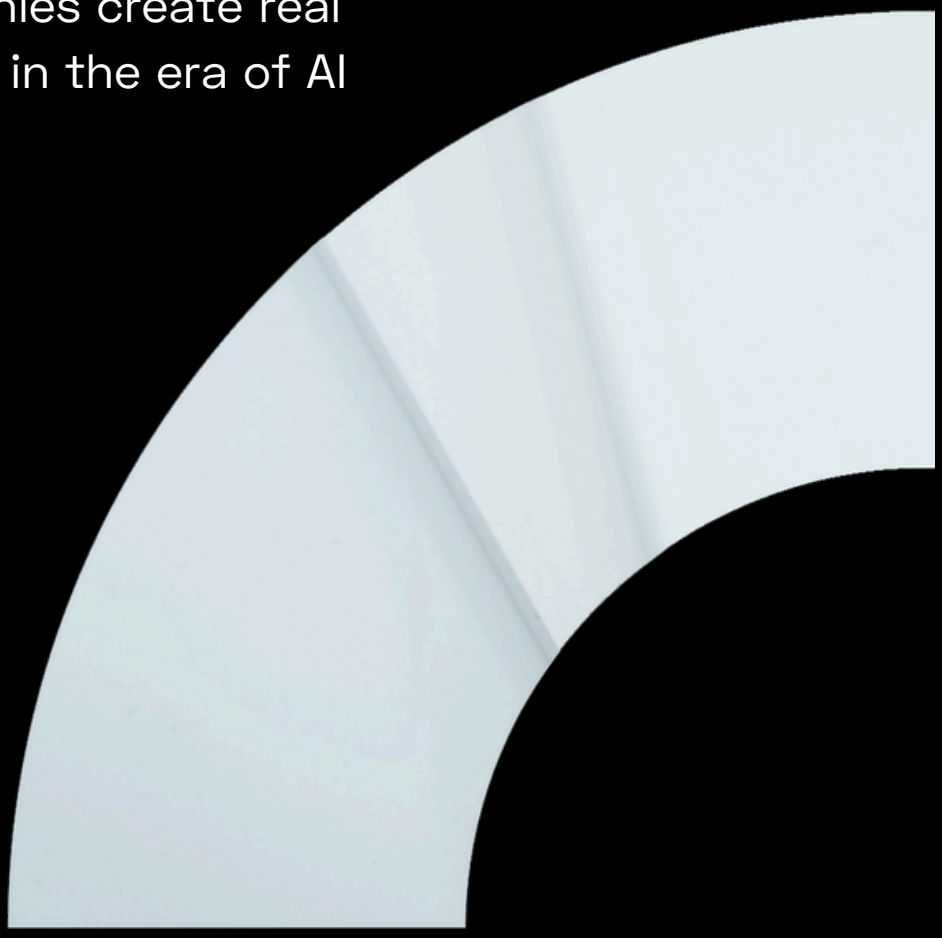
Agentic B2B Commerce: From digital self-service to autonomous trade

How B2B companies create real business impact in the era of AI agents



Executive summary

- B2B commerce is entering its third major wave of digitalisation: agentic AI. After the first wave of customer portals and the second wave of omnichannel self-service, AI agents are now beginning to initiate, evaluate, and execute transactions autonomously.

- Gartner forecasts that by 2028, 90% of B2B buying will be AI-agent intermediated, channelling more than $15 trillion through automated exchanges. The window to act is 24 to 36 months.

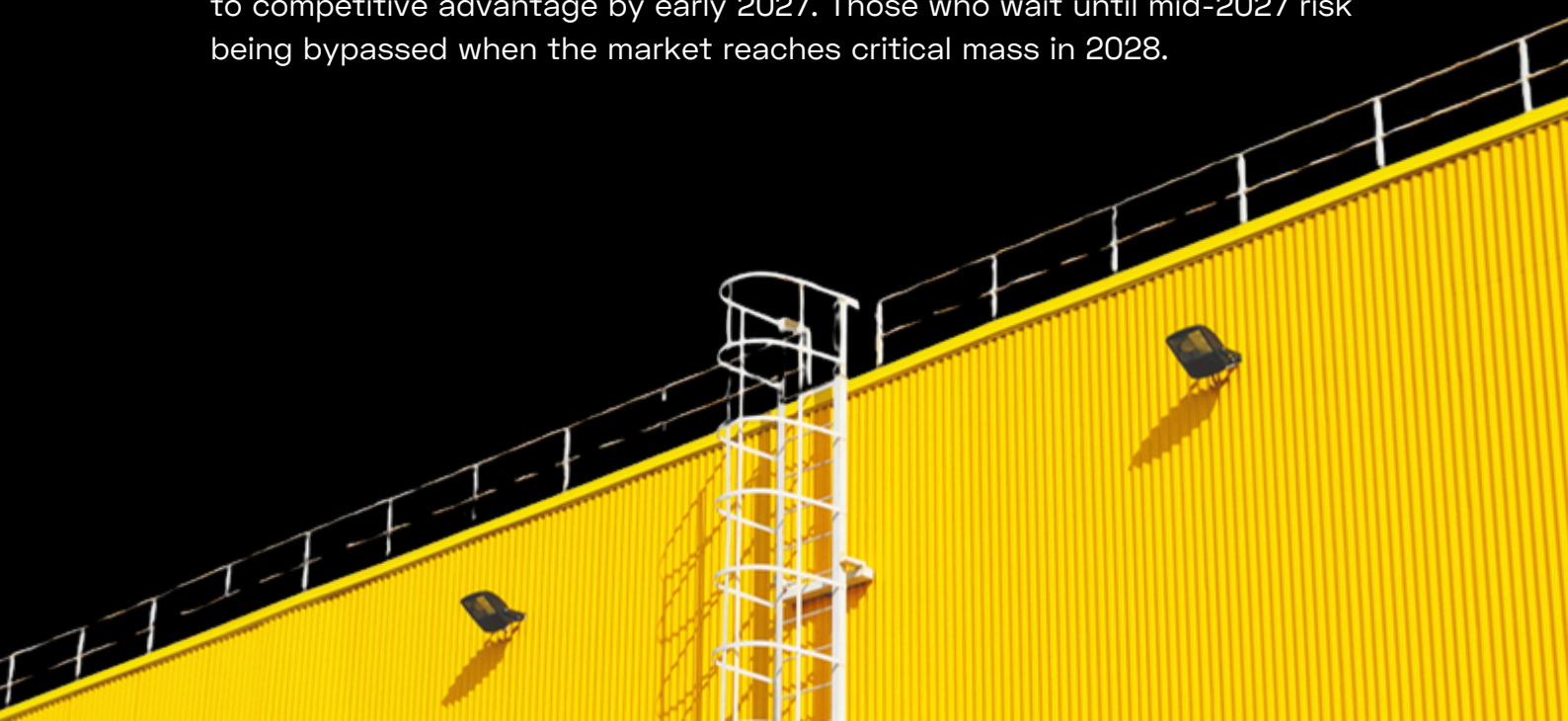
- AI procurement agents fundamentally differ from human buyers: they are data-driven, rule-bound, and loyalty-agnostic. Sellers must redesign their information infrastructure to serve machines, not just people.

- Three foundational pillars determine agentic readiness: structured data (product, pricing, stock), agent-compatible purchase workflows, and an organisational culture that embraces AI.

- New protocols such as the Model Context Protocol (MCP) and Google's Universal Commerce Protocol (UCP, January 2026) are becoming the de facto standards for agent-to-agent commerce.

- Relationship marketing is not dead, but it is shifting: the target audience moves from the individual buyer to the 'agent organiser' who sets constraints and supplier preferences for autonomous procurement agents.

- Companies that begin their agentic readiness journey now have a realistic path to competitive advantage by early 2027. Those who wait until mid-2027 risk being bypassed when the market reaches critical mass in 2028.



The three waves of B2B commerce digitalisation

To understand where B2B commerce is going, it helps to understand where it came from. The industry has moved through two distinct digital transformations, and a third is underway now.

Wave 1: The relationship era

Before digitalization, B2B commerce was entirely relationship-driven. Account managers and field sales representatives managed a portfolio of customers, acting as gatekeepers for every transaction. If a customer needed to place an order, negotiate a price, or check stock availability, they went through that individual. Product information lived in printed catalogues updated infrequently, and pricing was informal, often residing only in the sales rep's memory or personal notes.

The model worked. But it did not scale. Administrative overhead was high, transparency for customers was low, and any disruption to the relationship, illness, turnover, or competing priorities, could paralyse an account.

Wave 2: Digital self-service and omnichannel

The first wave of digital transformation introduced customer portals and self-service ordering. Sales reps and email threads remained part of the process, but transactions increasingly moved online. Customers gained the ability to log in, browse product catalogues, see their individual pricing, check real-time availability, and place orders at any hour without waiting for a callback.

The second, more mature wave consolidated these capabilities into what can be called a true omnichannel model: digital self-service at the centre, supported by field sales tools, inside sales, phone ordering, and email as complementary channels rather than primary ones. The result was higher operational efficiency, a materially better buying experience, and a business model that finally scaled.

> "Within four months of going live, customer self-service orders increased by 171%. The orders customers place themselves are also more profitable. Average order value is 30% higher, and margins increased by 11%."
> — Svante Petterson, Online Sales Manager, Session Map

> "A system we can grow in. Where we can increase revenue without adding personnel costs."
> — Svante Petterson, Online Sales Manager, Session Map

Despite clear evidence of value, adoption remains incomplete. McKinsey data shows only 65% of B2B companies currently offer ecommerce capabilities. Yet buyer expectations have already moved far ahead of most sellers.

Beyond the headline adoption gap, the data reveals how far buyer behaviour has already shifted. Forrester finds that 58% of B2B buyers are now comfortable placing complex orders online, not just simple reorders. And Capgemini research shows that 75% of B2B buyers would switch suppliers entirely for a better digital experience, with price not even a factor in that decision. The companies that moved early into digital self-service built a compounding advantage: better data, lower cost-to-serve, and stronger retention. The same dynamic is now beginning for the third wave.

Wave 3: Agentic commerce

The third wave is agentic AI. Unlike generative AI, which assists humans in researching and deciding, agentic AI can initiate, evaluate, and execute transactions autonomously. Agents do not browse webshops. They query APIs, interpret structured data, negotiate via protocols, and close purchase orders, often within minutes.

This is not a future scenario. It is happening now. Procurement agents that handle replenishment based on warehouse stock levels, AI systems that generate and evaluate supplier quotes, and agent-to-agent negotiation protocols are already deployed in early-adopter organisations. The question for B2B sellers is not whether this wave will arrive, but whether their infrastructure will be ready when it does.

The anatomy of an agentic buyer

The shift from human to agent procurement is not merely a technology change. It is a fundamental change in the nature of the buyer, with direct consequences for how sellers must structure data, design processes, and position their offer.

How AI agents differ from human buyers

Human B2B buyers are, by nature, loyal. They tend to consolidate with familiar suppliers, place batch orders on predictable cycles, and make decisions based on a combination of data, experience, and personal relationship. A trusted supplier gets the benefit of the doubt.

Agent buyers operate on an entirely different logic. Consider the contrast:

Dimension	Implication for sellers
Loyalty: Low. Agents evaluate all qualified suppliers against objective criteria on every transaction.	Established relationships provide no inherent protection. Pricing, availability, and data quality must compete on every query.
Order frequency: High. Agents can reorder continuously, not in monthly or weekly batches.	Order management systems must handle higher volumes of smaller, more frequent orders without friction.
Decision basis: Rules and constraints, not preferences. Agents follow explicit parameters set by their 'agent organiser'.	Product data completeness and pricing transparency become decisive. If an agent cannot resolve a query from structured data, it bypasses the supplier.
Discovery: API and protocol-driven. Agents do not browse. They query endpoints.	A webshop without an API layer and MCP server is invisible to agent buyers, regardless of how attractive its UI is.
Negotiation: Automated and rapid. Agent-to-agent negotiation can compress days of email threads into minutes.	Sellers without agent-facing capabilities are stuck in slow channels. Competitors with agent infrastructure will win on speed alone.

Two types of AI procurement agents

B2B procurement agents cluster into two primary archetypes, which often work in tandem on the buyer side:

The replenishment agent

Integrated with warehouse management or ERP systems, the replenishment agent monitors stock levels and triggers orders when thresholds are breached. It is largely reactive and operates within pre-approved supplier lists and price agreements. Banners, brand stories, and promotional content are irrelevant to this agent. What matters is real-time stock data, lead times, and accurate pricing APIs.

The procurement agent

More strategic in scope, the procurement agent researches sourcing options, solicits and compares quotes from multiple suppliers, negotiates terms, and surfaces a recommendation for human approval. It operates within constraints established by an agent organiser, typically a procurement manager or category manager, who defines which suppliers are approved, what quality thresholds apply, and which terms are acceptable.

> The glacier is coming closer. And once it is over you, it is too late to start acting. Getting all of your unstructured data into structured datasets and choosing a platform that can help you act through agents takes time. Start now, and you have a fighting opportunity in early 2027. Start in mid-2027, and the wave will already be here.
> — Benny Olsson, CTO, Norce

The role of the agent organiser

The agent organiser is the human who configures, supervises, and takes responsibility for the procurement agent's behaviour. This person sets the rules: which suppliers are approved, what maximum prices are acceptable, what quality certifications are required, what lead times are tolerable.

This role has a critical implication for B2B sellers: relationship marketing is not dead, it is shifting target. Traditional relationship marketing, built on social interactions, key account dinners, and personal rapport, has limited effect on an autonomous agent that evaluates suppliers purely on data. However, the agent organiser still cares about relationships. They will still attend industry events, engage with thought leadership, and form impressions of suppliers through personal interaction.

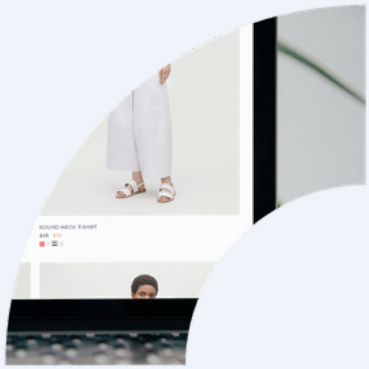
The strategic imperative for sellers is therefore dual: win the agent organiser through trust and relationship, and win the agent itself through data quality and API accessibility. Neither alone is sufficient.

Three pillars of agentic readiness

Readiness for agentic commerce requires progress across three interconnected dimensions. Infrastructure investment without cultural readiness will stall. Cultural openness without data quality will produce agents that hallucinate or fail. All three pillars must be developed in parallel.

Pillar 1: Structured data

Agents can only act on data they can access. The current state of data management in most B2B organisations is deeply incompatible with agentic requirements. Three categories of data are particularly critical:



Product data

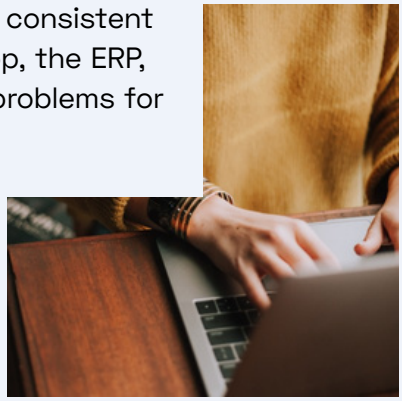
In most organisations, product information is fragmented across ERP systems, PIM platforms, and digital asset management tools. Specifications are often incomplete or inconsistent between systems. Compatibility rules, which products work with which configurations, may exist only in Word documents or in a sales representative's institutional memory. None of this is queryable by an agent in real time.

What agents require: a structured, queryable product catalogue with complete technical specifications, compatibility rules expressed as machine-readable attributes, and real-time API access. This is not merely a data management challenge; it is a data governance challenge. Someone must own the quality and completeness of product data as a strategic asset.

Pricing data

Customer-specific pricing in B2B is often scattered across Excel files, PDF agreements, and email threads. Discount structures and volume thresholds may be understood informally by account managers but not encoded in any system an agent can query. Contract terms may exist only in PDFs stored in a shared drive.

Agents require customer-specific pricing that is available in real time via API, dynamic in response to volume or agreement terms, and consistent across all channels. A price that differs between the webshop, the ERP, and the sales rep's offer sheet creates immediate reliability problems for any agent querying multiple sources.



Stock and lead time data
Real-time stock accuracy is a minimum requirement for agentic commerce. Stock data that is hours old is incompatible with agent-to-agent negotiation, where decisions are made in seconds. Lead times, which are often known informally by warehouse staff but not exposed via any structured endpoint, must be made queryable. An agent that cannot verify availability and expected delivery time cannot complete a procurement decision autonomously.

> Agents can only act on data they can reach. If product, pricing, and stock data are scattered, inconsistent, or not exposed via structured APIs, the agent will not be able to fulfill queries about your products. It will simply move to a supplier whose data it can access.
> — Benny Olsson, CTO, Norce

Pillar 2: Agent-compatible purchase workflows

B2B purchase flows span a wide spectrum of complexity, from simple repeat orders and customer quotes to multi-location procurement, volume-based pricing agreements, and complex deal structures involving custom terms. Not all of these can be automated immediately.

The practical approach is to progress from left to right on the complexity spectrum: automate the simpler, high-frequency flows first, then extend to more complex processes as capability and data quality improve.
Today's agentic commerce is most mature at the left end of the spectrum:

- Repeat orders with fixed pricing and known suppliers
- Stock replenishment within pre-approved supplier lists
- Simple quote requests where pricing parameters are encoded in the system
- Availability and lead time queries resolved via API

Buyers are already beginning to expect faster turnaround on these simpler flows. A customer quote that takes 48 hours to fulfil when an agent could resolve it in minutes creates measurable competitive disadvantage. The market expectation is shifting: speed is no longer a differentiator, it is a qualifier.

Critically, the transition does not require all suppliers to be agent-capable simultaneously. A well-designed procurement agent can negotiate via protocol with agent-equipped suppliers while simultaneously sending email requests to those who have not yet adopted agent infrastructure. Deals close faster with the former. The latter risk being too slow.

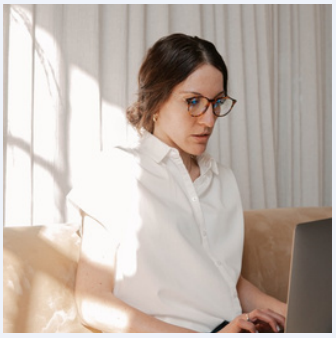
Pillar 3: Organisational culture

Structured data and agent-compatible workflows are necessary but not sufficient. Organisations that deploy agentic tools into a resistant or unprepared culture will experience friction, low adoption, and failed implementations.
Gartner's research supports this: over 40% of agentic AI projects will be cancelled by the end of 2027 due to escalating costs, unclear business value, or inadequate risk controls. The primary culprit in most of these failures is not technology. It is organisational readiness.

Based on Norce's own 18-month journey of AI adoption, three cultural practices are determinative:

Work with the culture, not around It
Deploying tools into a resistant culture creates friction and wastes investment. Adoption requires genuine buy-in from formal leadership, but more importantly from informal leaders: the individuals in any organisation whose enthusiasm or scepticism disproportionately influences the people around them. Identifying and enrolling these informal leaders is often the highest-leverage action available to a transformation programme.

Leaders must lead by doing
Declarations and mandates do not change behaviour. Leaders who visibly use AI tools in their own work, who openly discuss what is working and what is not, and who demonstrate comfort with experimentation and failure create the psychological safety necessary for broader adoption. A leader who stands at a podium demanding AI adoption and then continues to work exactly as before signals that the initiative is not serious.



Embed AI into the everyday, not into a pilot
Isolated AI pilots, run by a small dedicated team and then reported on at a quarterly all-hands, produce minimal organisational learning. AI adoption requires integration into daily workflows across all functions and levels. When AI tools are embedded into the actual work rather than positioned as a separate initiative, the organisation develops genuine capability through practice.

> Culture really is the foundation that everything rests on. Without it, everything else is going to stall. You can throw all the tools, all the processes, and all the money at this problem. If you do not have a culture in your organisation that is open to AI and ready to adopt the agentic mindset, it is going to crash and burn.
> — Benny Olsson, CTO, Norce

Agentic commerce in action: A live demo walkthrough

The best way to understand what agentic B2B commerce actually means is to watch it happen. At the Norce and Microsoft webinar in Q1 2026, CTO Benny Olsson demonstrated a fully functional agent-to-agent procurement system, live and unscripted. What follows is a step-by-step account of that demo. It is worth reading carefully, because the gap between what took minutes in the demo and what would have taken hours or days in a traditional process is the gap that will separate competitive from non-competitive B2B sellers over the next 24 months. For the live walkthrough, you can also watch the demo here

The setup: A buyer-side procurement system

The demo started not on the seller side, but on the buyer side. This is an important framing choice. Norce builds software for sellers, but the agentic shift begins on the procurement side. Buyer-side agents are already deployed in forward-looking organisations. The question for sellers is whether they have the infrastructure to receive those agents when they arrive.

The procurement system shown was intentionally simple: a small product catalogue, a handful of suppliers with individual ratings, purchase order history, and a conversational AI interface. The supplier rating system is worth noting. As Benny explained, ratings are the mechanism through which the human agent organiser exerts influence on the agent. The procurement manager may not control every agent decision, but they set the trust hierarchy that shapes which suppliers the agent approaches first and weights most heavily.

The AI model powering the procurement agent was built on Microsoft Azure AI Foundry, with full access to the product catalogue and supplier list. The interface was a conversational chat window, embedded directly in the procurement system. No separate app, no context switching. The agent lives where the work happens.

Demo 1: Agent-to-agent negotiation, three suppliers

The first scenario: a product that needs restocking. The procurement agent identifies it automatically when asked "what needs restocking?" and responds with the item and a question: would you like to start negotiations with suppliers?

The buyer types a single instruction: "Order 20 units. Speed is a priority."

That is the entirety of the human input. From this point, the agent takes over.

All three suppliers for this product have agent-capable commerce systems on their side. This means the procurement agent does not send emails or fill in web forms. It opens real-time conversations with three seller agents simultaneously, each of which has access to its own structured product data, customer-specific pricing, stock levels, and lead time information.

Supplier	Price per unit	Shipping cost	Lead time
Nord Supply AB (initial)	$88	$0	2 days
Competitor (initial)	$95	$6.50	5 days
Competitor (after negotiation)	Improved offer	Improved offer	Competed on speed
WINNER: Nord Supply AB	$88 / unit	$0 shipping	2 days

The procurement agent did not simply pick the cheapest option. It reasoned across price, total cost including shipping, and lead time against the stated constraint, speed as priority, and chose Nord Supply AB. Critically, the agent's full reasoning was visible in the UI. Transparency of agent logic is a deliberate design principle: users need to understand why the agent decided what it did, not just receive an output. The human can review, override, or approve. In this case, the deal looked good. One click: purchase order created.

> A negotiation that would normally take hours, if not days, was done in a matter of minutes. That is the real strength of agentic commerce in the B2B space.
> — Benny Olsson, CTO, Norce

Demo 2: The mixed-capability world (and why it matters even more)

The second scenario was more instructive than the first, because it reflects the world as it actually is today, not as it will be in two years. The product in question had three suppliers. Two of them had agent-capable commerce systems. The third, represented in the demo by a contact named David Hartley at a company called Meridian, had no agent capability. The only way to reach them was email.

The procurement agent handled this gracefully. It opened real-time agent-to-agent negotiations with the two capable suppliers simultaneously. For David Hartley and Meridian, it sent an email and flagged the thread as: email only, not agent-to-agent capable. Awaiting reply.

While the agent was live-negotiating with two suppliers, David's inbox sat unread. After a few minutes of back-and-forth between the agents, a deal emerged: 175 per unit, including shipping, five-day lead time. David still had not replied.

> David might get back to us later today. David might get back to us tomorrow. But by then it is too late. The deal is already done.
> — Benny Olsson, CTO, Norce, during the live demo

This is the scenario that every B2B seller needs to sit with. The buyer's agent did not discriminate against David or Meridian. It sent the email. It waited. But it did not wait long, because it did not have to. Two other suppliers were already negotiating in real time. By the time David's reply arrived, the purchase order was already issued. No malice, no preference. Just speed.

What the demo reveals about competitive position

Three structural insights emerge from Benny's demo that go beyond the technology itself:

1. Agent infrastructure is now a qualifying condition, not a differentiator
In the demo, the supplier without agent capability was not disqualified from consideration. The email was sent. But it could not compete on speed with suppliers whose agents were already in negotiation. As buyer-side agent adoption grows and purchase cycles compress from days to minutes, the window for a slow-channel response will narrow further. Eventually, the email option will not be sent at all. Suppliers without agent infrastructure will simply not appear in the shortlist.

2. Transparency of reasoning is non-negotiable
The demo made a point of showing the agent's full reasoning process before the purchase order was created. This is not a nice-to-have. Organisations will not delegate procurement decisions to agents they cannot interrogate. The ability to inspect, understand, and override agent logic is the condition under which humans extend trust to autonomous systems. Sellers building agent-facing infrastructure need to understand that the buyer's agent will also expect to see reasoning, not just receive outputs.

3. Supplier ratings are the new relationship signal
In the procurement system shown, supplier ratings were prominently displayed and explicitly described as signals that influence agent behaviour. The agent organiser, the human who configures the procurement system, sets these ratings based on experience, reliability, and relationship quality. This is where traditional relationship marketing has its last and most important job: earn a high supplier rating from the agent organiser, and the agent will prioritise you. Fail at that relationship, and no amount of agent infrastructure will save you from being deprioritised.

Minutes
for agent-to-agent negotiation vs. hours or days via email/phone

1 prompt
human input required to trigger full multi-supplier negotiation

100%
of the deal logic visible and reviewable before order confirmation

The emerging infrastructure layer: Protocols and standards

Agentic commerce requires agents to communicate with commerce systems in a standardised way. Without common protocols, every seller-buyer agent integration requires custom development, creating an N-by-N problem that prevents the ecosystem from scaling. Two protocols are now emerging as foundational standards:

Model Context Protocol (MCP)

Developed and open-sourced by Anthropic, the Model Context Protocol defines how AI agents discover and interact with external tools, APIs, and data sources. For commerce, an MCP server acts as a structured interface layer that an agent can query to understand what a platform can do, what data it exposes, and how to interact with it. Rather than learning the idiosyncrasies of each vendor's API individually, an agent can query an MCP server and receive a standardised description of available capabilities.

Norce released a commerce-oriented MCP server in December 2025, enabling AI agents to interact with the Norce commerce engine in a structured, discoverable way. This positions Norce-powered commerce solutions as agent-compatible without requiring custom integration for each individual agent deployment.

Universal Commerce Protocol (UCP)

In January 2026, Google released the Universal Commerce Protocol as an open standard, co-developed with Shopify, Target, Walmart, Etsy, and Wayfair, and endorsed by more than 20 organisations across retail and payments including Adyen, American Express, Mastercard, Stripe, and Visa. UCP establishes a common language for AI agents to interact with commerce systems across the entire buying journey, from product discovery and checkout to post-purchase support.

UCP is designed to be compatible with existing protocols including MCP, Agent2Agent (A2A), and Agent Payments Protocol (AP2). It addresses the N-by-N integration problem directly: rather than requiring each buyer agent to build a custom integration with each seller platform, UCP enables any agent to interact with any UCP-compliant merchant through a single standard.

> For agentic commerce to scale, it is critical for the industry to align on a common set of standards. UCP is designed to be that foundation.
> — Benny Olsson, CTO, Norce

Norce has added native UCP support to its product roadmap. The firm's belief is that UCP will become the de facto standard for agent-to-agent commerce communication in the near term, and that early adoption will be a meaningful differentiator for sellers and their platform providers.

Why protocol adoption matters now

The adoption pattern for agentic protocols resembles the adoption pattern of the telephone: the value of being connected increases non-linearly as more parties adopt the same standard. A seller who supports agent-to-agent negotiation via MCP or UCP today gains immediate speed advantages over email-only competitors. As agent adoption grows among buyers, the speed gap becomes a structural disadvantage that is difficult to close retroactively.

Critically, procurement agents on the buyer side are already deployed in early-adopter organisations. They are currently limited in what they can automate because the seller side has not yet caught up. This is the window. Sellers who build agent-compatible infrastructure now will be ready when buyer-side adoption reaches critical mass. Those who wait will find the market has moved without them.

What this means for B2B marketing and sales

The arrival of agent buyers does not eliminate the need for marketing and sales. It transforms what effective marketing and sales look like.

The end of agent-directed relationship marketing

Promotional banners, campaign emails, brand storytelling, and account dinners have no effect on a procurement agent. The agent does not experience these signals and would not weight them in its decision even if it did. Agents evaluate on objective criteria: price, availability, lead time, data completeness, and the constraint parameters set by their organiser.

This means a significant portion of traditional B2B marketing investment, if directed at the agent itself, will produce zero return. Organisations that do not recognise this shift will continue to spend on channels that no longer reach the decision-maker.

The rise of 'Agent Discoverability' as a marketing discipline

If agents cannot find your products or cannot resolve queries against your data, you do not exist in that sales channel. Discoverability for agents is determined not by SEO or advertising, but by:

- The completeness and accuracy of your structured product data
- The availability and reliability of your pricing and stock APIs
- Your compliance with emerging standards such as MCP and UCP
- Your rating and trust score within procurement platforms, which agent organisers configure based on experience

This creates a new category of competitive investment: data quality and API infrastructure as marketing assets. A seller with superior product data and reliable API endpoints will be surfaced more consistently by procurement agents than a competitor with richer brand content but poor data hygiene.

Retargeting relationship marketing to the agent organiser

While agents are indifferent to relationship marketing, the agent organisers who configure them are not. These procurement managers and category managers will still attend industry events, read thought leadership, engage with trusted advisors, and form supplier preferences based on experience and relationship. The key difference is that they will also require exactly what the agents require: structured data, transparent pricing, and reliable API access.

Effective B2B marketing in the agentic era therefore has two simultaneous targets: the agent organiser (trust, insight, relationship, brand) and the agent itself (data quality, API reliability, protocol compliance). Neglecting either creates vulnerability.

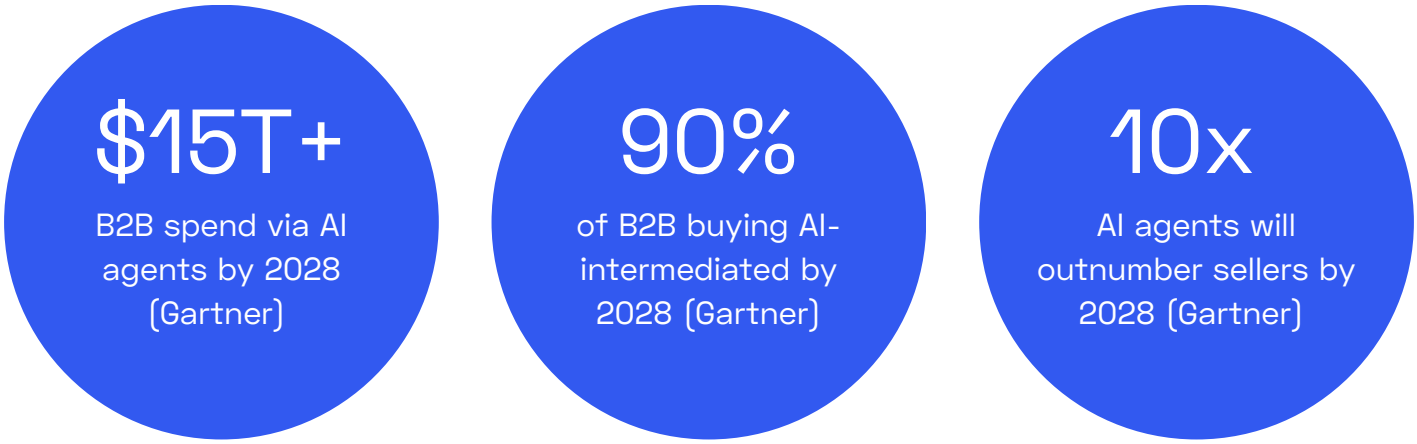
The human role shifts from executor to orchestrator

The most significant implication for B2B sales teams is not elimination but transformation. Agents absorb the repetitive, data-intensive work: pricing lookups, availability queries, quote generation, order processing, status tracking. This frees human sellers to focus on the genuinely human capabilities that agents cannot replicate: building trust, navigating ambiguity, managing complex negotiations where judgement and relationship matter more than speed, and identifying opportunities that no algorithm has yet encoded.

The human does not disappear in the agentic era. The human gets leverage. A sales professional who understands how to configure, supervise, and interpret the output of procurement and selling agents can manage an account portfolio that would have been impossible manually. The role shifts from execution to orchestration.

The strategic timeline: Why 2026 is the year to act

The Gartner forecast of $15 trillion in AI-agent-intermediated B2B purchasing by 2028 is not a distant prediction. It is a 24-to-36-month horizon from today. Understanding what that timeline requires operationally is essential for planning.

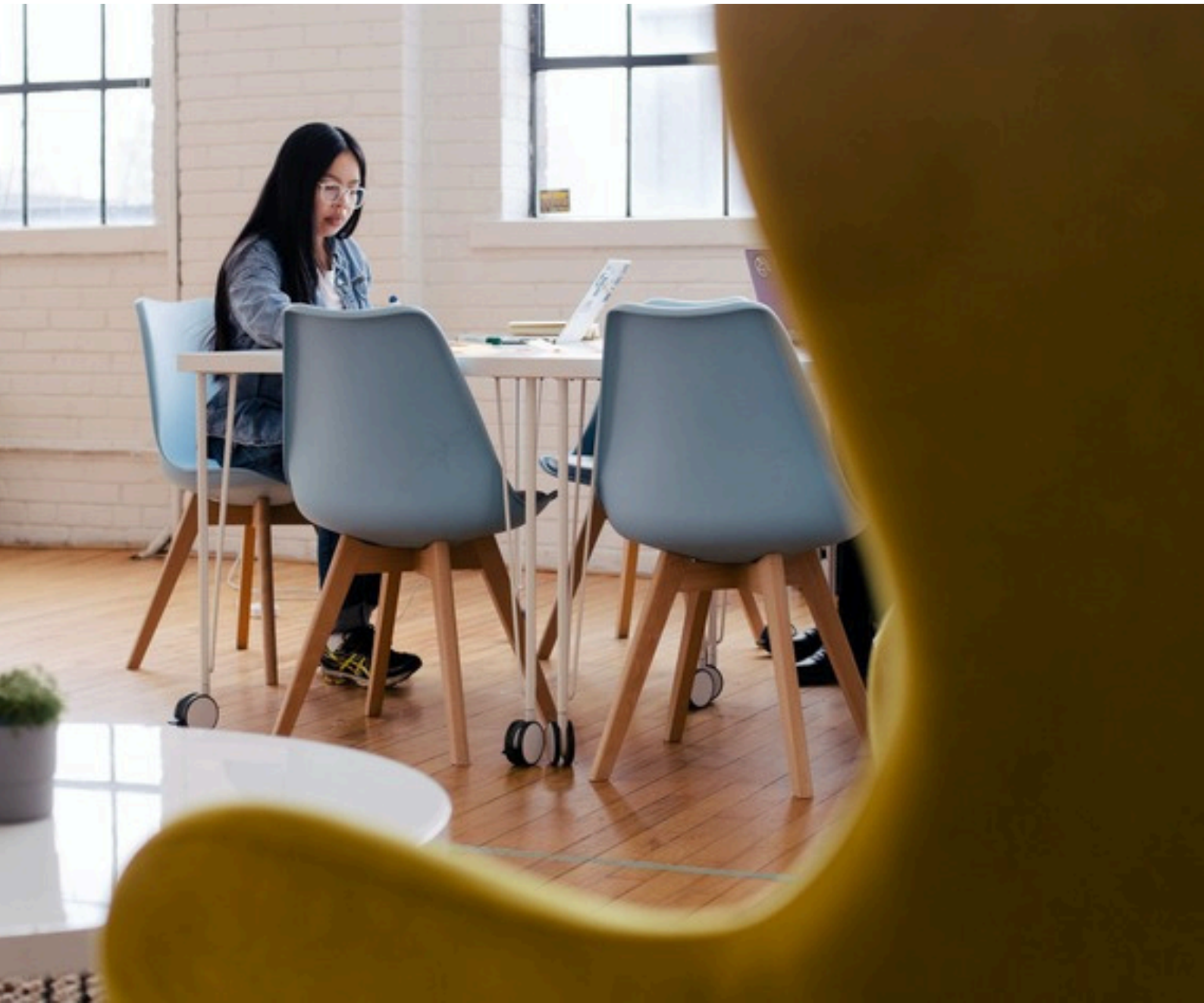


Consider what agentic readiness actually requires and how long each step takes in practice:

1. Data audit and gap analysis: typically 2 to 4 months to map the current state of product, pricing, and stock data across all systems and identify what is missing, inconsistent, or not machine-readable.
2. Data governance programme: establishing ownership, quality standards, and update processes for structured data is an organisational change, not a technical project. Realistic timeframe: 3 to 6 months before meaningful progress is visible.
3. Platform capability assessment and potential migration: evaluating whether the current commerce platform can support the API layer, MCP server integration, and real-time data requirements of agentic commerce. If migration is required, this adds 6 to 18 months depending on complexity.
4. Agent-compatible workflow design: mapping existing purchase flows, identifying which can be automated now, and re-engineering those that cannot. This is both a technical and a change management effort: 3 to 6 months.
5. Cultural transformation and AI adoption: the slowest variable. Organisations that begin today, with leadership commitment and embedded practices, can expect meaningful cultural shift within 12 to 18 months.

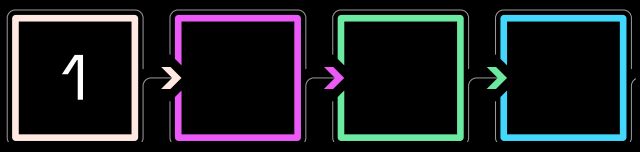
Summing these timelines, a company starting from a typical legacy state today faces a minimum of 18 months before it can credibly claim agentic readiness. An organisation that begins now has a reasonable path to readiness by early to mid 2027. One that waits until the end of 2026 will arrive after the first significant wave of market share redistribution has already occurred.

> The market is already at a point where buyers expect sellers to automate simpler flows and fulfil orders faster than ever. A customer quote that takes 48 hours when an agent could resolve it in minutes is already a competitive liability, not just a future risk.
> — Rikard Andersson, CCO, Norce



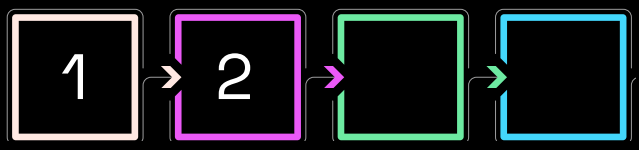
A practical readiness roadmap for B2B sellers

The following framework translates the strategic imperatives of agentic commerce into a sequenced action plan. Organisations will move through these phases at different speeds depending on their starting position, but the sequence reflects the dependencies between steps.



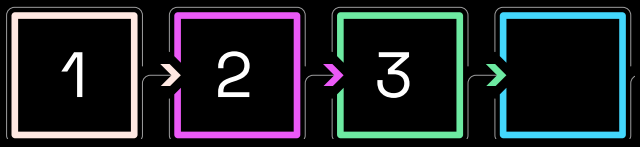
Phase 1: Diagnose and prioritise (months 1 to 3)

- Audit product data completeness across all systems (ERP, PIM, DAM). Identify which attributes are missing, inconsistent, or not machine-readable.
- Map pricing data: where does customer-specific pricing live? Is it in the platform, in Excel files, in PDF contracts, or in the sales team's heads? Quantify the gap between current state and API-accessible state.
- Assess stock and lead time data: what is the latency of your stock data? Are lead times documented in any structured system, or are they informal knowledge?
- Evaluate platform capability: does your current commerce platform expose a structured API? Does it support or allow for MCP server integration? What would UCP compliance require?
- Identify agent organiser targets: who in your key accounts is or will be responsible for configuring procurement agents? These individuals are now a primary audience for your commercial team.



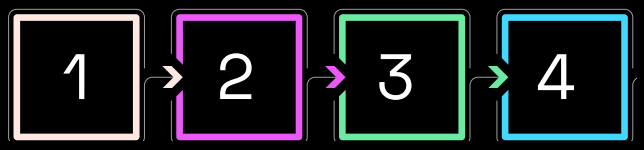
Phase 2: Build the foundation (months 3 to 12)

- Establish data governance: assign ownership of product, pricing, and stock data quality. Define standards, update processes, and measurement. Make this a board-visible initiative.
- Consolidate and structure pricing data: move customer-specific pricing into the commerce platform or a connected pricing engine that exposes it via API. Retire Excel-based pricing management.
- Achieve real-time stock and lead time availability: integrate warehouse and supplier systems to eliminate data latency. Aim for sub-minute stock updates as a minimum standard.
- Deploy or upgrade to an API-first commerce platform: if your current platform cannot serve as the foundation for an agent-accessible layer, evaluate alternatives. Platforms designed for headless, API-first architecture are inherently better positioned for agentic use cases.
- Launch AI adoption internally: embed AI tools into daily workflows across functions. Begin with productivity use cases, then extend to customer-facing applications.



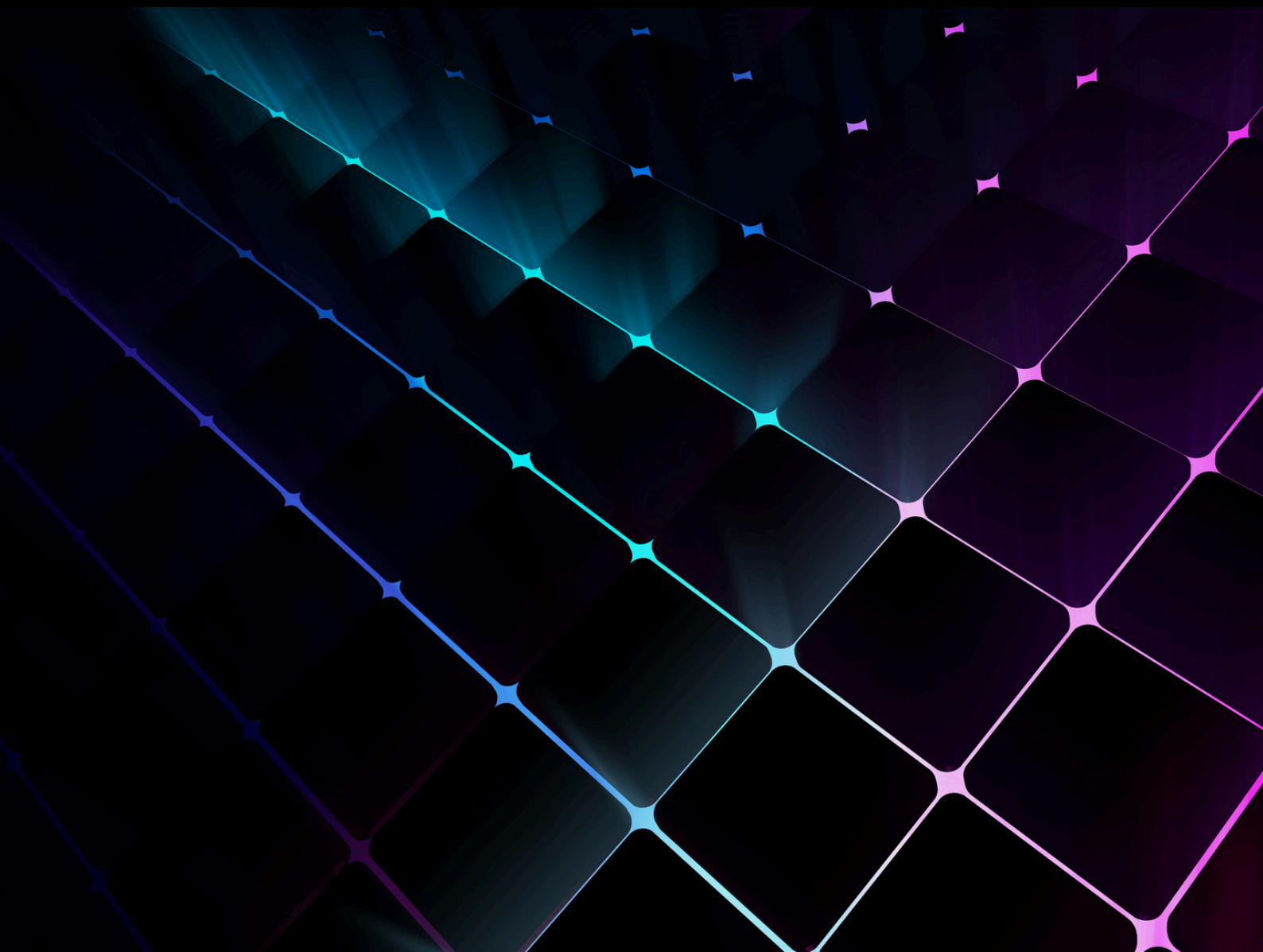
Phase 3: Build agent-compatible infrastructure (months 6 to 18)

- Deploy an MCP server: expose your commerce capabilities, product catalogue, pricing, and stock data in a standardised, agent-discoverable format. This is the minimum requirement for agent-to-agent interaction.
- Map and automate simpler purchase flows: identify repeat order, stock replenishment, and simple quote flows that can be fully or partially automated. Build these workflows as the foundation for more complex automation later.
- Begin UCP evaluation and implementation: assess what UCP compliance requires for your platform and initiate integration work. Early adoption positions your platform as a preferred destination for agent-driven commerce.
- Pilot agent-to-agent negotiation with willing customers: identify one or two key accounts with procurement agents deployed and build a joint proof of concept. Real-world learning will accelerate your capability development faster than any internal exercise.



Phase 4: Scale and optimise (months 12 to 24)

- Extend automation to more complex purchase flows: as data quality improves and simpler flows are proven, extend agent capabilities to multi-location procurement, volume-based pricing, and agreement-based ordering.
- Develop agent organiser engagement programmes: create specific touchpoints, content, and trust-building mechanisms aimed at the procurement managers and category directors who configure buyer-side agents.
- Establish trust and rating mechanisms: work with procurement platform partners to understand how your organisation is rated and surfaced by buyer-side agents. Supplier ratings within procurement systems will become as strategically important as credit ratings.
- Publish your agentic capabilities: make it easy for buyer-side agents to discover what you can do. This may mean explicit documentation of your MCP server capabilities, UCP compliance, and supported transaction types.



The Norce perspective: Commerce infrastructure for the agentic era

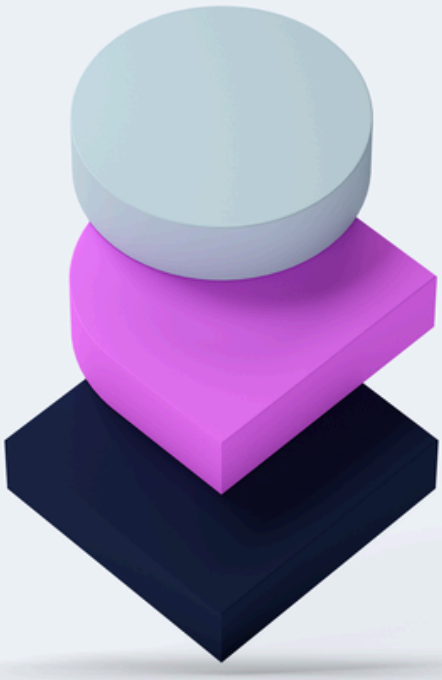
Norce Commerce is an API-first, headless ecommerce platform built for the complexity of B2B and mixed B2B/B2C commerce: large product assortments, advanced pricing structures with customer-specific tiers and agreement-based rules, and multiple buying configurations across different channels and customer segments.

This architectural foundation is directly relevant to agentic commerce. AI agents can only act on well-structured, consistently organised data. A platform built to handle complex pricing logic, large catalogue structures, and multi-dimensional customer configurations is inherently better positioned to serve as the data layer for agentic procurement than a platform optimised for simpler transaction types.

Norce's current and near-term agentic capabilities include:

- Commerce MCP Server (released December 2025): exposes Norce commerce capabilities in a structured, agent-discoverable format compatible with any MCP-supporting AI framework.
- Open-source Conversation Agent SDK (released January 2026): a reference implementation for building AI-powered conversation interfaces on top of the Norce commerce engine, available to customers and solution partners.
- Native UCP support (on roadmap): integration with Google's Universal Commerce Protocol to enable seamless agent-to-agent commerce across UCP-compliant surfaces.
- AI-augmented PIM capabilities (on roadmap): native AI support for product information management, including enrichment, categorisation, and quality scoring, to reduce the data governance burden that is the most common agentic readiness bottleneck.

Norce's approach follows a partner model: rather than building all agentic capability in-house, the platform publishes open standards and interfaces that solution partners and customers can extend and adapt for specific vertical or customer use cases. This is consistent with the modular, composable architecture principles that underpin effective agentic commerce infrastructure.



Conclusion: The glacier has a timeline

The shift to agentic B2B commerce is not a speculative future. The protocols are live. The Gartner forecasts are published. The procurement agents are deployed, currently limited by the seller side's readiness rather than by the technology itself. The $15 trillion in B2B purchasing that will flow through AI agent exchanges by 2028 is 24 to 36 months away.

Three things are true simultaneously. First, the infrastructure to participate in agentic commerce is buildable today, by companies of all sizes, using available technology and open standards. Secondly, the organisational, data, and cultural changes required take time, more time than most organisations expect. Thirdly, the companies that begin now will have a structural advantage when the market reaches critical mass that will be very difficult for late movers to overcome.

The buyers of 2028 will not be waiting for a sales rep's email reply. Their procurement agents will be querying APIs, comparing quotes across suppliers in real time, negotiating via protocol, and submitting purchase orders in minutes. The sellers who will capture those orders are the ones who have built the infrastructure to receive them.

The glacier is moving. And it has a timeline.

About Norce

Norce Commerce is an API-first, headless ecommerce platform built for mid-to-large B2B and B2C companies managing broad product assortments and complex pricing structures. Running cloud-native on Microsoft Azure, Norce is designed to serve as the commerce backbone for organisations operating across multiple channels, customer segments, and geographies. Norce is headquartered in the Nordics and operates as a SaaS platform through a network of certified solution partners.

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References and sources

The following research, reports, and announcements informed this white paper:

- Gartner IT Symposium/Xpo 2025: Top Strategic Predictions for 2026 and Beyond (October 2025). Includes forecast that by 2028, 90% of B2B buying will be AI-agent intermediated, channeling over $15 trillion through agent exchanges.
- Gartner: "By 2028, AI Agents Will Outnumber Sellers by 10X" (November 2025). Projects that fewer than 40% of sellers will report AI agents improved their productivity, underscoring the importance of strategy over volume.
- Gartner: "Over 40% of Agentic AI Projects Will Be Canceled by End of 2027" (June 2025). Identifies data quality, unclear ROI, and cultural resistance as primary failure drivers.
- Gartner: "40% of Enterprise Apps Will Feature Task-Specific AI Agents by 2026" (August 2025). Projects that by 2028, a third of user experiences will shift from native applications to agentic front ends.
- Gartner: "60% of Brands Will Use Agentic AI to Deliver One-to-One Interactions by 2028" (January 2026). Signals end of channel-based marketing in favour of AI-driven personalization.
- Forrester: B2B Marketing and Sales Predictions 2025 (October 2024). Projects that more than half of B2B transactions of $1 million or greater will be processed through digital self-serve channels, and that 95% of buyers expect to use generative AI in their purchase process.
- Session Map case study (Norce, 2025): Within four months of deploying a Norce-powered B2B commerce solution, Session Map increased self-service orders by 171%, grew average order value by 30%, and improved gross margins by 11%. Quote from Svante Petterson, Online Sales Manager: "A system we can grow in. Where we can increase revenue without adding personnel costs."
- Capgemini Research Institute: B2B Buying Behaviour Study (2024). Documents that 75% of B2B buyers would switch supplier for a better digital experience, independent of pricing. Also finds 58% of B2B buyers are comfortable placing complex orders online.
- Shopify/Gartner: Gartner found 61% of B2B buyers now prefer a rep-free buying experience (cited in Shopify B2B Ecommerce Trends 2025 to 2026).
- Google: Universal Commerce Protocol (UCP) Launch (January 11, 2026). Open standard for agentic commerce co-developed with Shopify, Target, Walmart, Etsy, and Wayfair, endorsed by 20+ partners. Available at ucp.dev.
- Shopify: "The Agentic Commerce Platform" and "Building the Universal Commerce Protocol" (January 2026). Technical architecture and commercial rationale for UCP.
- Anthropic: Model Context Protocol (MCP) specification and open-source release (2024). Foundation for agent-discoverable API interfaces.
- Digital Commerce 360 B2B News: Coverage of Gartner predictions, B2B buyer trends, and agentic commerce developments (various 2025 to 2026 issues).
- LinkedIn B2B Buyer Report 2025: Documents that millennials now constitute 73% of all B2B buyers and 44% of final purchasing decision-makers.


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