



Profit On Purpose

DEMONSTRABLY VALUABLE

The Non-Human Company

What AI Agents Can Do For Every Part
of Your Business

MARCH 2026

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Executive Summary

This report maps every major business function across a modern company and assesses what AI agents can realistically handle today, what they will handle within 12-18 months, and what genuinely requires a human being.

The analysis covers 11 departments and over 150 individual functions. For each one, we describe what an AI agent actually does, not which software you could subscribe to. The difference matters. Off-the-shelf tools automate tasks. AI agents do the work.



The functions that resist automation cluster into five categories: trust-based relationships, judgment under ambiguity, legal liability, emotional intelligence, and physical presence. These are not limitations. They define the highest value work your people should be doing.

Automation vs AI Agents

Most businesses already use some automation. Rules that trigger emails. Workflows that route tickets. Spreadsheets that calculate commissions. These are useful, but they are brittle. They do exactly what you tell them, nothing more, and they break the moment something falls outside the script.



AI agents are fundamentally different. An agent reads context, makes judgments, handles exceptions, and improves over time. It does not follow a script. It understands the goal and works out how to get there.

This is why the opportunity is so much larger than traditional automation. The 74% of functions that are agent-ready today includes work that was never automatable before: writing proposals tailored to specific clients, qualifying leads based on conversation tone, triaging support tickets by business impact rather than keyword matching, drafting financial reports that highlight what actually matters.

The question is no longer "what can we automate?" It is "what still needs a human?"

What This Means For Your Business

For most businesses, the gap between current headcount costs and what AI agents could handle represents 40-60% of total payroll spend. The companies deploying agents first are locking in a structural margin advantage that compounds every quarter.

This report gives you the function-by-function detail to assess your own business against. For a personalised analysis of your specific roles, processes, and costs, take the free assessment at profitonpurpose.co.uk.

01

Sales

10 functions agent-ready today. From lead generation through to post-sale onboarding.

AI AGENT READY

FUNCTION	WHAT AN AI AGENT DOES
Lead generation and prospecting	Scans the web, social media, and intent data sources to find companies matching your ideal customer profile. Enriches each lead with contact details, company size, tech stack, and buying signals. Delivers a qualified list daily without being told where to look.
Lead scoring and qualification	Reads every interaction a prospect has had with your business: emails opened, pages visited, content downloaded, conversations had. Scores them against patterns from your closed deals, not a static rubric. Re-scores in real time as new signals arrive.
Outbound email sequences	Writes and sends personalised outreach based on the prospect's industry, role, and recent activity. Handles follow-ups, adjusts tone based on response patterns, and knows when to stop.
Meeting scheduling	Coordinates availability across calendars, proposes times, handles rescheduling, sends reminders. Removes the back-and-forth entirely.
CRM data entry and hygiene	Listens to calls, reads emails, and updates the CRM automatically. Deduplicates records, fills in missing fields, and flags inconsistencies. Your salespeople never touch the CRM again.
Proposal and quote generation	Pulls client requirements from conversations and briefs, selects the right pricing structure, generates a branded proposal document tailored to the specific opportunity.
Contract generation	Assembles contracts from your clause library based on deal terms. Applies the right payment terms, liability caps, and special conditions without manual selection.
Pipeline forecasting	Analyses historical win rates, deal velocity, and current pipeline activity to predict revenue. Updates in real time as deals move, stall, or change scope. More accurate than your best sales manager's gut feel.
Commission calculation	Applies your commission rules across every deal, handles splits, accelerators, and clawbacks. Produces statements that match your finance team's numbers without reconciliation.
Post-sale onboarding	Sends the right onboarding materials, schedules kick-off calls, tracks completion of setup steps, and chases anything that stalls. The client feels looked after without anyone manually managing the process.

AGENT READY IN 12-18 MONTHS

FUNCTION	CURRENT LIMITATION	WHAT IS CHANGING
Outbound reply handling and meeting booking	AI SDR agents exist but achieve roughly 60% accuracy. They hallucinate, misread tone, and struggle with threaded objection handling.	Agent reasoning is improving quarter-over-quarter. Multi-turn conversation handling is the most actively funded capability in AI development.
AI voice calling (cold outbound)	Voice agents work for scripted calls but sound unnatural in open conversation. Prospects can tell.	Voice model quality (latency, naturalness, emotional range) is advancing rapidly. Within 18 months, the gap will be undetectable for most business calls.

HUMAN REQUIRED

FUNCTION	WHY
Relationship selling and closing	Reading the room, building personal trust, knowing when to push and when to pause. This is judgment, not process.
Complex objection handling	Requires context that spans the entire relationship, not just the current conversation. Empathy and improvisation cannot be scripted.
Key account management	The data preparation, reporting, and routine communication can all be handled by agents. But the relationship itself: the trust, the strategic advice, the understanding of what matters to this specific person. That is human work.

02

Marketing

10 functions agent-ready today. Content, SEO, paid media, email, and attribution.

AI AGENT READY

FUNCTION	WHAT AN AI AGENT DOES
Content writing (blog, articles, case studies)	Writes to your brand guidelines, tone, and style. Researches the topic, structures the argument, and produces a draft that needs light editorial review, not a rewrite. Handles SEO optimisation within the copy.
Social media copy	Writes platform-specific short-form content. Understands what works on LinkedIn vs Instagram vs X. Adapts tone per channel and can produce a week's content in minutes.
SEO: technical	Crawls your site, identifies broken links, missing meta tags, slow pages, crawl errors, and schema issues. Prioritises fixes by impact and produces the action list.
SEO: content strategy	Analyses your keyword landscape, identifies gaps, maps search intent, and generates content briefs with target keywords, structure, and competitive positioning already built in.
Paid media management	Manages bidding strategies, adjusts budgets based on performance, pauses underperformers, and scales winners. Reacts to performance changes faster than any human media buyer.
Ad creative (static)	Generates ad variations, tests headlines and images, and identifies which combinations perform. Produces creative at the volume needed for proper testing.
Email marketing	Segments your audience based on behaviour, writes personalised email sequences, optimises send times, runs A/B tests, and reports on performance. The full cycle without manual intervention.
Marketing attribution	Tracks every touchpoint across the customer journey and attributes revenue to the channels, campaigns, and content that actually drove it. Replaces guesswork with data.
Landing page creation	Builds and tests landing pages based on campaign objectives. Writes the copy, structures the layout, and runs conversion tests automatically.
Social listening and sentiment	Monitors mentions of your brand, competitors, and industry across social platforms. Analyses sentiment, flags emerging issues, and identifies opportunities to engage.

AGENT READY IN 12-18 MONTHS

FUNCTION	CURRENT LIMITATION	WHAT IS CHANGING
Long-form thought leadership	Agents produce competent content but lack genuine original insight. They synthesise existing knowledge rather than creating new ideas.	As agents gain access to proprietary data and learn from expert feedback, the gap between "competent" and "authoritative" is closing.
Video ad creative	AI-generated video exists but does not yet match human-produced creative on conversion rates consistently.	Video generation quality is advancing rapidly. For performance marketing where "effective" matters more than "award-winning," AI video will be production-ready within 18 months.
Autonomous brand-safe posting	Agents can write posts and schedule them. Deciding what to post without risking brand damage still requires a human approval gate.	As agents build longer context windows and better brand understanding, the approval gate will move from "approve every post" to "review weekly."

AGENT ASSISTED

FUNCTION	WHAT THE AGENT DOES	WHAT THE HUMAN DOES
PR and media outreach	Builds media lists, drafts pitches, tracks coverage, manages follow-up	Maintains journalist relationships, crafts the story angle, handles sensitive narratives
Event planning	Manages logistics, registration, communications, vendor coordination	Designs the experience, hosts, networks, makes judgment calls on the day

HUMAN REQUIRED

FUNCTION	WHY
Brand strategy and positioning	Creative vision, market intuition, and the ability to differentiate in a crowded market. This is leadership, not execution.

03

Finance and Accounting

10 functions agent-ready today. From bookkeeping through to cash flow forecasting.

AI AGENT READY

FUNCTION	WHAT AN AI AGENT DOES
Bookkeeping and transaction categorisation	Reads every transaction, categorises it against your chart of accounts, learns your patterns, and handles the exceptions that rules-based systems miss.
Accounts payable	Reads invoices (any format), matches them to purchase orders, flags discrepancies, routes approvals, and processes payment. End-to-end without manual data entry.
Accounts receivable and dunning	Tracks outstanding invoices, sends payment reminders with appropriate escalation, retries failed payments, and flags at-risk accounts before they become bad debt.
Expense management	Scans receipts, checks them against your expense policy, flags violations, routes approvals, and reconciles against bank statements.
Bank reconciliation	Matches transactions across accounts automatically. Investigates and resolves discrepancies that simple matching cannot handle.
Payroll processing	Calculates pay, applies tax rules, handles deductions and benefits, generates payslips, and files submissions. Fully rules-based but the agent handles the edge cases that trip up basic automation.
Financial reporting	Generates P&L, balance sheet, cash flow, and management reports. Does not just pull numbers; writes the narrative commentary that highlights what actually changed and why.
Cash flow forecasting	Analyses historical patterns, outstanding invoices, committed spend, and seasonal trends to predict cash position. Updates daily as new data arrives.
Budgeting and variance analysis	Compares actuals to budget, identifies variances, and explains them. Flags trends before they become problems.
Standard tax filing	Prepares and files straightforward, single-jurisdiction returns. Handles the data gathering, calculation, and submission.

AGENT READY IN 12-18 MONTHS

FUNCTION	CURRENT LIMITATION	WHAT IS CHANGING
Multi-jurisdiction tax	Cross-border complexity and regulatory ambiguity mean agents can research and draft but cannot yet make judgment calls on edge cases.	As regulatory databases become more structured and agent reasoning improves, the human will shift from "prepare" to "review and sign."
Fraud and anomaly detection	Agents can flag suspicious transactions effectively. Acting on those flags autonomously (blocking payments, freezing accounts) still generates too many false positives.	Accuracy is improving. Within 18 months, agents will handle clear-cut cases autonomously and escalate only genuine ambiguity.
Full audit preparation	Document assembly is solved. Professional judgment on materiality, risk assessment, and what to disclose remains human.	Agents will handle 80% of audit prep. The human role shifts to judgment and sign-off.

HUMAN REQUIRED

FUNCTION	WHY
CFO-level strategic decisions	Capital allocation, fundraising strategy, M&A evaluation. These require business judgment that spans the entire organisation.
Complex tax strategy	Cross-jurisdiction planning and tax-efficient structuring involve trade-offs that carry legal liability.

04

Human Resources

13 functions agent-ready today. The entire employee lifecycle, automated.

AI AGENT READY

FUNCTION	WHAT AN AI AGENT DOES
Job posting and distribution	Writes job descriptions based on role requirements and your employer brand, then distributes across relevant platforms and tracks application volume.
Resume screening and ranking	Reads every application, evaluates against the role requirements, ranks candidates, and provides a shortlist with reasoning. Processes hundreds of applications in minutes.
Interview scheduling	Coordinates across multiple calendars, handles time zones, sends confirmations and reminders, and rearranges when conflicts arise.
Background checks	Initiates verification, tracks completion, and flags issues. Removes the manual chase from the process.
Offer letter generation	Assembles offers based on the agreed compensation, benefits, and terms. Personalises the language and handles the document workflow.
Onboarding workflows	Manages the entire new starter process: document collection, system access provisioning, training scheduling, team introductions, and progress tracking.
Benefits administration	Handles enrolment, changes, questions, and annual renewal processes. Employees interact with the agent directly for routine queries.
Time and attendance	Tracks hours, manages shift patterns, handles swap requests, and flags anomalies.
Leave management	Processes requests against policy, checks team coverage, approves within rules, and escalates edge cases.
Compliance training	Enrolls employees in required training, tracks completion, sends reminders, and reports compliance status.
Offboarding	Revokes system access, collects equipment, processes final pay, and handles exit documentation. Nothing falls through the cracks.
Employee sentiment	Runs pulse surveys, analyses responses using natural language understanding (not just keyword counting), identifies themes, and alerts HR to emerging issues.
Performance review administration	Manages the review cycle: sends reminders, collects self-assessments, routes reviews, tracks completion, and compiles results.

AGENT READY IN 12-18 MONTHS

FUNCTION	CURRENT LIMITATION	WHAT IS CHANGING
AI-conducted screening interviews	Candidates find current AI interviewers off-putting. There are unresolved bias concerns and emerging legislation (e.g. Illinois AI Act) creating legal risk.	As conversational quality improves and legal frameworks solidify, screening interviews will become agent-handled with human review of edge cases.
Performance review writing	Agents can draft reviews, but managers do not yet trust AI for nuanced feedback about people. Assistance works; full ownership does not.	As agents learn individual performance context over time, the draft quality will reach the point where managers edit rather than rewrite.

HUMAN REQUIRED

FUNCTION	WHY
Hiring decisions (final)	Legal liability, culture fit assessment, and bias accountability. The shortlist can be agent-generated, but the decision must be human.
Conflict resolution and disciplinary	Employment law, emotional nuance, and duty of care. Getting this wrong has legal and personal consequences.
Culture building	Values, behaviour, and belonging are inherently human. An agent can measure culture. It cannot create it.
Coaching and career development	AI can suggest career paths and identify skill gaps. Humans deliver mentorship, motivation, and the relationship that makes development stick.

05

Customer Support and Service

6 functions agent-ready today. Tier 1 resolution without human involvement.

AI AGENT READY

FUNCTION	WHAT AN AI AGENT DOES
Tier 1 support	Handles FAQ, order status, how-to questions, and routine troubleshooting. Does not read from a script; understands the question, searches your knowledge base, and constructs a helpful answer. Currently achieves 40-60% full resolution without human involvement.
Ticket routing and prioritisation	Reads incoming tickets, understands the issue (not just keywords), assesses urgency and business impact, and routes to the right team.
SLA monitoring and escalation	Tracks every open ticket against SLA commitments, escalates before breaches, and alerts the right people at the right time.
Customer satisfaction	Triggers surveys at the right moments, analyses responses, identifies patterns, and flags accounts that need attention.
Knowledge base maintenance	Analyses support ticket patterns to identify gaps in documentation, suggests new articles, and flags outdated content.
Returns and refund processing	Handles policy-based returns end-to-end: validates the request, processes the refund, arranges collection or return shipping, and updates the customer.

AGENT READY IN 12-18 MONTHS

FUNCTION	CURRENT LIMITATION	WHAT IS CHANGING
Tier 2 support (multi-step troubleshooting)	Individual troubleshooting steps work. Chaining them across multiple systems (refund, re-ship, update CRM, follow up) with error recovery is not yet reliable.	Multi-step agent orchestration is the most actively funded area in AI development. The gap between "can do each step" and "can handle the whole workflow" is closing fast.
Voice support (phone)	Works for narrow domains (rebooking flights, checking order status). Open-ended conversation with variable accents and emotional tone is still patchy.	Voice quality, latency, and comprehension are improving every quarter. Phone-based agents will handle the majority of calls within 18 months.

HUMAN REQUIRED

FUNCTION	WHY
Complex and emotional complaints	De-escalation, empathy, and reading emotional state. When a customer is upset, they need a human who understands what it feels like.
VIP and enterprise support	High-stakes, relationship-driven. The data preparation and routine communication are agent-handled, but the relationship is not.

06

Operations and Supply Chain

7 functions agent-ready today. Orders, inventory,
logistics, and fleet.

AI AGENT READY

FUNCTION	WHAT AN AI AGENT DOES
Order processing	Handles orders end-to-end: validates, checks stock, routes to fulfilment, updates the customer, and handles exceptions.
Inventory management and reordering	Monitors stock levels, predicts demand based on historical patterns and external signals (seasonality, promotions, market trends), and places purchase orders before you run out.
Shipping and logistics	Selects the optimal carrier based on cost, speed, and reliability. Tracks shipments, handles delays, and communicates proactively with customers.
Demand forecasting	Analyses historical sales data, market signals, and external factors to predict demand. Updates continuously as new data arrives.
Supplier performance monitoring	Tracks delivery times, quality metrics, pricing changes, and communication responsiveness. Produces scorecards and flags deteriorating performance.
Fleet management	Monitors vehicle health, schedules maintenance, optimises routes, and predicts breakdowns before they happen.
Facility management	Manages HVAC, lighting, and energy systems based on occupancy patterns and external conditions. Reduces costs without anyone thinking about it.

AGENT READY IN 12-18 MONTHS

FUNCTION	CURRENT LIMITATION	WHAT IS CHANGING
Warehouse robotics at SME scale	Works at Amazon scale. Deployment complexity and cost are still prohibitive for smaller companies.	Hardware costs are falling. Robotics-as-a-service models are emerging, shifting from capital expense to operational cost.
Visual quality inspection for variable products	Works for consistent products (electronics, bottles). Unreliable for variable or organic products (food, textiles).	Computer vision for variable products is advancing. Within 18 months, most physical inspection tasks will be agent-handled.
Autonomous procurement	Agents can draft RFQs, compare quotes, and recommend vendors. Issuing purchase orders without human approval is not yet trusted.	As agents build procurement track records and approval frameworks mature, the human role shifts from "approve every PO" to "set rules and review exceptions."

HUMAN REQUIRED

FUNCTION	WHY
Supplier relationship and negotiation	Trust, strategic partnerships, and long-term alignment. The agent handles the data; the human handles the relationship.
Crisis management	AI detects disruptions faster than any human. But deciding what to do, communicating with stakeholders, and managing the fallout requires human judgment.

07

Legal and Compliance

8 functions agent-ready today. Contracts, compliance, privacy, and IP monitoring.

AI AGENT READY

FUNCTION	WHAT AN AI AGENT DOES
Contract review and redlining	Reads contracts, extracts key clauses, compares against your standard terms, flags risks, and suggests redlines. Handles in minutes what takes a junior lawyer hours.
Contract lifecycle management	Tracks every contract from draft through signature to renewal. Sends reminders, flags upcoming expirations, and ensures nothing lapses without a decision.
Regulatory monitoring	Scans regulatory feeds, government publications, and industry bodies for changes relevant to your business. Summarises what changed and what it means for you.
Compliance checklist tracking	Manages compliance requirements across frameworks, tracks completion, assigns owners, and produces audit-ready reports.
Privacy request handling (DSARs)	Receives data subject access requests, searches across your systems, assembles the response package, and tracks the regulatory deadline.
IP and trademark monitoring	Watches for potential infringements of your trademarks, domain squatting, and competitor filings. Alerts you to threats before they become problems.
Policy document generation	Drafts policies based on your requirements, regulatory context, and existing documentation. Produces first drafts that need review, not writing from scratch.
Document review and eDiscovery	Reviews large document sets for relevance, privilege, and key issues. Handles the volume work that makes litigation and investigations expensive.

AGENT READY IN 12-18 MONTHS

FUNCTION	CURRENT LIMITATION	WHAT IS CHANGING
Full contract negotiation	Agents can suggest redlines and draft counter-proposals. They cannot autonomously negotiate fallback positions, assess business trade-offs, or decide when to walk away.	As agents gain access to negotiation history and outcome data, they will handle routine negotiations end-to-end, escalating only genuinely complex terms.
Regulatory interpretation for novel situations	Agents are excellent at research and finding precedent. "What should we do about this?" requires judgment, not just research.	Agents will increasingly handle routine interpretation, freeing lawyers for genuinely novel questions.

HUMAN REQUIRED

FUNCTION	WHY
Litigation strategy	Licensed counsel, case-specific judgment, court dynamics. Legal liability sits with a person, not a machine.
Board and governance advice	Fiduciary duties and stakeholder management require human accountability.

08

IT and Infrastructure

10 functions agent-ready today. Monitoring, remediation, security, and scaling.

AI AGENT READY

FUNCTION	WHAT AN AI AGENT DOES
System monitoring and alerting	Watches every system, identifies anomalies, correlates across services, and alerts the right person with context, not just "server down."
Auto-remediation (known issues)	When a known issue occurs, the agent fixes it automatically: restarts services, clears queues, scales resources, reroutes traffic. No human wakes up at 3am.
Patch management	Scans for vulnerabilities, assesses risk, schedules patches during maintenance windows, applies them, and verifies success.
User provisioning and deprovisioning	When someone joins, moves, or leaves, the agent provisions or revokes access across every system based on their role. No tickets, no delays, no forgotten accounts.
Password resets and access requests	Handles the most common IT support request without human involvement. Verifies identity and processes the reset.
Backup and disaster recovery	Manages backup schedules, verifies integrity, tests recovery procedures, and reports compliance.
CI/CD pipeline management	Manages the build, test, and deployment pipeline. Runs tests, gates releases, handles rollbacks, and reports on deployment health.
Infrastructure scaling	Monitors load and scales resources up and down based on demand. Handles traffic spikes without human intervention.
Security scanning	Scans code and infrastructure for vulnerabilities, prioritises by exploitability and business impact, and assigns remediation.
Cloud cost optimisation	Analyses resource usage, identifies waste, recommends right-sizing, and manages reserved capacity. Finds savings that humans miss because they do not have time to look.

AGENT READY IN 12-18 MONTHS

FUNCTION	CURRENT LIMITATION	WHAT IS CHANGING
Full feature code generation	Agents handle individual functions, bug fixes, and refactoring well. Building a complete feature across multiple files with correct architecture is close but not autonomous yet.	Code generation capability is advancing faster than any other AI domain. Within 18 months, agents will handle feature-level work with human review rather than human writing.
Novel incident remediation	Agents fix known issues reliably. Diagnosing and fixing never-seen-before production issues still needs human reasoning.	As agents accumulate operational context and learn from past incidents, the boundary between "known" and "novel" shifts in the agent's favour.
Autonomous penetration testing	Narrow-scope automated testing works. General-purpose AI red-teaming is not yet production-ready.	Security-focused AI agents are advancing rapidly. Within 18 months, continuous automated penetration testing will be standard.

HUMAN REQUIRED

FUNCTION	WHY
Architecture decisions	Trade-offs that affect the entire system for years require context, business understanding, and long-term thinking.
Security incident response (strategic)	Containment decisions, business impact assessment, stakeholder communication, and regulatory notification. The agent detects and contains; the human decides and communicates.

09

Data and Analytics

6 functions agent-ready today. Pipelines, quality, reporting, and prediction.

AI AGENT READY

FUNCTION	WHAT AN AI AGENT DOES
Data pipeline management	Manages ETL/ELT processes, handles failures, retries, and data quality issues. Keeps your data flowing without manual monitoring.
Data quality monitoring	Watches for anomalies, schema changes, missing data, and drift. Alerts before bad data reaches your dashboards or reports.
Reporting and dashboards	Generates reports on schedule, highlights what changed, and writes the narrative summary. Does not just show numbers; explains what they mean.
A/B test analysis	Designs test parameters, monitors statistical significance, and reports results with clear recommendations. Removes the guesswork from experimentation.
Customer segmentation	Analyses behaviour, demographics, and transaction patterns to identify meaningful segments. Updates continuously as new data arrives, not quarterly.
Churn prediction	Identifies customers likely to leave based on engagement patterns, support interactions, and usage trends. Flags at-risk accounts while there is still time to act.

AGENT READY IN 12-18 MONTHS

FUNCTION	CURRENT LIMITATION	WHAT IS CHANGING
Natural language data queries	Works for simple questions (roughly 70% accuracy). Complex joins, ambiguous questions, and "is this number right?" validation are still unreliable for business-critical decisions.	Query accuracy and self-validation are improving rapidly. Within 18 months, anyone in the business will be able to ask questions of the data in plain English and trust the answers.

HUMAN REQUIRED

FUNCTION	WHY
Strategic insight	Connecting data patterns to business decisions. "The numbers say X" is agent work. "Therefore we should do Y" is human work. Identifying what matters, what is noise, and what to bet on requires business judgment.

10

Administration and General

7 functions agent-ready today. Email, calendar, documents, and travel.

AI AGENT READY

FUNCTION	WHAT AN AI AGENT DOES
Email triage and response	Reads incoming email, categorises by urgency and topic, drafts responses for routine queries, and routes everything else to the right person.
Calendar management	Manages scheduling, resolves conflicts, protects focus time, and coordinates across teams. Handles the back-and-forth that eats hours every week.
Meeting transcription and summary	Transcribes meetings, extracts key decisions and action items, and distributes summaries to attendees.
Document management	Files, tags, and organises documents automatically. Finds what you need when you need it, across every storage system.
Travel booking	Books travel within policy, finds the best options, handles changes and cancellations, and manages expense reporting.
Procurement (office and supplies)	Monitors stock levels and reorders automatically based on usage patterns and thresholds.
Visitor management	Handles registration, notifications, NDAs, and access badges. The front desk experience without the full-time receptionist.

AGENT READY IN 12-18 MONTHS

FUNCTION	CURRENT LIMITATION	WHAT IS CHANGING
Meeting action tracking and follow-up	Transcription and summary are solved. Auto-creating tasks, assigning owners, and chasing completion reliably is not yet reliable.	Task orchestration across tools (project management, email, calendar) is improving rapidly. The "meeting to action to completion" chain will be fully agent-handled.
General phone answering	Works for narrow domains (scheduling, routing). Acting as a general receptionist for any call is still unreliable for open-ended conversations.	Voice AI for open-ended conversation is one of the fastest-moving areas. General phone handling will be agent-ready within 18 months.

11

Product and Engineering

6 functions agent-ready today. Code review, testing, releases, and documentation.

AI AGENT READY

FUNCTION	WHAT AN AI AGENT DOES
Bug triage and prioritisation	Analyses bug reports, assesses severity based on user impact and system criticality, deduplicates, and prioritises the backlog.
Code review	Reviews pull requests for security vulnerabilities, performance issues, style violations, and logic errors. Catches what humans miss because they are reviewing too many PRs too fast.
Test generation and execution	Writes test cases based on code changes, runs the full test suite, and reports coverage gaps.
Documentation	Generates and maintains documentation from code, API definitions, and usage patterns. Keeps docs in sync with the actual system.
Release management	Manages feature flags, canary deployments, and rollbacks. Monitors post-deployment health and rolls back automatically if metrics degrade.
Dependency management	Monitors for security vulnerabilities and updates, tests compatibility, and auto-merges safe patches.

HUMAN REQUIRED

FUNCTION	WHY
Product strategy and roadmap	Market intuition, stakeholder alignment, and vision. Deciding what to build and why is human work.
System design decisions	Architectural trade-offs that affect maintainability, scalability, and cost for years. Requires understanding the business context, not just the technical options.

12

The Human-Only Layer

The work that stubbornly requires humans. Trust, judgment, liability, empathy, and physical presence.

Across all eleven business functions, the tasks that stubbornly require humans fall into five categories.

1. Trust-Based Relationships

- Closing sales deals
- Key account management
- Supplier partnerships
- Investor relations
- VIP customer support

2. Judgment Under Ambiguity

- Business strategy
- Legal interpretation of novel situations
- Crisis response decision-making
- Architecture and system design
- Product roadmap prioritisation

3. Legal Liability

- Hiring and firing decisions
- Compliance sign-off
- Board governance and fiduciary duties
- Litigation strategy

4. Emotional Intelligence

- Conflict resolution and disciplinary processes
- Complex customer complaints
- Culture building and team morale
- Coaching and mentorship

5. Physical Presence

These are not limitations of AI. They define the highest value work in your business. The goal is not to eliminate humans. It is to free them from everything that is not on this list.

- Event hosting and networking
- Some facility and logistics tasks
- In-person client meetings

13

The 12-18 Month Horizon

Five technical gaps being closed right now. Where the next wave of agent capability is coming from.

The functions categorised as "agent ready in 12-18 months" are not random. They cluster into five specific technical gaps that are being closed right now.

1 Multi-Step Orchestration

Individual agent actions work. Chaining them across multiple systems with error recovery, branching logic, and rollback is the current frontier. Example: a customer returns a product, and the agent needs to process the refund, arrange collection, update inventory, notify the warehouse, trigger a replacement order, and email the customer, all as one coherent workflow.

Why 12-18 months: Agent orchestration frameworks are the most actively funded area in AI infrastructure. The ability to chain actions reliably is advancing month over month.

2 Voice AI in Open-Ended Conversations

Scripted, narrow-domain voice works today. Open-ended conversation with unpredictable topics, accents, dialects, and emotional tone does not.

Why 12-18 months: Voice model quality (latency, naturalness, comprehension) is improving every quarter. The gap between "obviously a robot" and "indistinguishable from a person" is closing fast.

3 Autonomous Decisions with Financial or Legal Consequences

Agents can recommend and flag. They cannot yet own a decision where the wrong call costs real money or creates legal exposure.

Why 12-18 months: This is as much a trust and liability problem as a technical one. As agents build track records and insurance/liability frameworks emerge, the human role shifts from "decide" to "review."

4 Creative That Truly Converts

AI-generated static creative performs well. Video, long-form thought leadership, and brand creative still underperform human work at the top end.

Why 12-18 months: The gap between AI and human creative output is narrowing each quarter. For performance marketing where "effective" matters more than "award-winning," AI creative will be indistinguishable.

5 Physical Automation at SME Scale

Warehouse robotics, visual quality inspection, and autonomous logistics work at enterprise scale. The unit economics do not yet work for companies with fewer than 100 employees.

Why 12-18 months: Hardware costs are falling. Robotics-as-a-service models are emerging, shifting the model from capital investment to operational cost.

What Next

This report gives you the landscape.
The question is: where does your business sit
within it?

The free assessment takes five minutes. It
analyses your business against this framework
and sends you a personalised report showing
exactly where the value is, what could be
automated today, and what that is worth to your
bottom line.

No cost. No obligation. Just the numbers.

profitonpurpose.co.uk