GO BEYOND

THE SHIFT TO AGENTIC COMMERCE:

A new model for unified operations & customer experience.

How AI agents are reshaping operations
& improve how customers buy.

17 min read

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The evolving commerce landscape

Organisations involved in commerce are navigating a challenging period of change. Ongoing pressure on margins, supply chains and customer expectations is forcing leaders to rethink how their businesses operate.

At the same time, the economics of growth are becoming more complex. Customers are more value-driven, less loyal and more selective in how and where they buy. Many organisations are struggling to deliver seamless buying experiences while maintaining control over cost, fulfilment and operational risk.

Customers are also changing how they buy. Traditional browsing is being complemented by AI-driven interactions, where customers ask questions, compare options and purchase directly through conversational interfaces.

These pressures are consistent across the market. Margin compression, demand volatility and rising operational complexity are becoming core challenges. Disconnected systems, manual processes and fragmented ownership are no longer sustainable.

Artificial intelligence presents a clear opportunity to respond, particularly through the emergence of agentic commerce. Unlike traditional automation, agentic models enable intelligent agents to take action across end-to-end processes, supporting both customer interactions and operational decision-making in real time.

15x ↑ increase in orders originating from AI searches
8x ↑ increase in AI-driven traffic to online storefronts
2x ↑ increase in stores receiving traffic from AI searches

– Shopify global search API usage

However, agentic commerce is still not well understood. Many organisations lack clarity on what it is, where it applies and how to adopt it safely. This creates a growing risk, where the opportunity is clear, but the path forward is not.

These challenges are not just technology issues. They are driven by operating models that were not designed for real-time, connected decision-making. Siloed teams, sequential workflows and fragmented data limit how effectively organisations can respond to change.

Contents

Why read this eBook?

This eBook explores what agentic commerce means in practice, the challenges it can help address, and how organisations can begin to evolve their operating models.

It includes:

- A practical explanation of agentic commerce and how it differs from traditional automation and AI tools
- An overview of the key challenges agentic commerce is designed to address across operations and customer experience
- Examples of where and how agentic commerce can be applied across customer journeys, fulfilment and back-office workflows
- Insight into emerging considerations such as AI-driven product discovery and Generative Engine Optimisation (GEO)
- Guidance on how commerce operating models need to evolve to support agentic ways of working
- Key considerations and foundational capabilities required to become agentic-ready

What is agentic commerce?

Agentic commerce is a model where AI agents act on behalf of customers, frontline teams and operations to complete tasks and make decisions. Unlike traditional automation, these agents operate across end-to-end processes, not just individual interactions.

In practice, this means they can guide customer buying decisions, support staff with real-time insights, and coordinate workflows across operations. They work across customer journeys, inventory and fulfilment, pricing and promotions, supplier interactions and back-office processes.

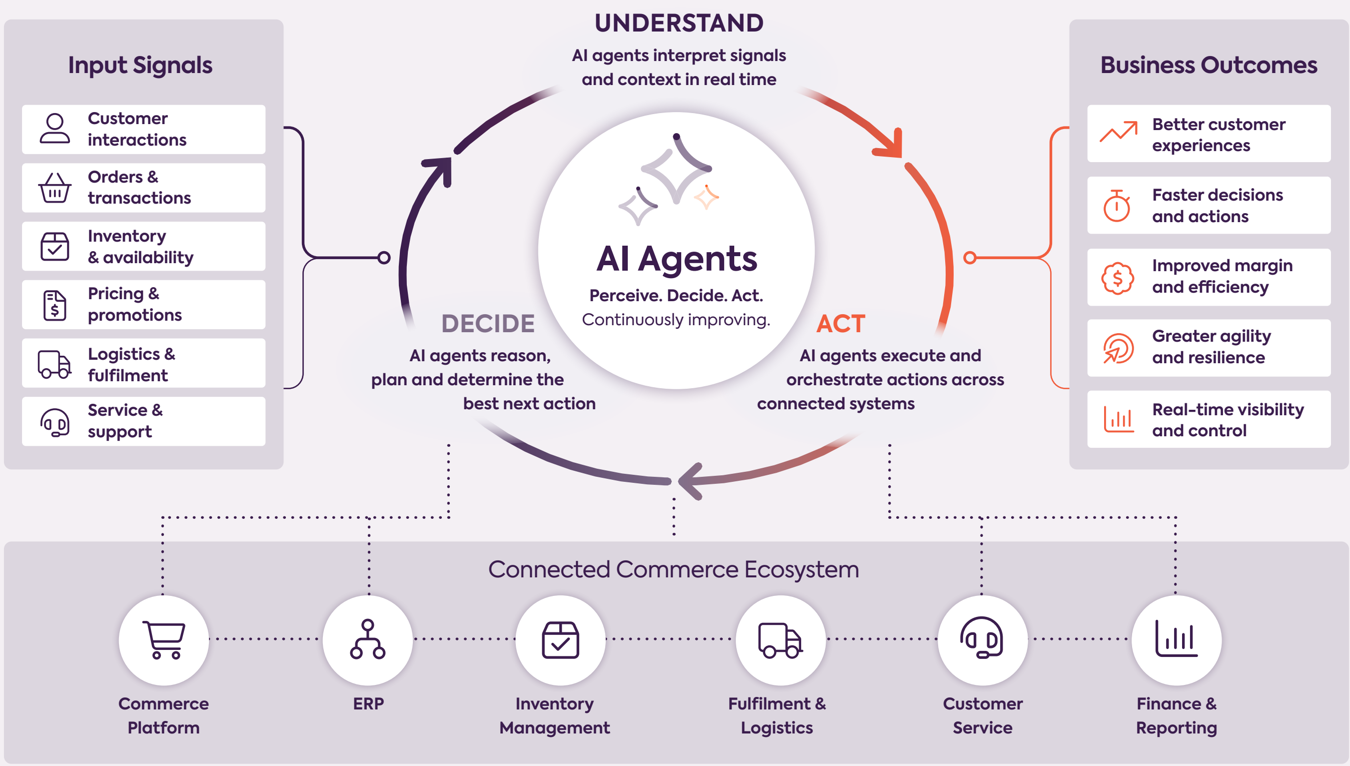
Agents rely on connected data from commerce, inventory, finance and customer systems to act in real time. This reduces manual effort, removes handoffs and limits reliance on disconnected processes.

As AI increasingly drives product discovery, the accuracy and accessibility of product data becomes critical. Inaccurate pricing, availability or product information can directly impact whether a brand is surfaced and selected.

Human oversight remains central. People define the goals and guardrails, while agents handle execution and escalate when needed.

For organisations under pressure to improve efficiency, protect margins and deliver better customer experience, this creates a more responsive way of operating at scale.

At its core, agentic commerce enables faster, more consistent decision-making by allowing agents to act in real time on connected data, within clearly defined goals and guardrails.



AI agents continuously learn and adapt, optimising every interaction and outcome across the commerce value chain.

Types of commerce operating models

Commerce operating models vary, but they often share common patterns and challenges.

Direct-to-consumer models	Multi-channel or store-led environments	Wholesale and B2B models
Speed to market and growth can outpace operational visibility and control.	Inventory, fulfilment and customer experience must stay aligned across multiple touch-points.	Pricing, contracts and fulfilment rules are complex and often dependent on individual knowledge.

Across each, organisations rely heavily on manual processes, fragmented data and delayed decision-making. This creates gaps between customer experience and operational reality, limiting the ability to respond quickly, scale efficiently and maintain control as complexity increases.

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What key problems can agentic commerce solve?

The challenges with commerce are interconnected. Together, they create friction across both customer experience and operations, limiting speed, consistency and control.

Customer experience, self-service & buying friction

As expectations rise, customers expect fast, accurate and self-service interactions at every stage of the journey. In practice, this is difficult to deliver. Product discovery, availability checks and order updates are often disconnected from operational data. This creates friction in the buying experience, while high volumes of customer service enquiries, such as order tracking and returns, place additional strain on support teams. The result is an experience gap, where what customers see or are promised does not consistently reflect operational reality.

A $100 bulky-goods return costs retailers $26.70. Reverse logistics, restocking and write-down costs continue to place pressure on margins.
– Australia Post eCommerce Report, 2025

Operational inefficiency & manual effort

Many organisations continue to rely on manual processes across buying, fulfilment, service and day-to-day operations. As complexity grows, so does the cost of managing it. Routine decisions are often handled manually, even when they could be guided by clear rules and guardrails. This creates unnecessary effort, increases the risk of inconsistency and drives up operational cost over time.

Limited visibility & inconsistent data

A lack of connected data makes it difficult to operate with confidence. Teams often work from multiple, conflicting views of inventory, orders and availability, leading to over-promising and poor outcomes. Visibility is fragmented across fulfilment, logistics and service teams, making it harder to answer customer queries, coordinate actions and stay aligned across the business.

Slow & reactive decision-making

Without real-time insight, decision-making becomes delayed and reactive. Organisations struggle to respond to changes in demand, inventory or customer behaviour as they happen. This is often reinforced by operating models built around siloed teams and sequential processes, where decisions are passed between functions rather than made in context.

Scaling & experience challenges

As channels, products and markets expand, complexity increases. Many organisations find it difficult to scale without introducing new inefficiencies. At the same time, maintaining consistent, real-time experiences across channels becomes harder, particularly during peak periods.

Missed insight & ongoing margin pressure

Important signals are often lost within day-to-day operations. Returns, service interactions and fulfilment issues are treated as transactions rather than sources of insight. This limits the ability to identify root causes and improve performance over time, contributing to ongoing pressure on margins.

41% of consumers expect to be able to shop on multiple platforms, including social media, websites & apps.[i]

27% of Australian retailers say they lack the technology infrastructure to deliver a personalised customer experience.[ii]

> *Customer expectations are shifting beyond price to demanding seamless omnichannel experiences, transparency, and technology-supported service. Over 60% rate knowing real-time product availability as vital, while easy returns (58%) and improved in-store experience (47%) are top priorities.*
>
> ***– KPMG: 2026 Australian Retail Outlook***[iii]

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How can agentic commerce work in practice?

Agentic commerce becomes most valuable when it is applied to real workflows that connect customer experience and operations. Rather than operating in isolation, agents work across processes, using shared data to drive faster, more consistent outcomes.

Customer journeys and assisted buying

Agents support customers throughout the buying process by answering questions, checking availability, recommending alternatives and guiding decisions based on preferences, context and real-time data. This is not limited to front-end interaction. Agents ensure that what is shown to customers reflects actual availability, fulfilment options and delivery timelines. This helps reduce friction in product discovery and self-service, while improving confidence in the buying experience.

Inventory and replenishment decisions

Agents continuously monitor demand signals, stock levels and lead times across locations. Based on defined cost, margin and service thresholds, they can trigger replenishment actions or provide recommendations. This helps reduce overstocking in some areas while preventing stockouts in others, improving both availability and margin control.

Order fulfilment and exception handling

When disruptions occur, such as stock discrepancies or delivery delays, agents can assess the situation and determine the best alternative. This may include re-routing orders, adjusting fulfilment locations or proactively notifying customers and internal teams. By coordinating responses across systems, agents reduce the need for manual tracking and escalation.

Pricing and promotions support

Agents analyse performance data, customer behaviour and market conditions to support pricing and promotional decisions. This enables more responsive adjustments that align with inventory levels, demand patterns and margin objectives, rather than relying on static or manually managed pricing strategies.

> Australian food inflation reached 3.1% in Q1 2026, while New Zealand food inflation reached 3.4%, highlighting differing pricing and margin pressures across both markets.
>
> **– ABS, March Quarter 2026; Stats NZ, March Quarter 2026**

Customer service and returns

Agents handle high-volume, routine enquiries, including order tracking, availability checks and returns. They can initiate and coordinate follow-up actions while capturing relevant data, such as return reasons. This reduces pressure on service teams while creating a clearer view of underlying issues. More complex or sensitive cases are escalated to human teams where judgment is required.

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Warranty Claims & Return Agent

AI-orchestrated decisioning for consistent, retailer-specific returns and warranty outcomes.

1.

Guided assessment

AI agent guides the salesperson through a structured assessment of the return or warranty claim.

2.

Evaluate inputs

AI agent evaluates key inputs and applies retailer and supplier rules:

- Purchase
- Warranty status
- Customer loyalty tier
- Product type
- Supplier rules

3.

Recommended outcome
(Human in the loop)

AI agent provides a recommended action, Salesperson reviews & confirms the final decision.

4.

Orchestrate follow-up actions

Once confirmed, AI agent orchestrates required follow-up actions across systems and teams.

Human in the loop

Sales staff remain in control with AI providing guidance and recommendations.

AI Agent

Returns & Warranty Orchestration Layer

Consistent policy application

Ensures retailer & supplier policies are applied consistently, with reduced variability.

Automated follow-up actions

Complete supplier-specific forms

AI agent completes the correct forms.

Submit to correct mailbox

AI agent submits the form to the right mailbox for review or forwarding.

Draft return purchase order

AI agent creates a return purchase order for the relevant supplier.

Create case record

AI agent creates a case to manage the return to resolution.

Business outcome: Reduced variability, faster decisions and consistent application of retailer-specific policies – without extensive custom development.

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Fusion5's Warranty Claims & Returns Agent helps retailers streamline return and warranty workflows by guiding assessments, recommending outcomes based on retailer policies and orchestrating follow-up actions automatically. This improves consistency, reduces manual effort and accelerates resolution workflows while keeping humans in control of final decisions.

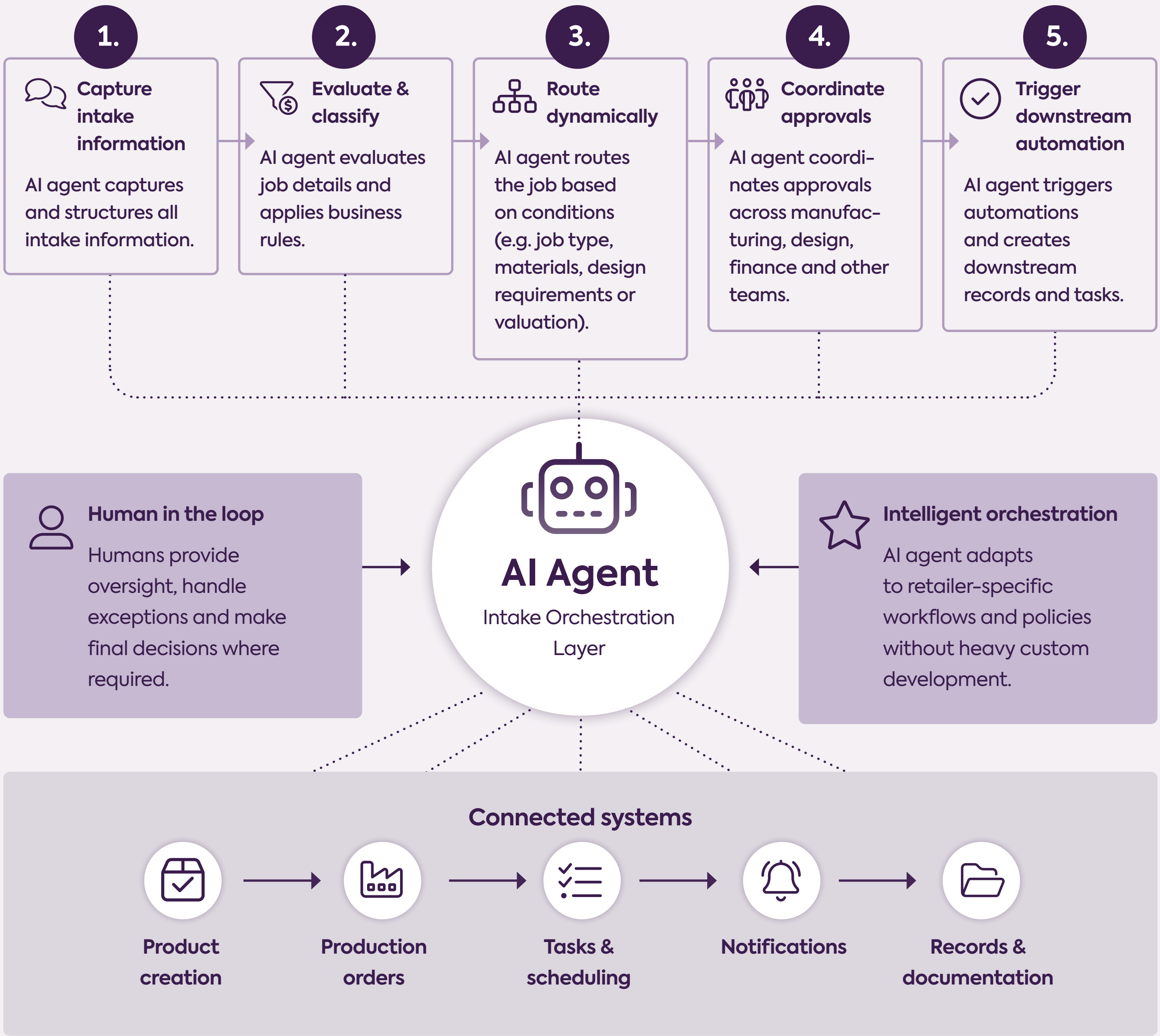
Back-office operations

Beyond customer-facing use cases, agents support internal workflows such as invoice matching, supplier follow-ups, reporting preparation and internal requests. By automating repetitive tasks and coordinating actions across systems, agents reduce manual workload and improve consistency across teams.

Across these scenarios, the pattern is consistent. Agents operate across end-to-end workflows, not isolated steps, connecting customer interactions with operational execution in real time. Examples of these patterns can already be seen in areas such as returns and warranty handling, or in complex intake and approval workflows, where agents can guide decisions and coordinate actions across systems.

Intake Form Agent

AI-driven intake orchestration for bespoke and repair jobs.



Business outcome: Flexible, intelligent workflows that remove the need for large-scale custom development while improving speed, accuracy and visibility.

Fusion5's Intake Form Agent helps retailers orchestrate complex bespoke order and repair workflows by dynamically capturing information, coordinating approvals and triggering downstream actions across teams. This reduces reliance on heavily customised systems while improving operational speed, consistency and visibility.

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What is required to become agentic-ready?

Becoming agentic-ready is not just about deploying new technology. It requires organisations to rethink how work is structured, how decisions are made, and how people, data and systems operate together. It also introduces new considerations, such as how product and brand data is structured and optimised for AI-driven discovery.

80% of Australian eCommerce retailers are already on the AI adoption curve,

33% have fully implemented AI capabilities, while

47% are scaling pilots.

– Salesforce & Australian Retailers Association, State of Commerce 2024

Rethink how work gets done

Many current operating models are built around siloed teams and sequential processes. To support agentic commerce, organisations need to move towards more connected, outcome-focused ways of working. This means designing workflows that span end-to-end processes, where humans and agents can operate together rather than handing work between disconnected steps.

Define clear goals & guardrails

Agents are most effective when they operate within clearly defined boundaries. Organisations need to establish what outcomes agents are accountable for, where decisions can be automated, and when human input is required. Clear goals, rules and escalation paths help ensure consistency, while maintaining control over how decisions are made.

Strengthen your data foundations

Connected, trusted data is critical. Agents rely on accurate, real-time information from across commerce, inventory, finance, supply chain and customer systems. Without this foundation, organisations risk inconsistent decisions, poor customer outcomes and limited scalability.

Standardise & connect processes

For agents to operate effectively, processes need to be clearly defined and connected across functions. This includes aligning workflows across buying, fulfilment, service and back-office operations. Standardisation does not mean removing flexibility. It provides a consistent structure that enables agents to act across processes, not just within isolated tasks.

Prepare your people

Becoming agentic-ready requires changes to roles, responsibilities and ways of working. Teams need to adapt to working alongside agents, focusing more on oversight, exception handling and continuous improvement.

Put governance & oversight in place

As organisations scale agentic capabilities, the challenge shifts from building individual solutions to managing how they operate across the business. This requires clear governance for decision-making, data use, security and compliance, alongside defined roles for human oversight and exception handling.

Governing agentic systems at scale

As organisations scale agentic capabilities, many are discovering that the challenge is no longer building AI agents, but effectively governing, monitoring and operating them across the business.

Optimising for AI-driven discovery (GEO)

As AI increasingly influences how products are surfaced and recommended, the quality of product and brand data becomes critical. Inaccurate or outdated information can directly impact visibility and conversion. This is driving the emergence of Generative Engine Optimisation (GEO), ensuring product data is consistent, structured and accessible for AI platforms. For organisations, this means treating product data as a strategic asset and ensuring it is continuously maintained and aligned across systems.

Operational disciplines, such as Fusion5's Agent Operations Centre (AOC), are designed to address this challenge. The AOC approach focuses on how agents are deployed, monitored and managed in a controlled way, ensuring they operate safely, consistently and in line with business objectives. Rather than treating agents as isolated solutions, this introduces a more structured model for operating agentic systems at scale.

Agent Operations Centre:

Read our whitepaper to learn more

> *Shoppers are browsing more selectively, with a stronger focus on value and buying when the deals are best. Thanks to AI, it's also easier than ever to compare prices. Today, Aussie households are shopping across an average of 16 brands a year, a figure that has been growing for the last decade.*
>
> ***– Australia Post eCommerce Report 2026***[iv]

From operating model to agentic readiness

- From siloed teams to connected, end-to-end workflows
- From manual handoffs to goal-driven execution
- From delayed decisions to real-time, data-led actions
- From fragmented roles to human oversight with agent execution

How Fusion5 helps organisations adopt agentic commerce with confidence

Fusion5 takes a business-led approach to agentic commerce, focused on turning emerging capabilities into real operational outcomes. This ensures agentic capabilities are introduced in a way that aligns to existing operations, rather than adding complexity.

Start with the business, not the technology

Understand how work is done today and where manual effort, delays or fragmentation are limiting performance. This ensures any agentic use cases are grounded in real operational needs, not hypothetical scenarios.

Identify high-impact starting points

Focus on practical use cases where agent-led decision-making can deliver clear, early value. Prioritising the right entry points helps demonstrate impact quickly and builds momentum for broader adoption.

Ground everything in real operations

Connect commerce, ERP and data environments into a unified operating backbone, so agents can work across end-to-end processes rather than isolated systems. This ensures agents operate across workflows rather than being limited to isolated tasks or systems.

Embed control from the outset

Design governance, security and clear guardrails early. This builds confidence in how agents operate, how decisions are made, and how performance is managed over time.

Take a structured, phased approach

Adopt a blueprint-led model to test, refine and scale use cases. This allows organisations to expand agentic capabilities without introducing unnecessary risk or complexity.

Build towards long-term capability

Agentic maturity develops over time. Organisations should continuously evolve use cases, processes and ways of working as they build confidence and capability.

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Next steps

Agentic commerce is already beginning to reshape how customers discover, compare and buy. While many retailers are still figuring out where to start, those taking early steps now will be better positioned to adapt as AI-driven commerce continues to evolve.

The good news is that getting started does not need to be complex. Many organisations begin with small, practical use cases that improve visibility, reduce manual effort and remove friction from the customer experience.

Book a complimentary discovery call with Fusion5 to explore:

- What agentic commerce could unlock for your business
- Where your current data, platforms, and processes are holding you back
- Practical, straightforward next steps to become agentic-ready

Following the discovery call, eligible organisations can access a discounted Agentic Commerce & AI Envisioning Workshop, tailored to your commerce landscape and priorities.

Book a discovery call today