetitive execution offloaded to AI, human roles are shifting toward decision-making and impact. Managers will focus on improving outcomes—monitoring SLAs, analyzing KPIs, and fine-tuning AI performance. Individual contributors will become orchestrators—not of teams, but of AI agents.

**But this isn't just about offloading tasks. Agents are not only executing work—they're reimaging how it gets done. They reason faster, adapt quickly, and enhance human thinking in the process.**



These shifts will look different across domains—but the common thread is a move from task completion to higher-value work, driven by insight, innovation, and human connection—the real source of sustained competitive advantage.

In procurement, that could mean co-innovating with suppliers. In HR, it might involve curating personalized employee journeys. Talent strategies will evolve—hiring for strategic thinking and AI fluency. And as AI documents and codifies processes, institutional knowledge becomes scalable and more accessible to early-career employees.

# The cross-functional advantage

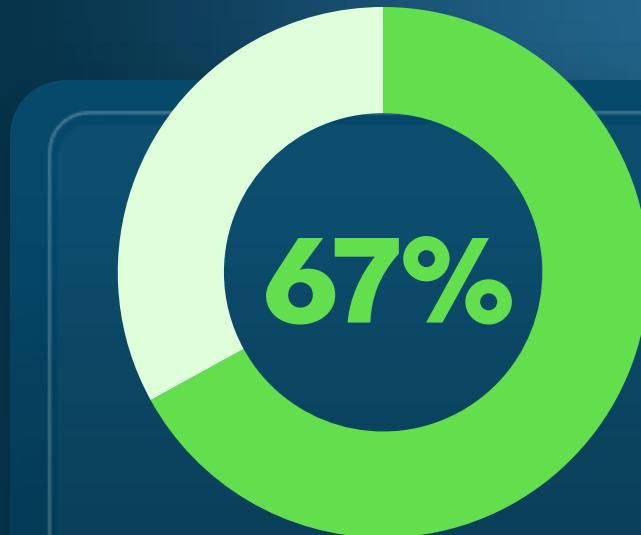
Autonomous Business Operations doesn't just supercharge Finance, HR, Procurement, and GBS individually—it unifies them into one intelligent operating fabric. By embedding intelligence directly into workflows, not just tools, it dissolves the traditional functional boundaries that have long fragmented enterprise operations.

No matter how your organization is structured—GBS, shared services, or standalone functions—Agentic AI enables a new model of work: functionally agnostic, insight-connected, and experience-driven. Agents move across silos, surface shared context, and help teams operate with unified purpose.

And just as organizations have long struggled with functional fragmentation, AI has often followed suit—deployed in disconnected copilots, agents, and point solutions that don't talk to each other. Agentic AI offers a way to unify both the work and the intelligence that drives it.

This isn't just automation—it's a rethinking of how work flows, how resources are deployed, and how business partners engage.

**And the business value is clear.**



**67%**  
of executives reported margin gains due to AI

Source: ServiceNow's 2025 Enterprise AI Maturity Index

In ServiceNow's 2025 Enterprise AI Maturity Index, **67% of executives reported margin gains due to AI**. The transformation is measurable—and already underway.

This shift begins at the process level—within the core workflows that power Finance, Procurement, and HR—and then scales outward to unify how work gets done across the enterprise.

# Autonomous procurement

This is how autonomous business operations come to life in procurement.

AI Agents are reshaping procurement and accounts payable by taking over tedious, high-volume, rules-based tasks—like request intake, supplier onboarding, PO revisions, and invoice matching. This eases the burden on teams and surfaces insights that drive smarter supplier management and procurement strategy.

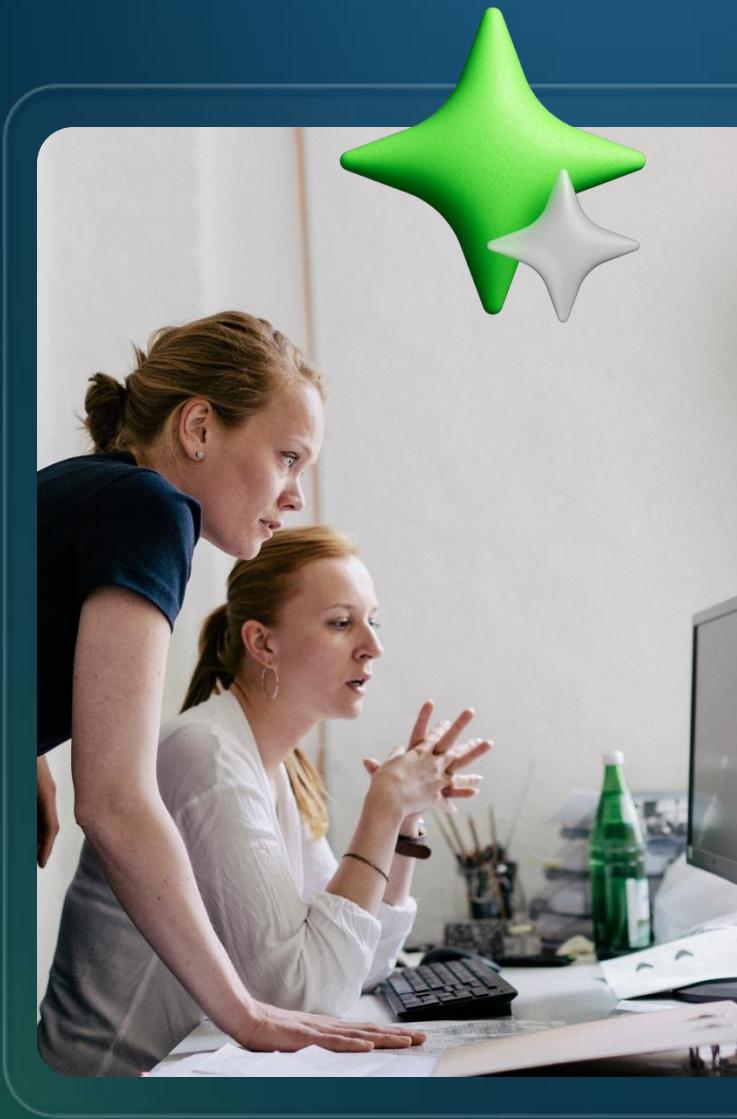
Beyond automation, agentic AI is beginning to enhance strategic workflows—augmenting human expertise in spend analytics, supplier selection and negotiations, contract review, ESG compliance, and exception or crisis management.

Over time, AI agents will autonomously manage purchase orders and invoicing—navigating policy, compliance, and exceptions—freeing procurement teams to focus on co-innovation, supplier relationships, and performance management.

## Agentic AI is ushering in a new era of intelligent procurement.

As procurement shifts from process execution to market shaping, teams will take on new roles—advising on pricing models, managing dynamic partnerships, and co-creating value with suppliers. This evolution also creates demand for specialists in policy, collaboration, and AI governance.

Companies using AI in the procurement function can **reduce costs by 15-45%** depending on category **and eliminate up to 30% of the work.\***



\*Source: [GenAI in Procurement: From Buzz to Bottom-Line Cost Reductions](#) by Wolfgang Schnellbächer, Tyler Vigen, and Yulia Oleynikova

# Autonomous finance

This is how autonomous business operations come to life in finance.

Finance teams are beginning to evolve from compliance hubs into strategic accelerators—and Agentic AI is set to accelerate this shift by eliminating the manual effort of assembling reports, reconciling data, interpreting KPIs, and preparing statements—freeing teams from cobbling together insights and enabling them to focus on activating business levers that drive the bottom line.

Today, finance plays three critical roles:

1. **Strategic planning**  
through resource allocation
2. **Safeguarding growth**  
by managing cash flow and spend
3. **Operational control**  
through timely, accurate reporting

**71%**  
of CFOs report that AI has  
already improved employee  
productivity  
yet only ~20 % of finance  
functions have adopted Gen AI

**20-40%**

capacity freed for  
strategic activities  
(across finance)

**50%+**

Improved  
forecast  
accuracy

Agentic AI is already augmenting many of these areas, including:

- **Data collection and validation:**  
Recording transactions and verifying financial data
- **Account reconciliation:**  
Handling adjustments, journal entries, and asset assessments

## Financial statement preparation:

Compiling data, generating reports, and drafting narratives

To enable full autonomy, organizations must establish foundational conditions, such as:

- A unified, AI-ready data layer
- Robust monitoring, audit, and fraud detection systems
- Clear AI governance and guardrails

The outcome is an autonomous finance engine—capable of hands-free accounting, auto-reconciliation, and AI-generated reporting. As agentic AI expands into FP&A and treasury, routine tasks like cash flow management and transaction processing will be increasingly offloaded. This will reposition finance as a proactive, value-generating partner that is agile, resilient, and tightly aligned with growth.

Source: [Gen AI: A guide for CFOs](#)

# Autonomous human resources

This is how autonomous business operations come to life in HR.

AI is helping HR shift from reacting to employee challenges to shaping talent strategy. As AI agents become fluent in policies, workflows, and organizational context, they're taking over high-volume, rules-based tasks—like updating employee records, verifying rewards eligibility, handling locale-specific exceptions, and surfacing internal process guidance. Employees can now describe their need in natural language, and AI takes it from there.

But AI isn't built for nuance. It excels at structure and speed—not empathy or ethical judgment. That's why the most effective HR models pair AI-driven efficiency with human-centered care. For example, while an AI agent can process a parental leave request, a human HR partner is essential for more complex situations like international relocation or medical concerns. This is the essence of an agentic workflow—AI handles the predictable, HR handles the personal.

**1.8** hours per day

**9.3** hours per week

Spent searching for information

Source: McKinsey

## Unlocking impact from GenAI

Employee engagement grows

**3X**

Source: BCG

HR retention improves by

**25%**

## To support this shift, HR structures must evolve:

- Generalist models will give way to specialized, strategic roles
- Administrative tasks will diminish
- Supervisors will move from managing queues to orchestrating holistic employee experiences
- AI-generated insights will help onboard talent and preserve institutional knowledge

## Looking ahead, AI agents will become more proactive—

- Flagging flight risks
- Recommending timely interventions
- Helping close skill gaps

HR business partners will stop reacting to attrition and start designing environments that retain, develop, and inspire. Ultimately, HR will move from enabling transactions to architecting a dynamic talent ecosystem—one that fosters mobility, flexibility, and purpose across the workforce.

# Autonomous global business services (GBS)

This is how autonomous business operations come to life in GBS.

GBS sits at the center of large enterprise transformation—connecting front, middle, and back-office workflows across IT, Procurement, Finance, and HR to reflect how work really happens across employees, customers, and partners. Once focused solely on cost and standardization, today's GBS is evolving into a strategic driver of enterprise-wide value and transformation.

AI agents are accelerating this shift—not just simplifying work, but enabling organizations to manage complexity at scale. GBS leaders must navigate fragmented systems, regions, languages, and delivery models. AI brings structure to that complexity: understanding intent, triggering workflows, pulling data, enforcing policies, and making routine decisions with speed and consistency.

**But this isn't just about efficiency—it's a new model for executing work globally.**

One that scales without added headcount. One that standardizes where possible, adapts where needed, and unlocks visibility across functions, geographies, and partners

**As a result:**

- Administrative roles will shrink
- GBS models will shift from high-volume Tier 1 support to AI-driven triage
- Teams will organize around journeys like Source-to-Pay and Hire-to-Retire
- Enterprises will prioritize platforms that consolidate functionality and enable cross-functional coordination.
- BPOs will evolve from labor-based scale to value-based delivery—reshaping contracts and expectations.

## What it looks like in action:

Siemens GBS has already automated **over 1M hours** across HR, finance, and procurement operations—

accelerating workflows, enhancing employee experience, and enabling the shift from workforce-led to technology-led service delivery.

# Autonomous GBS (continued)

These shifts are most impactful during inflection points—moments when businesses need to scale, pivot, or integrate fast. With AI at the core, GBS can turn disruption into opportunity:

## Mergers & acquisitions:

AI accelerates integration by automating process mapping and harmonizing systems (ERP, CRM, HR). Agents guide change management via real-time communication and embedded KPIs to track execution against business goals.

## Divestitures:

AI identifies affected workflows and data boundaries to enable clean carve-outs. Agents help triage dependencies, automate handoffs, and ensure continuity for both the divested and remaining entities.

## Onboarding & offboarding:

AI coordinates cross-functional workflows across IT, HR, Finance, and Facilities—streamlining access, enforcing policies, and personalizing experiences to reduce time-to-productivity and mitigate attrition risk.

## Portfolio reshaping:

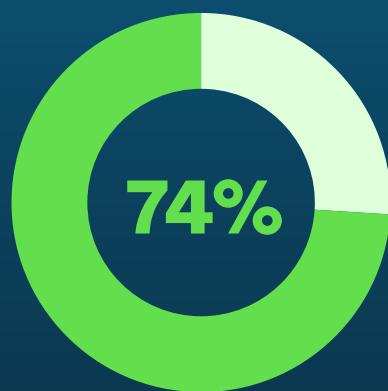
As companies spin out or restructure, AI surfaces performance insights, flags redundancies, and helps reconfigure services at speed—improving agility in dynamic markets.

## Global reorganizations:

AI continuously monitors KPIs and workforce signals to detect friction early, route workflows dynamically, and support communication through chatbots and automated guidance—positioning GBS as a stabilizing force, not a bottleneck.

No longer reactive or back-office, GBS now plays a central role in how businesses operate, scale, and grow.

With AI at its core, **74% of GBS leaders** say their top priority is enabling business outcomes—not just reducing cost.\*



\*Source: ServiceNow 2025 Global Business Services Benchmark Report

# From AI to autonomous business operations—with ServiceNow

ServiceNow has spent years capturing structured process data across every corner of the enterprise—support requests, task flows, and service interactions that reflect how work actually gets done. Agentic AI brings this history to life, transforming that data into dynamic guidance, reducing cycle times, and enabling autonomous operations with built-in intelligence.

The shift to Agentic AI isn't just about new technology—it's about choosing the right platform to operationalize it. ServiceNow is uniquely positioned to help lead this transformation. Unlike generic AI that focuses on summarization or isolated agentic use cases, our platform is purpose-built to automate and optimize enterprise workflows—embedding governance, visibility, and agility into the fabric of work.

Most critically, AI doesn't eliminate the need for oversight—it increases the stakes. Our platform gives teams the tools to govern agents, audit decisions, and shape outcomes in real time. What was once a service console becomes the cockpit for AI operations—where leaders monitor agent performance, enforce policy, and intervene with precision.

With ServiceNow, autonomy isn't aspirational, it's operational. This is how leaders shape autonomous business operations with clarity and trust.

**In a world where AI demands context, control, and trust, ServiceNow delivers all three.**

**In a world of growing tool sprawl—**

**80+  
systems per enterprise**

ServiceNow brings AI, data, and workflows together in one platform, turning chaos into coordinated execution.

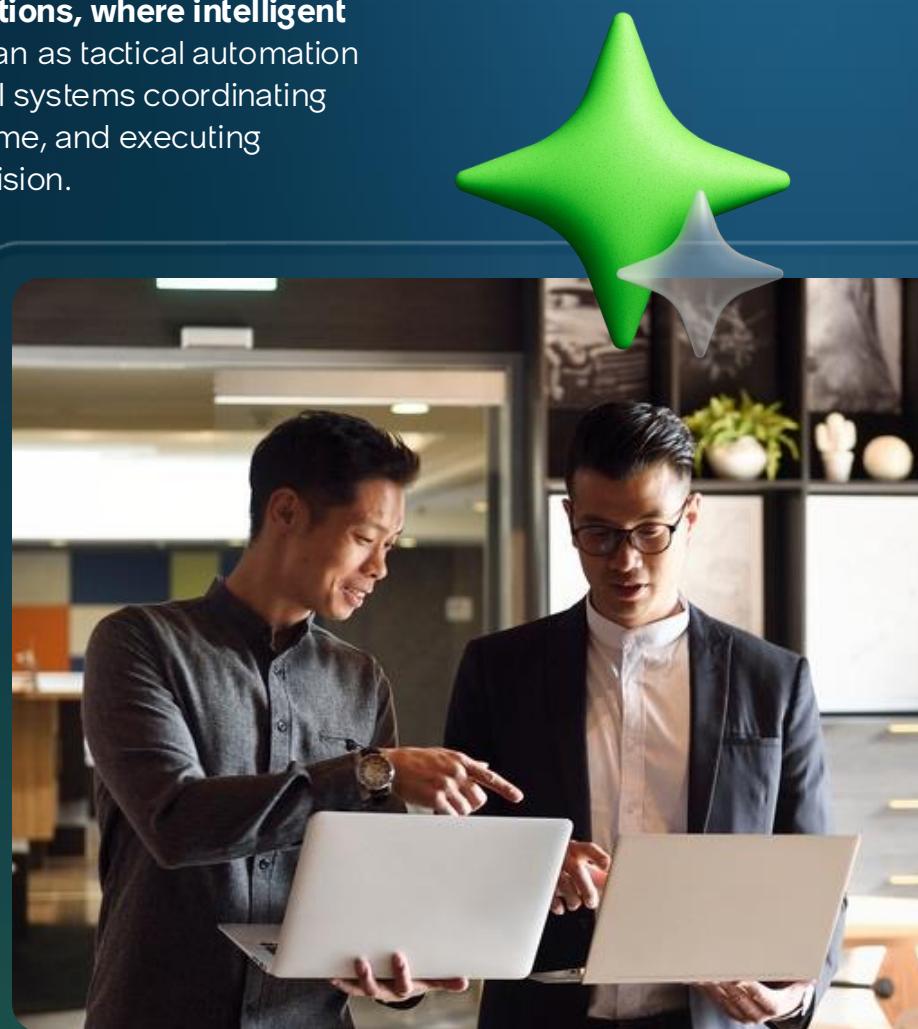
# Conclusion: Welcome to the autonomous enterprise

**Welcome to Autonomous Business Operations, where intelligent systems amplify human impact.** What began as tactical automation has evolved into intelligent orchestration—AI systems coordinating across functions, surfacing insights in real time, and executing end-to-end processes with speed and precision.

But transformation isn't just about the technology—it's about what it enables. When AI handles the routine, people are freed to lead, strategize, and innovate. Teams become orchestrators of outcomes. Processes become platforms for growth.

This shift is already underway. Leading organizations are resolving thousands of requests per month with AI agents, scaling service delivery without adding headcount, and unlocking new capacity across Finance, HR, and Procurement.

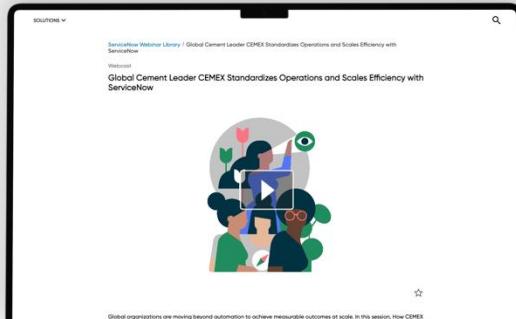
Those that move now won't just adapt—they'll accelerate. They'll rethink GBS as a driver of value, empower talent with intelligent workflows, and build the operational agility to lead through change.



**It's not just about adopting AI—it's about choosing the right way to operationalize it.**

## Webinar: CEMEX + ServiceNow

Watch here



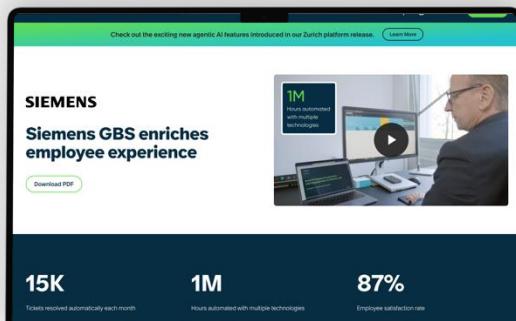
## AI transformation guide

Read the guide



## Siemens GBS customer story

Learn more



## Explore next steps

Learn more

