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AI Platforms Group

AI Agents, and the Model Context Protocol

AI Platforms Group Briefing

Tom Martin, David Heurtaux, Kiran Ikram,
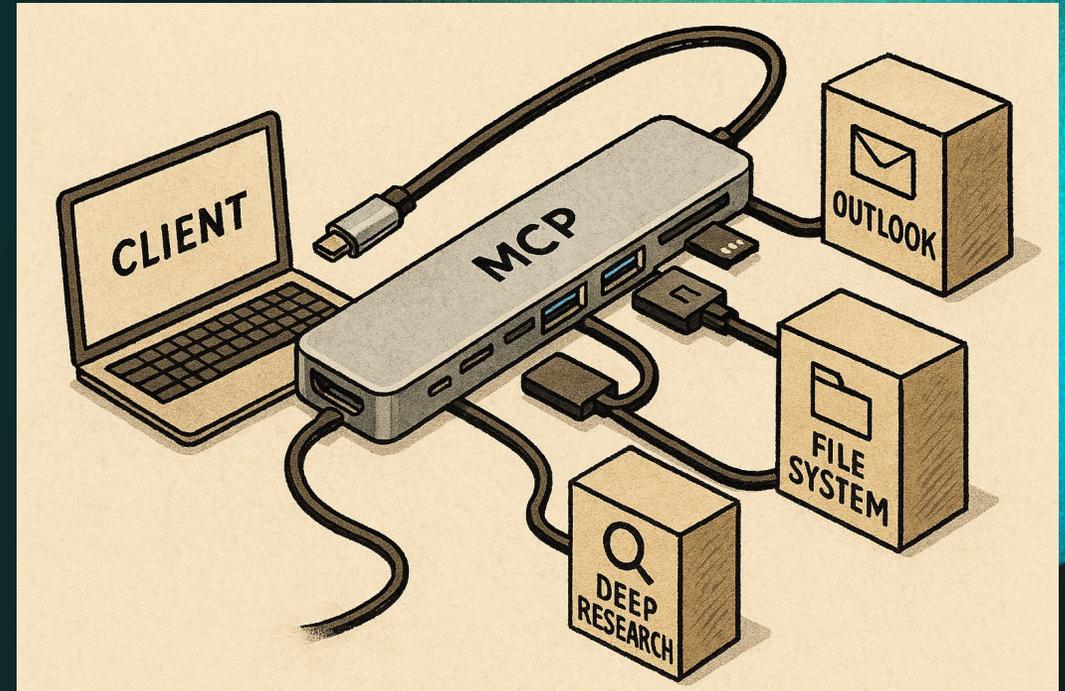Dan Sack, Djon Kleine, Niels Degrande

APRIL 2025

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The open-source Model Context Protocol (MCP) launched by Anthropic is growing in popularity. In four short months it has been adopted by OpenAI, Microsoft, Google, Amazon, and others marking a shift in how AI Agents observe, plan, and act with their environments.

But how does it make AI Agents more reliable, safe and enterprise-ready?

This short brief unpacks how AI Agents are evolving, MCPs role, and why it's a meaningful step towards agentic abundance

Source: Prompted in ChatGPT 4o

01

How are Agents evolving?

02

Where do they have product-market-fit?

03

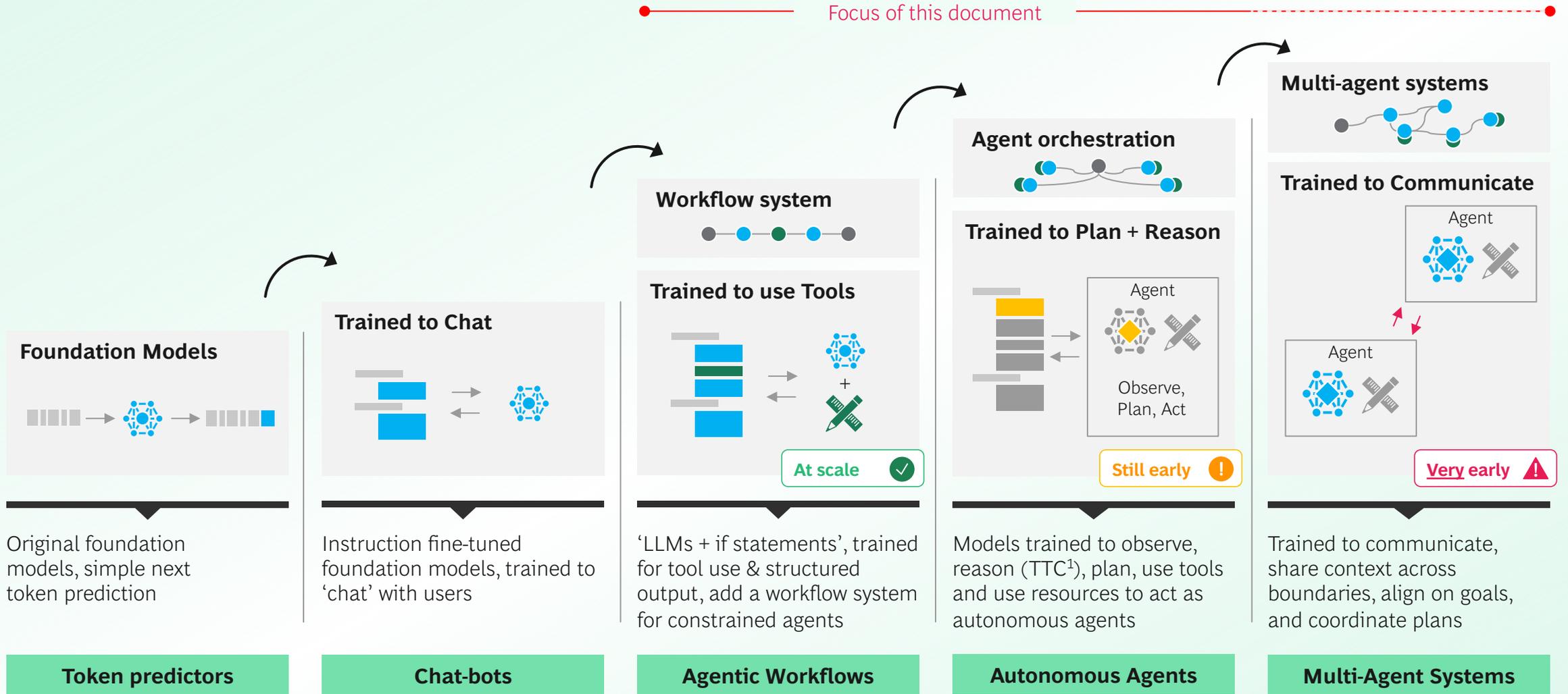**Can they be reliable and effective?**

04

MCP's role and building at scale

01 How are Agents evolving?

We are moving beyond 'agentic if-statements', towards autonomous agents

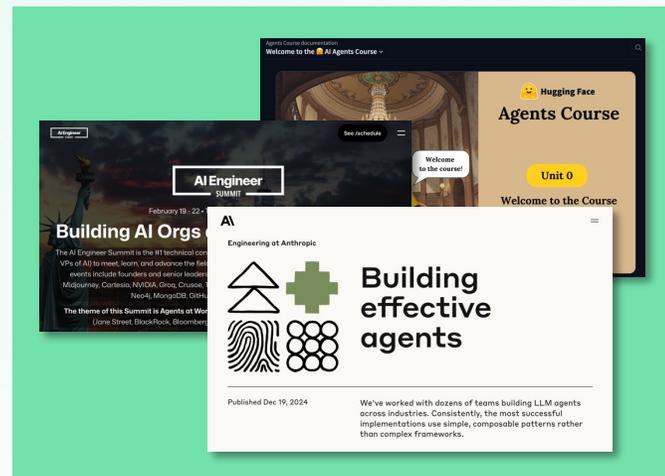Focus of this document

Foundation Models

Trained to Chat

Workflow system

Trained to use Tools

At scale ✓

Agent orchestration

Trained to Plan + Reason

Agent

Observe, Plan, Act

Still early !

Multi-agent systems

Trained to Communicate

Agent

Agent

Very early ⚠

Original foundation models, simple next token prediction

Instruction fine-tuned foundation models, trained to 'chat' with users

'LLMs + if statements', trained for tool use & structured output, add a workflow system for constrained agents

Models trained to observe, reason (TTC[1]), plan, use tools and use resources to act as autonomous agents

Trained to communicate, share context across boundaries, align on goals, and coordinate plans

| **Token predictors** | **Chat-bots** | **Agentic Workflows** | **Autonomous Agents** | **Multi-Agent Systems** |

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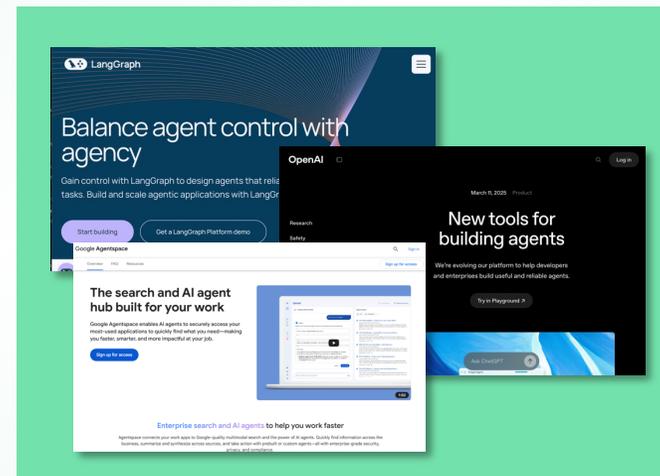# Techniques, frameworks and proof-points are maturing rapidly …

As techniques are shared, community grows

Industry-wide knowledge and training on how to build agents is growing, and being shared, leading to fast feedback cycles. With Anthropic, Pydantic, Langchain, Hugging face and others publishing detailed guides and training, and AI Engineering growing as a community
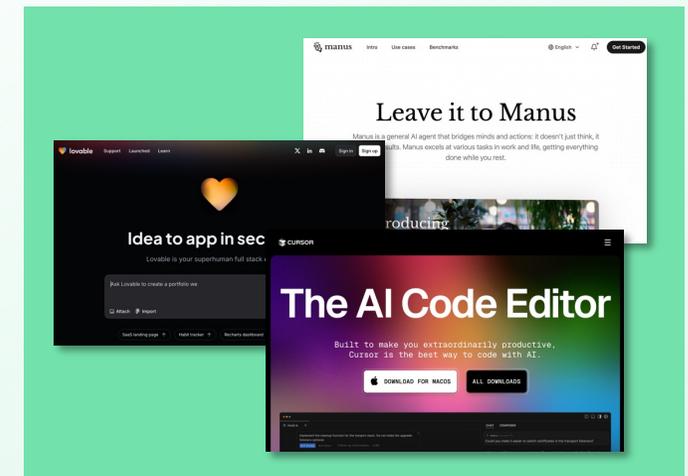

Agentic Frameworks lift the tide for all

It is getting faster and easier to build, deploy, and monitor agents. Established players are evolving (e.g. OAI Assistants, Copilot, Agentspace, Bedrock agents), new players entering the game (e.g. Cloudflare, Pydantic), and low-code platforms growing (e.g. Lindy, Dust.tt)

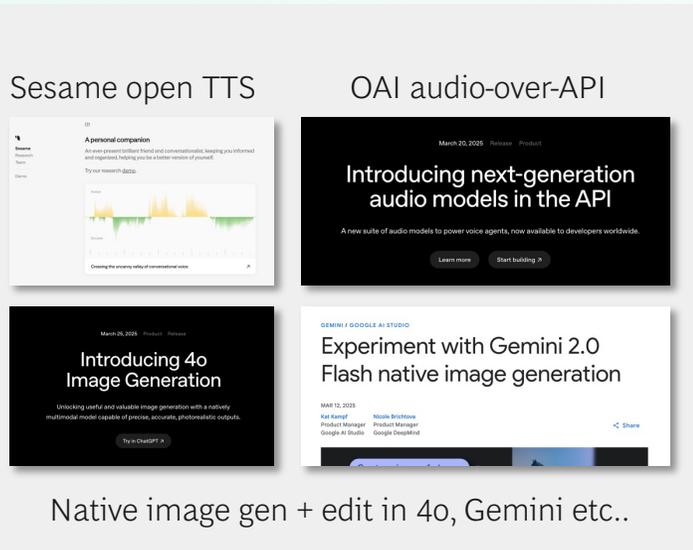## Proof-points are visible, compelling, and growing

The first commercial agents are here, and generating meaningful revenue. From vibe-coders (v0, Cursor, Loveable, Bolt, Replit, Claude code), to consumer agents (e.g. Operator, Manus, and the many deep research's), to vertical B2B players (e.g. Intercom)

Source: Anthropic; Google; Microsoft; Amazon; HuggingFace; AI Engineering Summit; Langchain; OpenAI; Cursor; Manus; Lovalbe ai
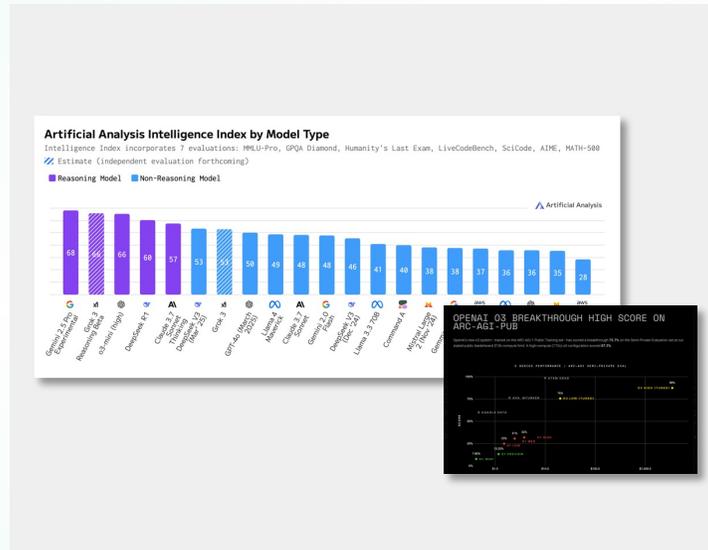
… and the underlying models are getting better and better

More modalities unlock more opportunity

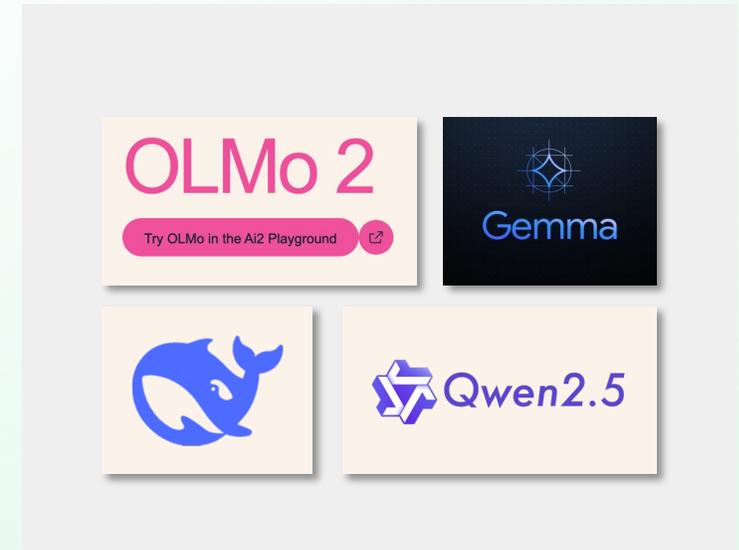Voice goes mainstream, native image gen and edit has gone viral, and video continues to evolve

Sesame open TTS   OAI audio-over-API

Native image gen + edit in 4o, Gemini etc..

Better reasoning from Test-Time-Compute

+81%	**5 of 10**

Performance on ARC-AGI 1 in 6 months

5 of top 10 models are 'reasoning', and dominating leaderboards

Artificial Analysis Intelligence Index by Model Type

Open innovation is driving cost down, and perf. up

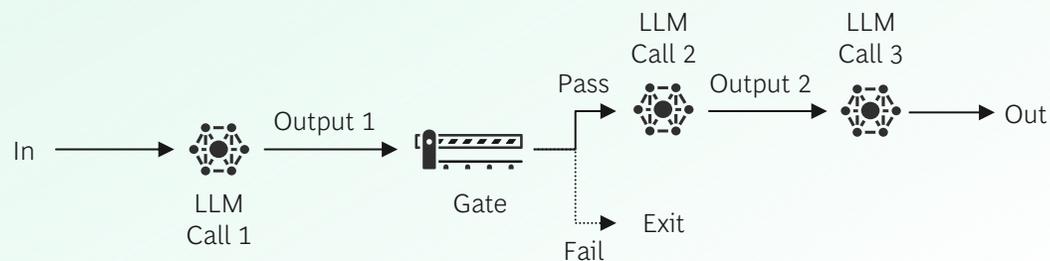| **~8-10**	**10x**

Open source models matching 2024 GPT-4 performance

Reduction in cost per token for frontier performance

This maturity is driving a shift from predefined workflows to self-directed agents
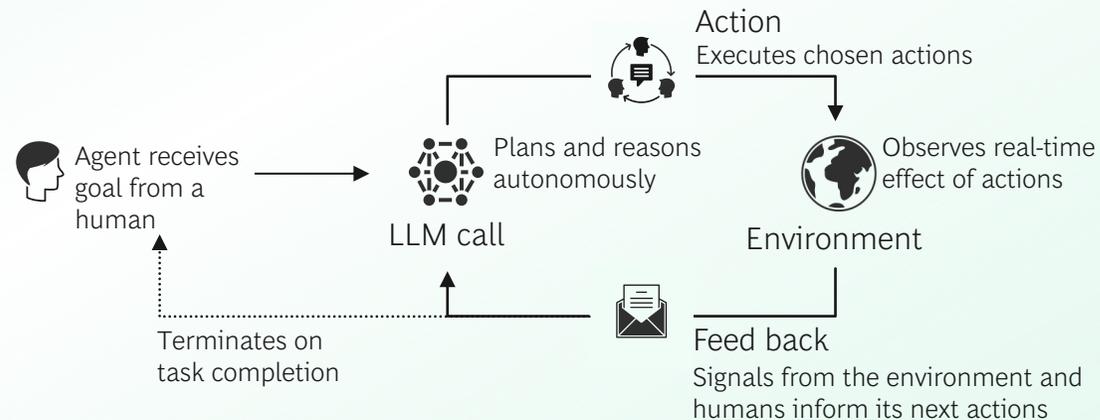
Agentic Workflows

A common type of workflow, **prompt chaining** involves decomposing a task into a sequence of steps, where each LLM call processes the output of the previous one

- Are helpful when process consistency matters
- Good for problems where domain intelligence is valuable
- Are more predictable, but less adaptable to new inputs

Autonomous Agents
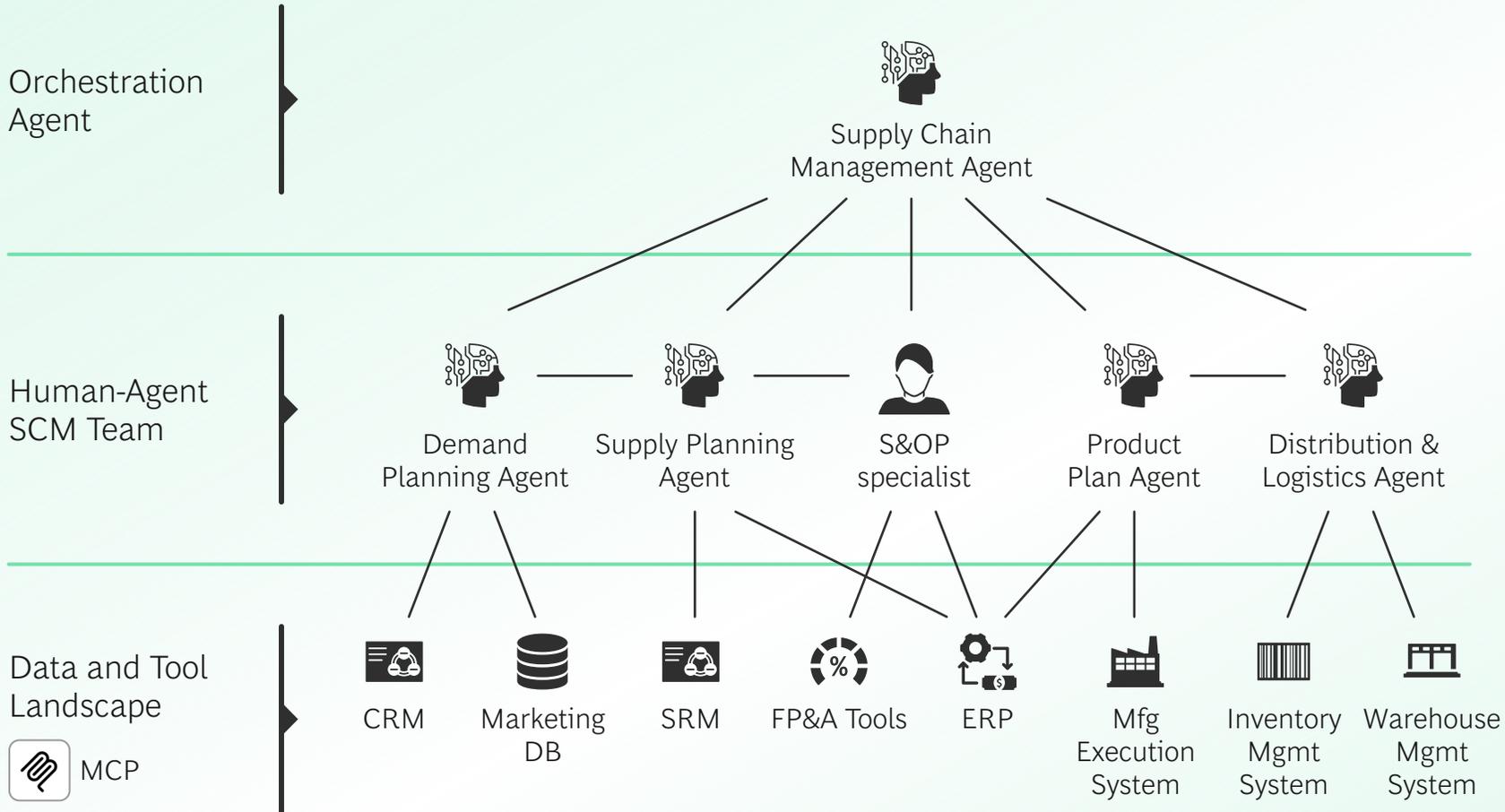
A common type of agent, involves **autonomous reasoning**, acting, and learning from feedback, where each LLM call is informed by real-time signals from its environment and previous actions

- Are helpful when process flexibility matters
- Good for problems where general intelligence is valuable
- Are less predictable, but can adapt to user needs

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Are we headed for a multi-agent future?

Orchestration Agent

Supply Chain Management Agent

Human-Agent SCM Team

Demand Planning Agent | Supply Planning Agent | S&OP specialist | Product Plan Agent | Distribution & Logistics Agent

Data and Tool Landscape

MCP

CRM | Marketing DB | SRM | FP&A Tools | ERP | Mfg Execution System | Inventory Mgmt System | Warehouse Mgmt System

Agents can work together in networks and with humans to accomplish complex tasks or automate multi-step processes

EXAMPLE

Advanced E2E Supply Chain Management

A human-agent team that coordinates input from multiple agents to manage the supply chain process end-to-end. MCP helps expose data and tools

Avoid 'microservices' thinking, focus on collaboration and networks ⚠️

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02 Where do they have
product-market-fit?

Coding agents among the first to reach product-market-fit

Vibe-coding players are moving fast and capturing the software development market, accelerating software time to market

Company	ARR	User Growth
CURSOR	$100M by the end of 2024	~40,000 active paying customers by end 2024, surged to 360,000 users currently
replit	$28M (2025 estimate)	30M users by Sep'24, approaching 40M users currently
bolt	$20M in 2 months	>100,000 weekly users in first 4 weeks (Nov'24) Currently at 3M registered users
lovable	$17M in 3 months	3000 initial paying customers 500,000 users since launch in Nov'24
V0 windsurf		Extends to other vendors, data not available

To move from prototyping to production, vibe coding must mature

Code needs to be modular and maintainable

Requires integration with version control, CI/CD pipelines

Must meet enterprise-grade stds: auth, data protection, auditing etc.

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Organizations are already gaining significant value from agentic workflows

Bloomberg

Bloomberg's compliance agents rigorously check facts, catch edge-case risks and minimize exposure to costly mistakes. Agents execute structured workflows, **reducing time-to-decision by 30-50%**

Booking.com
Jane Street

Booking.com' and **Jane Street's** coding agents reclaim developer time – culling dead code, cleaning up cruft, assist with code reviews and cut cycle times by **30%+**

Brightwave

Brightwave's research agents turn 10,000 pages of legal and financial text into crisp decision-ready takeaways- on demand, and at scale. Agents are able to cross reference diverse data sources in real-time, continuously refining their own output

BCG BOSTON CONSULTING GROUP

BCG delivered 300+ GenAI agents across 100+ clients, unlocking up to 90% cost reduction, 50–75% faster execution, and **30–40% productivity uplift** across critical business functions within various industries[1]

Future outlook

Only as **reasoning** and **evaluation** systems mature, will fully autonomous agents be able to handle complex, open-ended tasks

Assistive agents will thrive in high-risk domains, blending agent support with human judgement

Rule-based agents will remain as **reliable guardrails**, anchoring dynamic systems with predictability

Adaptive agents will lead enterprise adoption, balancing automation with real-time feedback and control

1. Metrics are illustrative, depending on specific implementation context, and not guaranteed
Source: AI Engineering Summit 2025, Bloomberg, Booking.Com, Jane Street, Brightwave, LinkedIn; BCG

03 Can they be reliable and effective?

Benchmarks and studies are exploring agent reliability

Benchmarks are shifting to **measuring how well agents use tools** and handle end-to-end tasks over time within different domains

New test cases **emphasize edge scenarios** like missing tools, irrelevant queries, and incomplete inputs to probe agent robustness
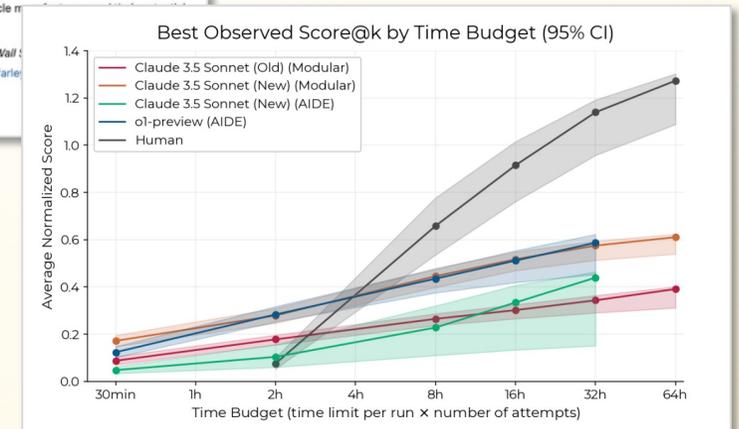
Increasing **focus on multi-turn tasks** requires agents to manage context, sequence actions, and adapt to evolving goals (e.g. ML training)

"AI Search Has a Citation Problem: We Compared Eight AI Search Engines. They're All Bad at Citing News." Columbia Journalism Review
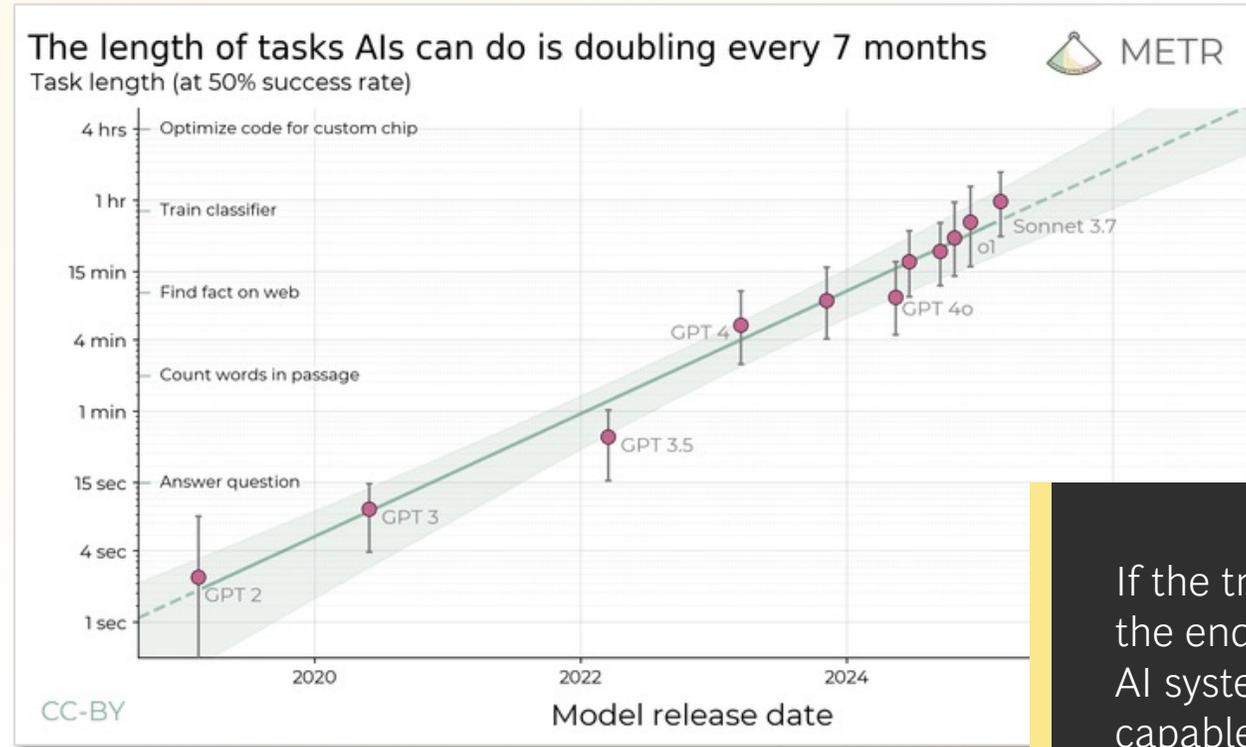
RE-Bench Evaluating frontier AI R&D capabilities of language model agents against human experts

Source: AI Search Has A Citation Problem - Columbia Journalism Review; Galileo AI; Scale AI; BCG analysis; Expert interviews

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Today, AI Agents can reach '1h' of automation - doubling every 7 months

Current SOTA[1] models are capable of some tasks[2] that take even expert humans hours, but can **only reliably complete tasks of up to a few minutes long**

Length of addressable tasks with 50% reliability has **been doubling approximately every 7 months** for the last 6 years

The length of tasks AIs can do is doubling every 7 months

METR

Task length (at 50% success rate)

If the trend continues to the end of this decade, AI systems will be capable of autonomously carrying out **month-long projects**

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BCG's Agent Assessment Framework
The 6 dimensions we use to track Agent performance in 2025

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Reasoning & Planning	**Task autonomy & Execution**	**Memory & Knowledge**	**Reliability & Safety**	**Integration & Interoperability**	**Social understanding**
Ability to follow instructions, understand intent, infer, and make decisions based on data to form a plan	Function calling performance to execute tasks, interact with environments, and take goal-based actions	Ability to use and leverage knowledge, overall long context performance	The consistency, accuracy, and trustworthiness of an AI Agent's responses	Seamlessly exchange data, communicate, and collaborate with other systems or agents	Ability to interpret human intent, social cues, maintain character, and share context in natural language

Constrained agents working today, but full autonomy on the horizon

	1 Reasoning & Planning	**2** Task autonomy & Execution	**3** Memory & Knowledge	**4** Reliability & Safety	**5** Integration & Interoperability	**6** Social understanding
	Ability to understand, infer, and make logical decisions based on input data	Function calling performance to execute tasks, interact with environments, and take goal-based actions	Ability to use and leverage knowledge[2], overall long context performance, and state representation	The consistency, accuracy, and trustworthiness of an AI Agent's responses	Seamlessly exchange data, communicate, and collaborate across with other agents or diverse platforms	Ability to interpret human intent, social cues, maintain relevant empathetic interactions
Current Capability Maturity	Low ▬▬ Med ▒▒ High	Low ▬ Med High	Low ▬▬ Med ▒▒ High	Low ▬ Med High	Low ▬ Med High	Low ▒▒ Med High
Limitations	• Struggles with multi-step reasoning and long-term dependencies • Prone to hallucinations and incorrect inference	• Struggles with real-world execution beyond simulations • Limited integration w/ external tools & APIs • Limited standardization	• Limited memory retention across long conversations • Forgetfulness due to context window size restrictions	• Tendency to hallucinate or generate incorrect information • Vulnerable to biases	• Data silos and inconsistent formats hinder interaction • Security risks from broad access permissions	• Struggles with detecting emotional nuance and non-verbal intent • Prone to misinterpreting ambiguous or implied language
What needs to happen for these capabilities to evolve/mature	• Advancements in multi-step reasoning, supported by a versatile action set • Additionally, enabling reasoning during inference	• Standardized access[1] • Security initiatives (e.g., skimming prevention & RBAC) Goal-seeking behavior • Self-reproduction (future adv.)	• Building contextual awareness (memory) • Continuous learning and automatically recalibration of responses in light of past experiences	• Improved model calibration to assess confidence scores • Evaluation metrics (output quality measurement)	• Development of universal AI standards and frameworks for communication • Improved middleware solutions to bridge platform gaps	• Fine-tuning on diverse multimodal human interaction datasets (cultural, emotional, conversational) • Fine-tuning in multi-agent scenarios to develop inter-agent context sharing

▬ Perceived maturity by AI experts   ▒▒ Divergent expert perspective

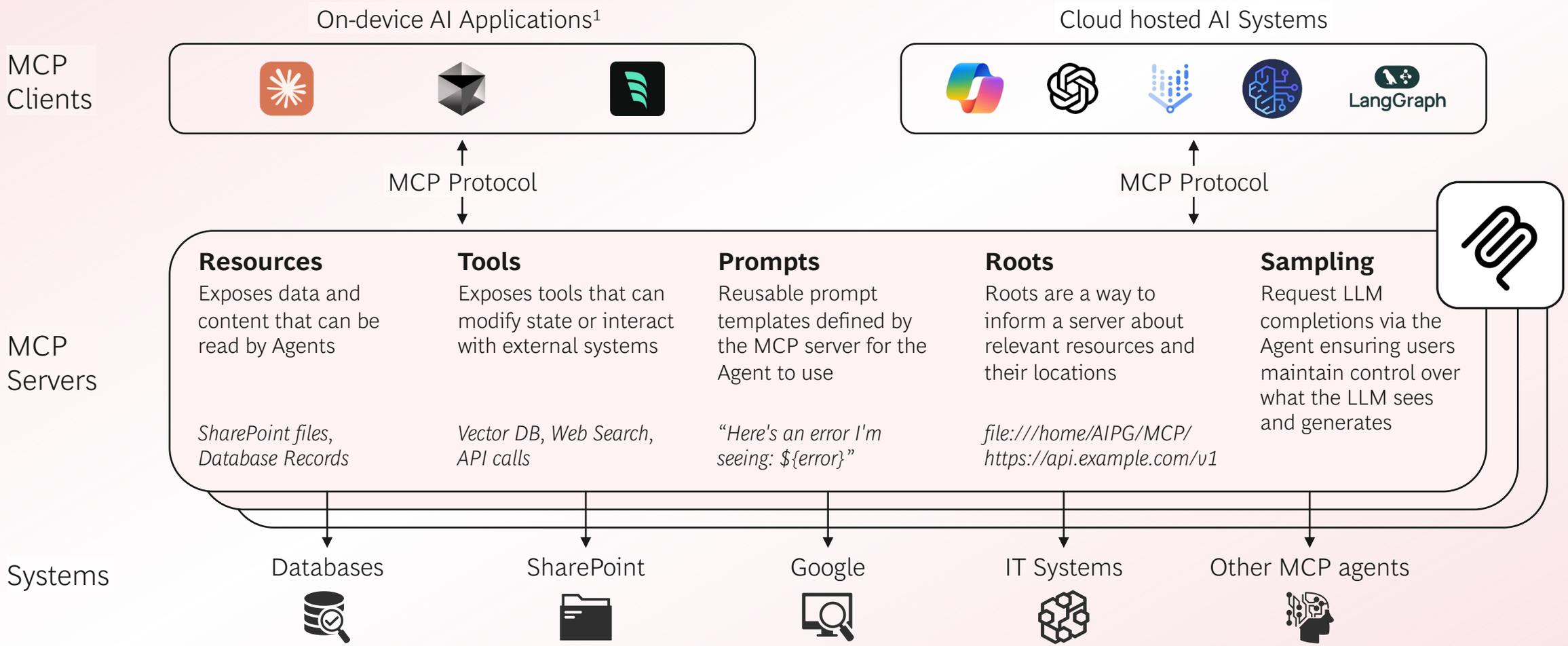Source: BCG analysis; Expert interviews
1. To tools & data; 2. Ability to use long-context windows, recall accuracy from training data, knowledge consciousness and ability to know when to call external tools, intra-session memory (learning)

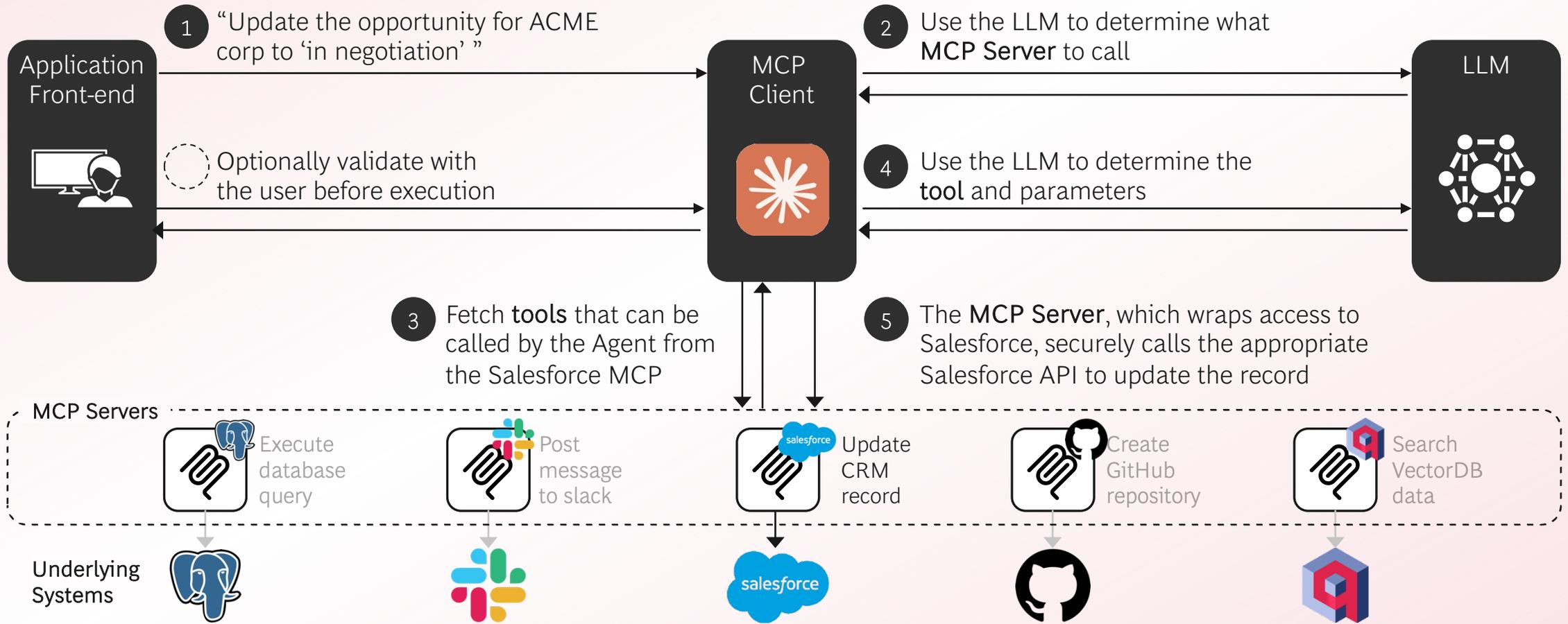**BCG | AI Platforms Group**   16

04

MCP's role and
building at scale

The Model Context Protocol (MCP) exposes resources, tools and prompts to LLMs

On-device AI Applications[1]

Cloud hosted AI Systems

MCP Clients

MCP Servers

MCP Protocol

MCP Protocol

Resources
Exposes data and content that can be read by Agents

SharePoint files, Database Records

Tools
Exposes tools that can modify state or interact with external systems

Vector DB, Web Search, API calls

Prompts
Reusable prompt templates defined by the MCP server for the Agent to use

"Here's an error I'm seeing: ${error}"

Roots
Roots are a way to inform a server about relevant resources and their locations

file:///home/AIPG/MCP/ https://api.example.com/v1

Sampling
Request LLM completions via the Agent ensuring users maintain control over what the LLM sees and generates

Systems

Databases

SharePoint

Google

IT Systems

Other MCP agents

1. In many current implementations (e.g., VS Code, Claude Desktop, Cursor), the front-end and MCP client are effectively merged. For custom enterprise deployments—such as those developed by BCG—this separation remains architecturally relevant and often intentional.
Source: Anthropic Model Context Protocol; BCG Experience

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MCP unlocks agentic workflows through one unified protocol

Application Front-end

1 "Update the opportunity for ACME corp to 'in negotiation' "

⬚ Optionally validate with the user before execution

MCP Client

2 Use the LLM to determine what **MCP Server** to call

4 Use the LLM to determine the **tool** and parameters

LLM

3 Fetch **tools** that can be called by the Agent from the Salesforce MCP

5 The **MCP Server**, which wraps access to Salesforce, securely calls the appropriate Salesforce API to update the record

MCP Servers

Execute database query

Post message to slack

Update CRM record

Create GitHub repository

Search VectorDB data

Underlying Systems

salesforce

Source: Anthropic Model Context Protocol

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MCP addresses 4 of the 6 capabilities seen as lacking in today's agents

1	2	3	4	5	6
Reasoning & Planning	**Task autonomy & Execution**	**Memory & Knowledge**	Reliability & Safety	**Integration & Interoperability**	Social understanding

MCP's Role

MCP Servers expose prompt templates and tool registries which allow for high quality context to aid in tool use reasoning	MCP Clients and Servers allow agents to chain tool usage autonomously and coordinate execution across multi-tool workflows	MCP Servers allow clients to connect to external tools like Postgres for real-time data access or Vector Databases for knowledge access	The consistency, accuracy, and trustworthiness of an AI Agent's responses is driven by the model and evals	The MCP protocol resolves architectural fragmentation by bridging tools and platforms through standardized interfaces	Social understanding; link to empathy, intent detection, are inherent to the model

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MCP has gained popularity in the AI community

MCP is becoming the de facto standard by being an AI-native, open protocol backed by Anthropic; leveraging the successful LSP[1] foundations, launching with a full first-party stack, and executing a rapid iterative delivery roadmap

AI Frameworks and Protocols, Github Stars (thousands)

NOVEMBER 25, 2024
Anthropic releases Model Context Protocol (MCP)
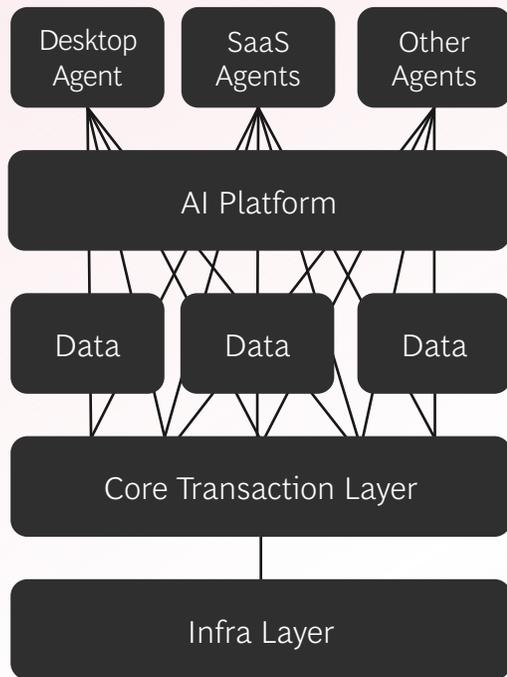
MARCH 19, 2025
Microsoft adds MCP support in CoPilot Studio

MARCH 26, 2025
OpenAI introduces MCP support for its Agents SDK[2]

APRIL, 2025
Google, Amazon & Azure Agent frameworks adopt MCP

Source: https://star-history.com/. 1. Language Server Protocol enabling development tools to communicate with language-specific servers for features like autocomplete, go-to-definition, and hover documentation 2. Software Development Kit

How to think about MCP in the context of your architecture?

Siloed agents, data and systems, with duplicative or diverging integrations

| Desktop Agent | SaaS Agents | Other Agents |

AI Platform

| Data | Data | Data |

Core Transaction Layer

Infra Layer

Transversal shared set of MCP Servers liberating access to data and systems

Agents

AI Platform

Data

Core Transaction Layer

Infra Layer

MCP Servers

MCP **de-duplicates integration efforts**, and enables faster experiments and seamless system upgrades behind the scenes

MCP doesn't solve all our problems; **currently a lot of work still goes into integrating tools** as adoption maturity is low

MCP value hinges on the Agents that consume them and **broader ecosystem adoption**

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Access to tools creates new risks — security must be foundational, not optional

1 Malicious tools can read and **access local credentials** (e.g., SSH[1] keys, config files) and leak them via innocuous inputs

2 Agents can be vulnerable to **invisible tool poisoning attacks** where tool descriptions include embedded malicious instructions

3 Users may see safe summaries; but models act on full descriptions. This mismatch enables **prompt injection** without user visibility

4 Tool logic can be altered server-side after trust is granted, **compromising agent behavior** over time

5 One compromised MCP server can influence how agents use tools from other trusted servers—**breaking domain isolation**

Treat all tool logic and servers as untrusted. Enforce OAuth + RBAC[2] on every call, and pin tool versions. Isolate trust domains to prevent cross-server hijacks. Log agent reasoning traces, not just outputs. And don't rely on random GitHub code—verify or build your own.

Source: Anthropic; Invariantlabs; BCG Experience. 1. Secure Shell 2. Role based access control.
Illustrated agent tool use risks are applicable to any AI agents and not unique to MCP

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Emerging agent-to-agent protocols, such as Google's A2A, will work alongside MCP

A2A defines **how agents talk, coordinate, negotiate, and share state—not how they're built**
It supports natural communication, plan refinement, task handoffs, and cross-boundary collaboration

Leading agent frameworks including Google's Agent Developer Kit (ADK), CrewAI, LangGraph, and GenKit already have examples integrating A2A into agent building frameworks to enable **natural agent-to-agent collaboration with each other**

Agents

A2A Protocol

MCP Servers

AI Platform

Data

Core Transaction Layer

Infra Layer

A2A and MCP solve different layers of the AI tech stack: A2A handles the dialogue between agents, while MCP enables agents to discover and call each other as resources via AgentCards[1] , and give them access to tools

Proceed with **curiosity and caution**. Protocols like A2A (launched days ago) and IBM's ACP[2] are promising but expect fragmentation, evolving specs, and competing standards

Source: Google. 1. Agent Card: A public metadata file (usually at /.well-known/agent.json) describing an agent's capabilities, skills, endpoint URL, and authentication requirements. Clients use this for discovery. 2. Agent Communication Protocol
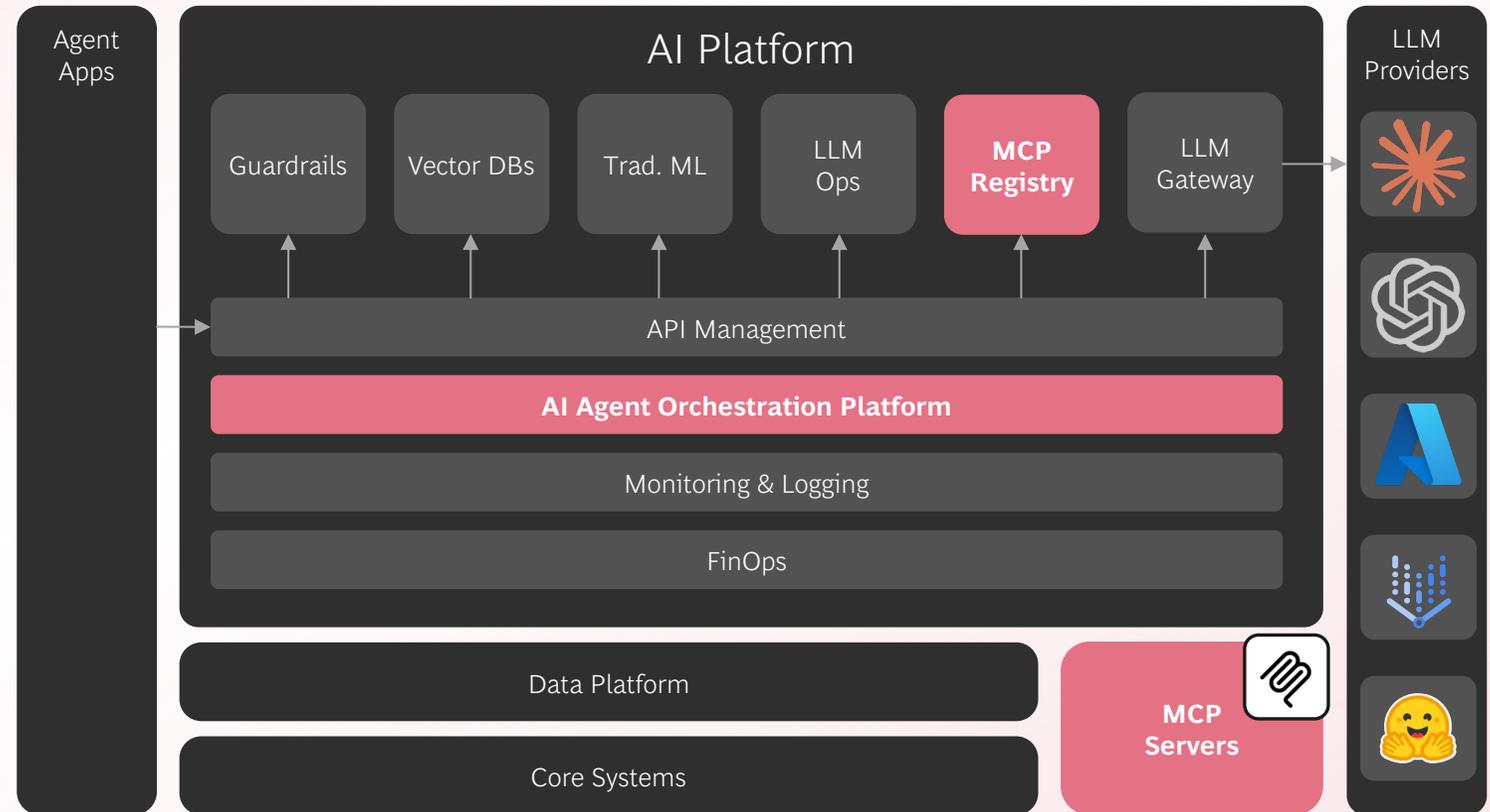
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Agent orchestration & MCP will be the beating heart of the modern AI company
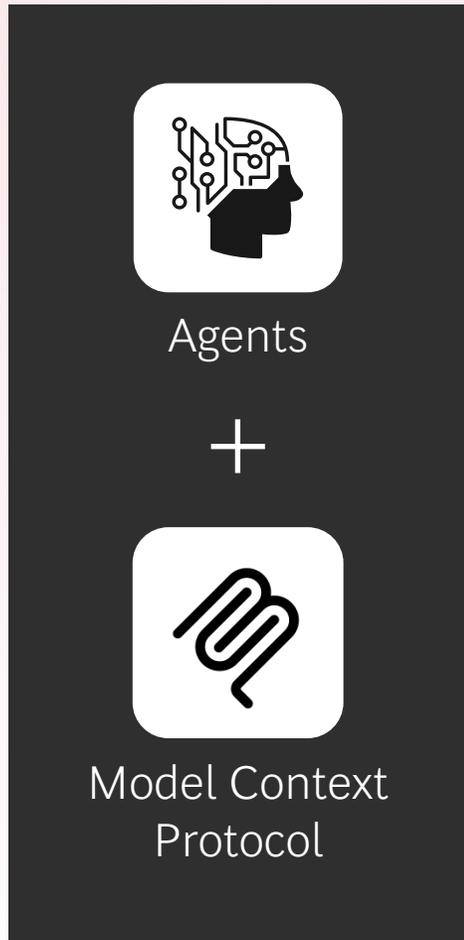
Agent Orchestration

Platform-as-a-service offerings (e.g. Azure AI Foundry, Google Vertex, Amazon Bedrock Agents, Lindy) that enable the creation, orchestration, and deployment of agents through their lifecycle (AgentOps)

MCP Registry

Directory service that catalogs, governs, and exposes available MCP servers within an organization

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Key points for building Agents with MCP in your Enterprise

Agents

+

Model Context Protocol

1 **Eval driven development enable agents at scale**
Agents without evals are stochastic parrots, not co-workers. Design and build with evals from the start

2 **Plan out the 'MCPs' that will unlock your silos**
Think through the systems and datasets you want your AIs to access, then implement MCPs as the 'new data mesh'

3 **Build an Agent Orchestration platform, and proprietary MCP registry**
Choose an agent platform to allow you to build and scale agents with evals, and couple with an in-house MCP registry to open up silos

4 **Review Legal, Data Security, and Privacy implications**
MCPs bring unique risks, as the 'AI surface area' grows beyond limited, and constrained chatbots. *BCG does not provide legal or compliance advice*

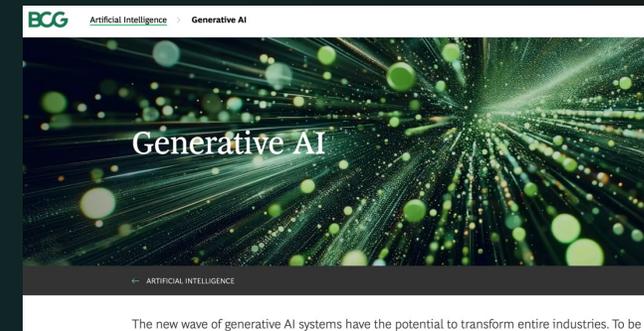**5** Technical Appendix for further reading at the end of the document
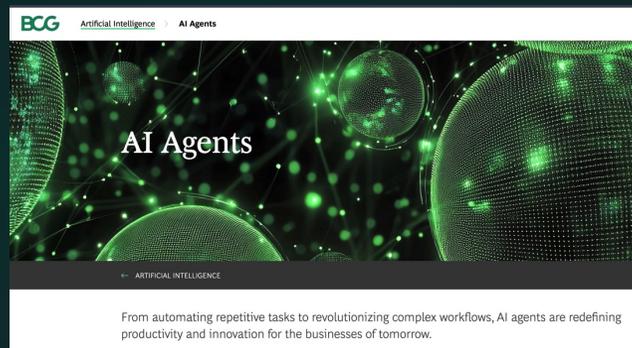
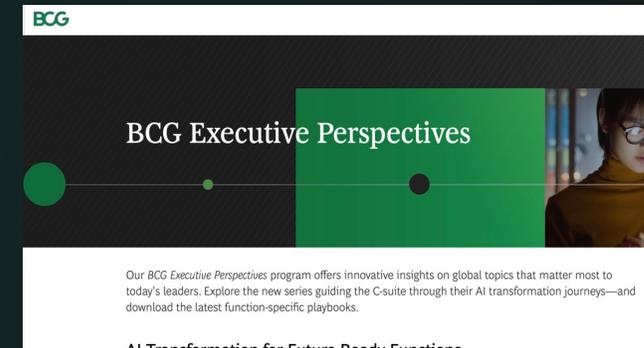# Read more of BCG's perspectives

Building Multi-model platforms

AI on BCG.com

Latest thinking on Agents

Our Executive Perspective Series

Get in touch with our AI team

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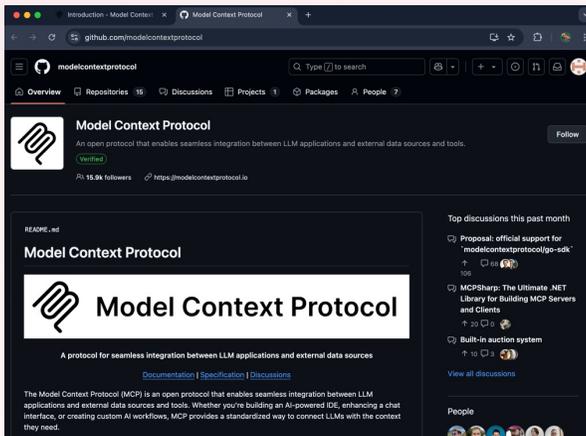**Dan Sack**

Geoffrey Sipperly

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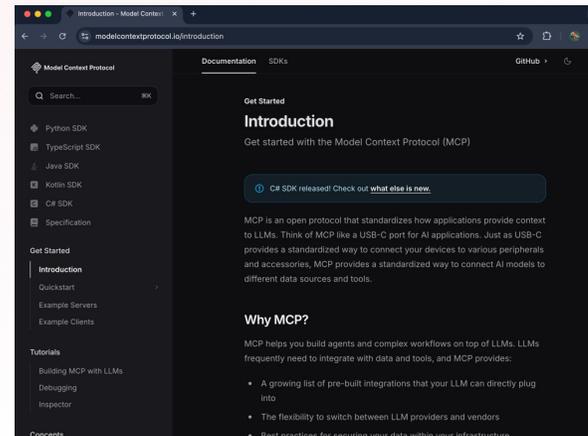
Technical appendix

Anyone can build MCP clients or MCP servers, it's truly open source

Built in public with feedback loops

MCP is developed as an open-source project on GitHub, encouraging community contributions and transparency; with key players such as Pydantic contributing to the protocol

Comprehensive Documentation

Anthropic provides detailed documentation, providing clear guidelines and best practices for developers to understand and implement MCP effectively

Growing list of supported MCP SDKs

MCP offers official SDKs in multiple programming languages, including Python, TypeScript, and C#, facilitating seamless integration across diverse development environments

Source: Anthropic Model Context Protocol; BCG

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Many MCP servers have been built and shared across the eco-system…

Non-exhaustive

Enterprise software

salesforce ⬈

Connects agents with Salesforce's CRM platform, enabling retrieval and interaction with Salesforce data & metadata

servicenow ⬈

Supports agents in retrieving and managing IT service management data (e.g. incidents, requests) through ServiceNow's APIs

CLOUDFLARE ⬈

Supports agents in deploying Cloudflare Workers, querying D1 databases, or copying data between KV storage and R2 buckets

Desktop automation

Filesystem ⬈

Enables agents by reading, writing, searching, and organizing files on the host machine (within permitted directories)

Puppeteer ⬈

Allows agents to programmatically navigate websites, extract information, or fill out forms; mimicking desktop web browsing tasks

Fetch ⬈

Enables agents to retrieve and transform live websites, fetches content, strips HTML, or converts to Markdown

Productivity tools

slack ⬈

Enables agents to interact with Slack workspaces – post messages, read threads, and manage channels via the Slack API

Google Drive ⬈

Allows agents to list, read, and search Drive files, converting Google Docs/Sheets into plain text for LLM consumption

todoist ⬈

Lets agents manage to-do lists by reading, adding, or updating task. Supports natural language task tracking, reminders, and project-based productivity flows

Software Dev/Ops tools

GitHub ⬈

Gives agents access to repository content, issues, pull requests, and commits through GitHub APIs

SENTRY ⬈

Lets agents retrieve and analyze application errors, alerts, and logs from Sentry.io allows, debugging, and surfacing insights from observability pipelines

Grafana ⬈

Enables agents to query metrics, logs, traces, and dashboards via Grafana's APIs to manage incident analysis, on-call alerts, and live monitoring queries

Diverse and growing network of MCP servers is emerging across enterprise

Official MCPs are still early-stage; documentation gaps and incomplete tool definitions are common

Widespread access creates surface area for cyber risk; robust static security and isolation are mandatory

Opensource references by Anthropic   Officially maintained by vendor   Community driven

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Emerging best practices for designing, using and building with MCP and Agents

1 **Use structured frameworks**
Accelerate development with orchestration libraries such as the MCP SDKs, FastMCP, Langraph, or many others!

2 **Design tools precisely**
Define clear, scoped tool descriptions—agent reasoning quality depends on precision and coherence

3 **Limit cognitive overload**
Keep toolsets under 100 per call; expose only what the agent truly needs

4 **Evaluate LLM outputs**
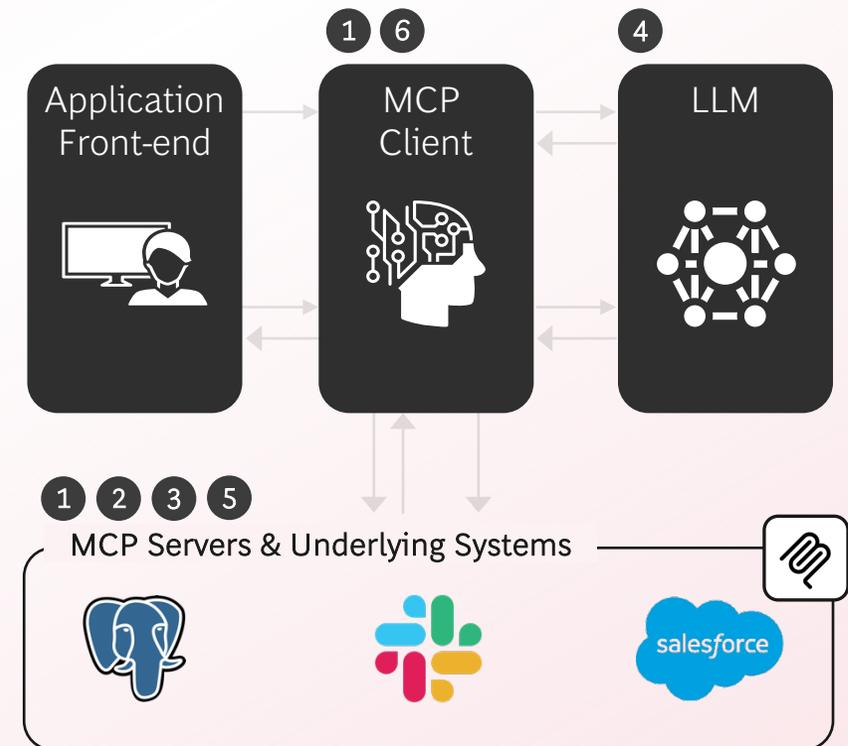Continuously test LLM reasoning paths—no evals means no guarantees

5 **Modularize via server boundaries**
One MCP server per system improves routing clarity & flexibility

Deep-Dive

6 **Secure agent interactions**
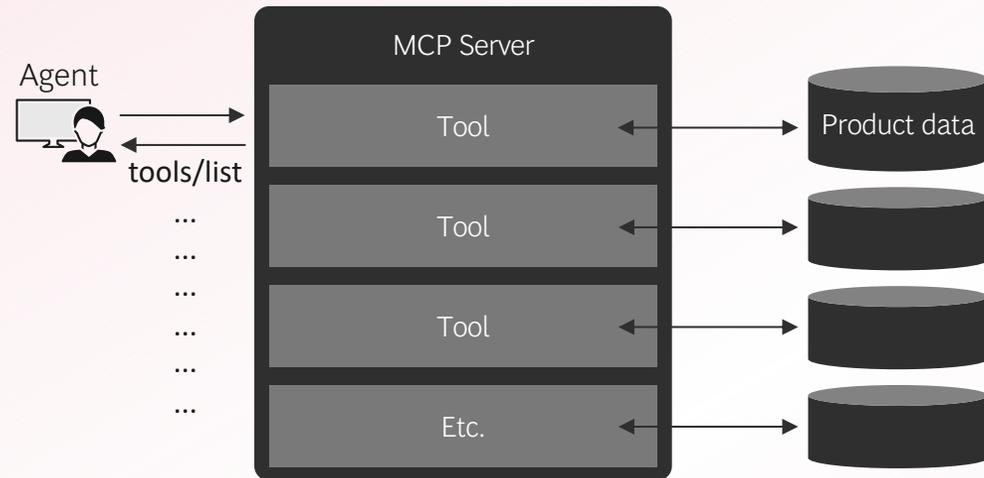Enforce auth for front-end MCP clients to protect user and system access via oAuth

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Avoid monoliths or microservices at the extremes when building MCP servers
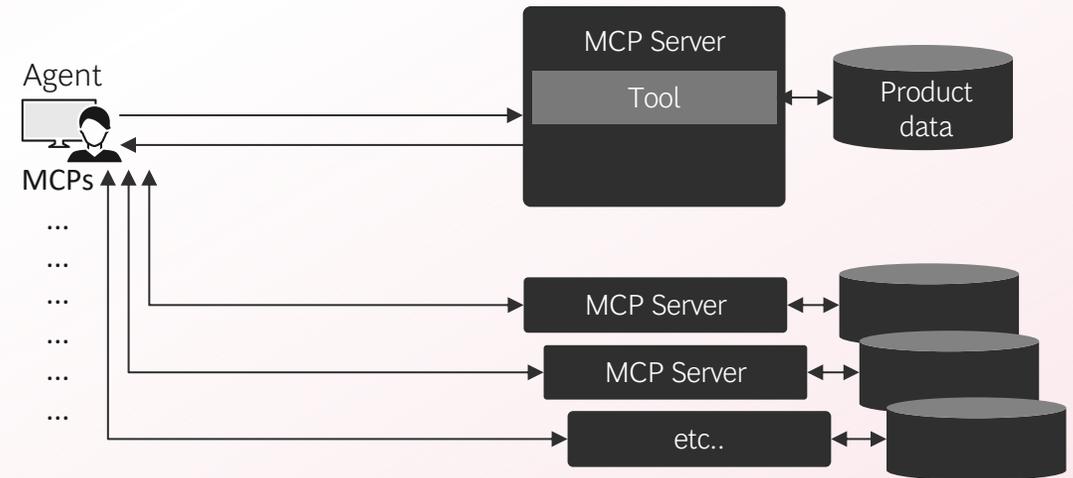
Monolith MCP pattern

Microservice MCP pattern

Monolith MCP servers **bundle multiple tool integrations** or functions into one server across service boundaries, potentially **overloading the agent** with too many choices
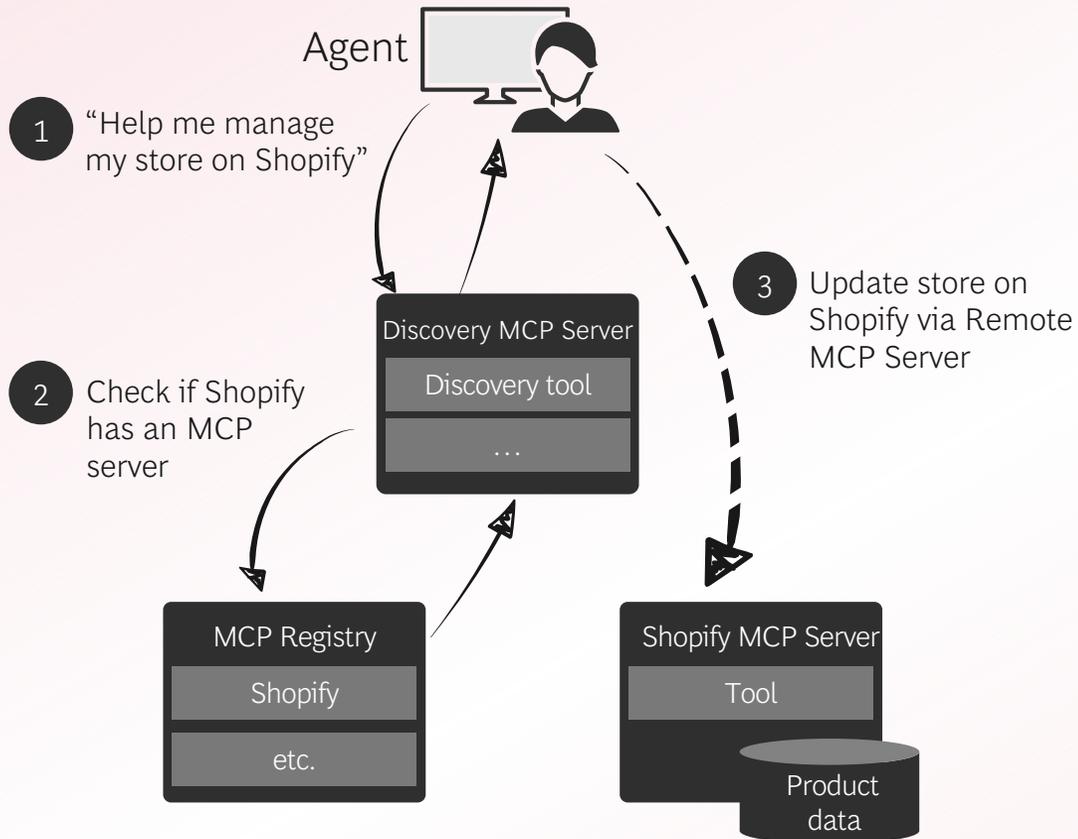
Microservice MCP servers host a **subset of tools**, which can lead to a highly complex, unmanageable agent architecture, **undermining interoperability and reusability**

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Focus on building lean MCP servers, leverage dynamic server discovery if needed

Agent

1 "Help me manage my store on Shopify"

Discovery MCP Server
- Discovery tool
- ...

2 Check if Shopify has an MCP server

3 Update store on Shopify via Remote MCP Server

MCP Registry
- Shopify
- etc.

Shopify MCP Server
- Tool
- Product data

1 Agent receives a user request (i.e. "Help me manage my Shopify store")

2 Checks a registry or the target domain's .well-known/mcp.json for available MCP servers

3 Dynamically loads the server's schema/actions without needing manual configuration

> Avoids overwhelming the agent with all tools up front & adapts instantly to new or evolving server endpoints and APIs

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