

HR AI Architecture: Workflows vs. Agents

While “agentic AI” is currently hyped, 80–90% of HR functions are better served by deterministic workflows. Choosing the wrong architecture leads to 300–500% budget overruns and significant legal risks due to “black box” decision-making.

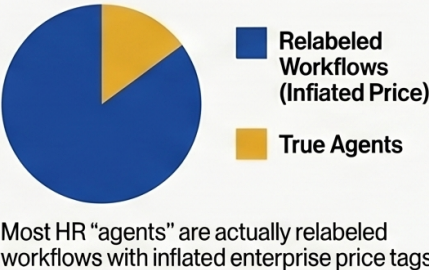
Workflows: Human-Owned Logic



Practitioners define fixed sequences of steps where humans own the decision tree.



85% Architecture Mismatch

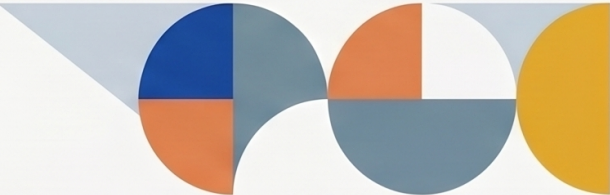
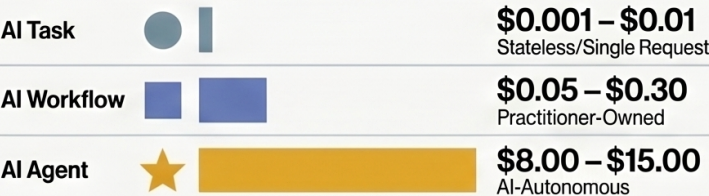


Agents: AI-Owned Logic



Systems receive a goal and autonomously determine their own path to execution.

Economic & Operational Footprint



The Decision Framework

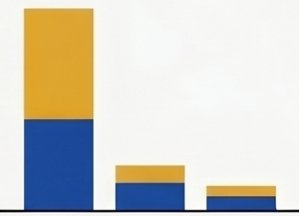
The IF-THEN Test

If you can map comprehensive rules for the task, a workflow outperforms an agent.

Comprehensive Rules Map	Comprehensive Rules Map = Workflow Outperforms
Workflow Outperforms	No Clear Rules = Agent Potential

3–10x Cost Multiplier

Agents require massive computational overhead; only use when dynamic path selection adds unique value.



High-Stakes Auditability

Workflows ensure procedural justice; agents often struggle to explain specific adverse decisions to regulators.

