

From Reactive to Proactive: How AI Agents Are Redefining Work

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY & CORE TAKEAWAY

Proactive AI agents differ fundamentally from reactive assistants like ChatGPT: they receive a goal, plan the steps themselves, use tools, check outcomes and escalate to humans only when needed. For Swiss mid-market companies, this means deploying agents and supervising people, not simply hiring more staff.

CONTEXT & EXECUTIVE RELEVANCE

A reactive AI assistant such as ChatGPT, Siri or Alexa waits for your question, delivers an answer — and the next step is yours to decide. A proactive AI agent reverses this pattern: you set a goal, the agent plans the necessary steps itself, selects the right tools, executes them, checks the outcome and adjusts course — until the goal is reached or a situation arises that it deliberately escalates to you. This shift is what is changing how office and knowledge work gets organised inside Swiss companies.

A capable language model with fast inference is enough for a reactive assistant. A proactive agent needs considerably more: a persistent state that survives beyond a single session, mechanisms that activate it without a user prompting it (so-called wakeup triggers), clear guardrails for its actions, and a binding rule for when a human must be brought in. The Zylos maturity model describes this progression across five levels — from purely reactive systems to agents that identify opportunities on their own and act without being asked.

CORE ACTION ITEMS

- 01 Level 0 – Reactive: the agent only responds to explicit requests.
- 02 Level 1 – Assisted: the agent suggests next steps but does not act on its own.
- 03 Level 2 – Semi-autonomous: the agent executes defined tasks with human approval.
- 04 Level 3 – Autonomous with oversight: the agent plans and acts independently, escalating only exceptions.

SWISS COMPLIANCE & ARCHITECTURE GUIDELINES

- ☑ Full compliance with revised Swiss Data Protection Act (revDSG).
- ☑ Zero vendor lock-in on closed proprietary models.
- ☑ Seamless integration into Abacus, Bexio and M365 ecosystems.

Non-Binding Process Analysis

Let us review in 20 minutes where AI agents create immediate measurable efficiency in your workflows.

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