



DESIGNING FOR AGENTIC COMMERCE

WHY REPRESENTATION COMES BEFORE EXECUTION



TL;DR

- **Agentic commerce is separating into three layers:** commerce surfaces, agentic experience (AX), and agent decisioning.
- **The highest-leverage near-term move** for enterprises is improving agentic experience, as agents are already mediating discovery and evaluation.
- **AX means** making products, services, and policies legible, comparable, and verifiable for machines – structured representation determines whether an offering is considered at all, not SEO or storytelling.
- **In practice,** this centers on a small set of capabilities: machine-readable offers (pricing, bundles, eligibility), explicit policy expression, and preference capture that agents can apply consistently.
- **The constraint today** is not model capability but how enterprise data is structured. Pricing, eligibility, and product logic are spread across systems in ways that are difficult for agents to interpret.
- **For enterprises like Comcast,** where value is defined through complex combinations of plans, bundles, serviceability, and promotions, the path to machine-readable representation is more complex – but the preparation requirement is the same.
- **AX is an enterprise-controlled, near-term lever.** Decisioning and surfaces can be layered later. Representation is the prerequisite.

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INTRODUCTION

The convergence of artificial intelligence and digital commerce is accelerating. AI is increasingly linked to [reduced organic website traffic](#), [new patterns of brand discovery](#), and shifts in consumer education and intent.

[Comcast NBCUniversal LIFT Labs](#) tracks these shifts directly through ongoing collaboration with the startups at the frontier of this space, translating early signals into capabilities enterprises will need to build and partner around.

In [LIFT Labs' report on generative engine optimization \(GEO\)](#), we predicted that brands and consumers will become even more disintermediated as AI, through autonomous and semi-autonomous agents, increasingly manages entire purchasing journeys on behalf of humans. We suggested that agents may increasingly move beyond answering questions or offering suggestions; instead, they could interpret consumer *intent*, conduct exhaustive comparative analyses, and eventually *negotiate* and execute transactions with *minimal* human involvement.

The underlying commerce flow has not disappeared. Consumers still discover, compare, evaluate, and transact. What is shifting is the locus of interpretation. As agents increasingly mediate discovery and evaluation, the first entity parsing a brand's value proposition may no longer be a human consumer, but a machine acting on their behalf.

In this follow-up to our initial report, we examine this evolving shift, often referred to as **agentic commerce**. Though still nascent and uneven, research from the likes of [McKinsey](#), [Boston Consulting Group](#), [Mastercard](#), [General Catalyst](#), and others suggests that many enterprises are already experimenting with these new systems in meaningful ways. LIFT Labs spoke with startups both building the agentic commerce infrastructure and helping enterprises and consumers productively transact through AI to help illustrate how this shift is being operationalized across agent-native browsing, structured product intelligence, and machine-mediated purchasing infrastructure.

We have identified three areas that enterprises like Comcast exploring the agentic commerce space should consider:

THREE THINGS TO CONSIDER

- 01** Optimizing digital properties for **agentic experience** rather than exclusively for human experience
- 02** Identifying the surfaces where **agentic commerce** may occur
- 03** Decoding and influencing **agentic decisioning**: how consumer agents evaluate, influence, and execute purchase decisions

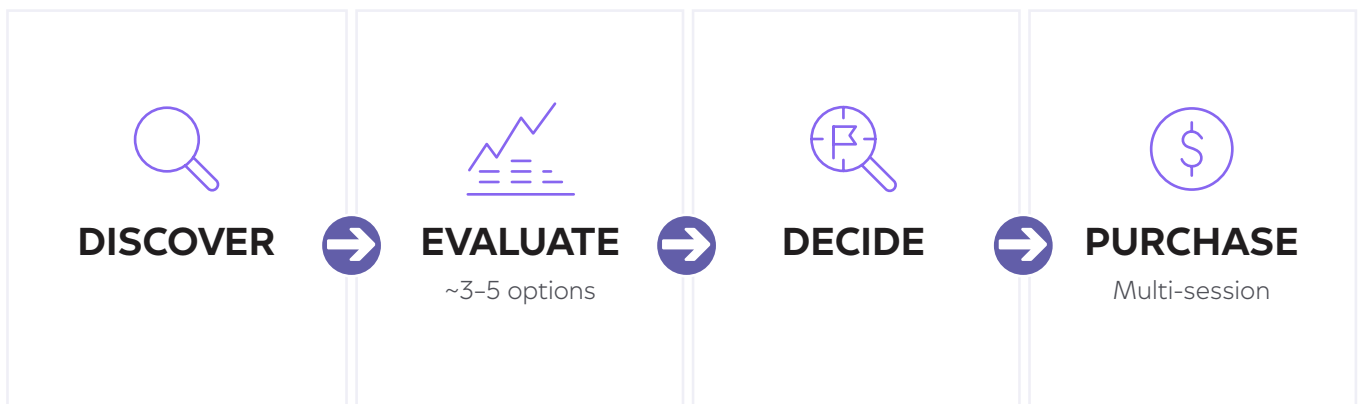
THIS EDITION FOCUSES ON **AGENTIC EXPERIENCE (AX)**

The most immediate, controllable entry point into agentic commerce for enterprises.

This layer of the agentic commerce stack addresses a foundational question:

If agents are increasingly owning consumer discovery, evaluation, and selection, how must enterprises alter their digital presences and express value so that it can be reliably interpreted and evaluated by machines?

HUMAN BUYER



AI AGENT



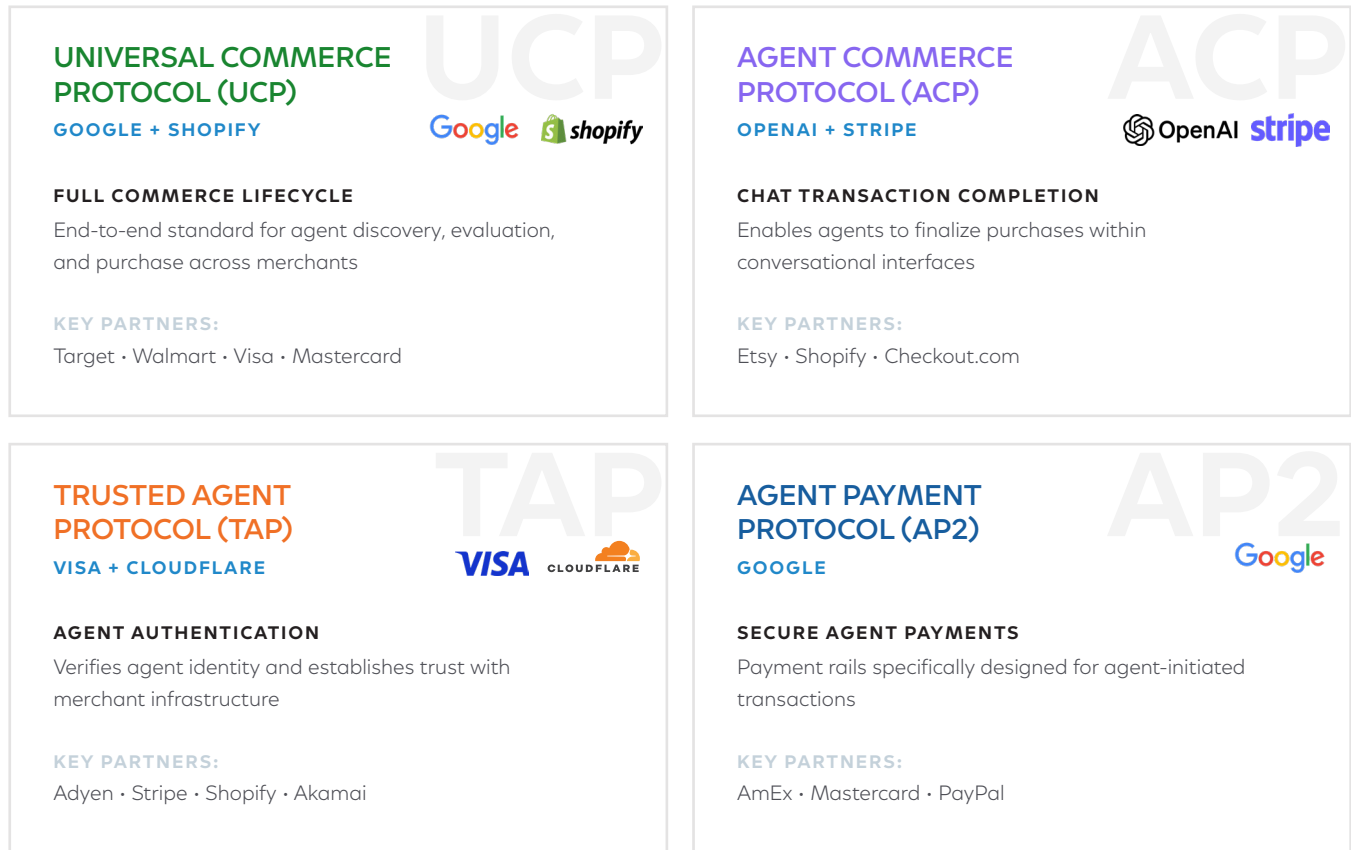
WHY THE CONVERSATION IS ACCELERATING

AI systems are rapidly improving in their ability to handle complex, multi-step tasks, including interpreting intent, coordinating actions, and interacting with external systems. A visible example of this progression has been the [OpenClaw phenomenon](#), an open source project that combines reasoning models, tool use, computer access, browser automation, and memory into a single consumer-facing agent. Users have employed it to complete complex, long-running digital tasks that require coordination across platforms. [Sudden Mac mini shortages](#) from enthusiasts snapping up hardware, [large stock price swings of enabling software](#) like Cloudflare, and fierce battles between the likes of [Meta and OpenAI to try to hire the project's founder](#) have made OpenClaw the first clear signal that consumers could be willing to delegate real-world digital tasks, including commerce, to agentic systems, and not just interact with them conversationally.

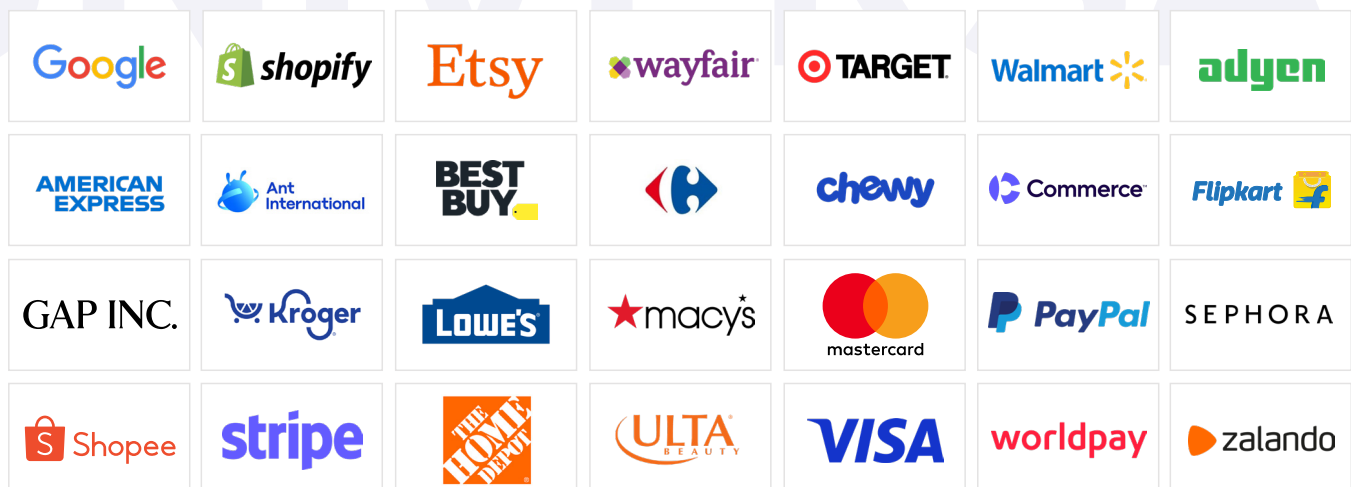
At the same time, both startups and Big Tech players are racing to provide the enabling infrastructure. Google, Shopify, Stripe, Visa, Cloudflare, OpenAI, and others are advancing transaction protocols that allow agents to execute payments. In parallel, a number of leading retailers have joined these protocols and signed on as partners, signaling growing ecosystem adoption.

Taken together, these signals help explain why agentic commerce has moved from a speculative idea to an area of active investment. But the market has already run early tests, and the **results point clearly toward which model works, and which doesn't.**

AGENTIC COMMERCE: PROTOCOL LANDSCAPE



UNIVERSAL COMMERCE PROTOCOL



THE MARKET HAS ALREADY RUN THE TEST

OpenAI launched native agentic checkout in late 2025 and pulled it within months – not because the technology failed, but because platform-owned checkout created friction with the merchant partners it needed and couldn't justify its infrastructure cost. Walmart's experience puts a number on it: ChatGPT-mediated checkout produced roughly a third of its direct conversion rate before the company reversed course, embedding its own assistant inside AI interfaces while keeping cart and checkout on Walmart.com, bringing conversion back to 70% with 35% higher average order value.

The infrastructure didn't retreat with OpenAI. It was reorganized. Shopify and Google launched merchant-branded agentic storefronts and the Universal Commerce Protocol almost immediately after. Robinhood's agentic trading product makes the enterprise-controlled model concrete: agents execute

transactions within rails the platform sets, with a dedicated budget, per-trade notifications, and a consumer disconnect option. Visa's investment in Replit, paired with its Trusted Agent Protocol for verifying agent identity at the point of payment, signals that the underlying infrastructure is being purpose-built around the same principle.

The signal from all of this is not that agentic commerce doesn't work. It is that aggregator-owned agentic commerce doesn't, at least not yet. The model that converts is enterprise-controlled. And the cost of waiting is already visible: Amazon's Alexa for Shopping now claims the entire purchase loop, including inventory it doesn't own, quietly capturing commerce flowing through infrastructure enterprises already control. **AX is not preparation for a distant future. It is the prerequisite for competing in the one already taking shape.**

1/3 

Conversion rate under ChatGPT-mediated, aggregator-owned checkout

+35% 

Higher average order value under the enterprise-controlled model

70% 

Conversion restored once cart and checkout moved back to Walmart.com

FROM USER EXPERIENCE TO AGENTIC EXPERIENCE: DISCOVERABILITY

Agentic experience (AX) describes the process of brands optimizing their digital postures for agent discoverability, interpretability, and clear and exhaustive communication of value propositions.

Digital commerce has historically been structured for human cognition: persuasive interfaces, narrative framing, and experiences designed to reduce cognitive load. Agent-mediated commerce operates under different constraints. Agents do not respond to storytelling or visual hierarchy; they rely on explicit information, structured data, and consistent logic. Many current systems perform best when value is expressed in simplified, machine-readable formats rather than visually complex pages.

“Representation over presentation” is how one founder of a **pre-launch stealth company** helping make enterprises become agent-ready recommended enterprises approach AX. However, the current internet, including most brand digital properties, are still “built for human eyes, not for agents.” The question is no longer whether agentic commerce will arrive. It is whether an enterprise’s offerings are legible enough to be evaluated when it does.

REPRESENTATION
OVER PRESENTATION

UX vs. AX

The same commerce functions, rebuilt for machines instead of humans.

HUMAN · UX		AGENT · AX
NAVIGATION	• Visual Hierarchy • Menus • Search Bars	• APIs • Semantic Metadata • Plaintext
PERSONALIZATION	• Cookies • Behavioral Targeting	• Preference Schemas • Memory
ENGAGEMENT	• Push Notifications • Email Campaigns • Retargeting Ads	• Event Webhooks • Agent-to-Agent Messaging Protocols
ERROR HANDLING	• Helpful Error Pages • Tool Tips • Chatbots	• Structured Error Codes • Graceful Degradation • Retry Logic
SUCCESS METRICS	• Engagement • Time on Site • Conversion Rate	• Latency • Task Completion Rate • Cost-per-Resolution

Beyond interpretability, cost is also a constraint.

Agents incur computational expense when parsing visually complex or poorly structured pages. Machine-oriented representation reduces token usage, latency, and ambiguity.



Companies such as [Scrunch](#) (recently acquired by Sitecore for \$225M), an AI search optimization startup, are experimenting with agent-oriented digital twins of brand websites, routing AI traffic to simplified, machine-readable versions at the CDN level.

Rather than forcing enterprises to redesign their human-facing experiences, this approach separates presentation from representation. Human interfaces remain intact, while agents access structured data in formats they can reliably parse – not JavaScript-heavy pages or media-rich interfaces. The broader insight is structural: enterprises may not need to rebuild their websites for agents, but they do need to expose their value in a form machines can interpret.

Optimizing for AX should operate alongside UX rather than replacing it. Human-facing design continues to matter for trust and complex decision-making, while agent-facing representation increasingly determines which options even surface to consumers at the top of the funnel.

AS AGENTS TAKE ON A GREATER ROLE
IN MEDIATING DISCOVERY, AX BECOMES
A GATE. IF AN OFFERING CANNOT BE
RELIABLY INTERPRETED BY A MACHINE,
IT MAY NEVER BE CONSIDERED.

CONSUMER FIRST, SERVICES NEXT

Despite growing momentum around agent-managed commerce, adoption is not unfolding evenly across categories. **Agent-forward experiences have emerged earliest in consumer goods, where standardized, SKU-driven environments make agentic commerce approachable.** Attributes are discrete, price comparison is straightforward, and decision criteria can be evaluated systematically. It is relatively simple to encode a consumer's preference for a red pair of sneakers over a blue pair, a shoe's size, or its price.

This relative simplicity matters. Agent-mediated evaluation exposes a hidden failure mode in many existing catalogs: inconsistency. Identical products are often described differently across merchants, variants are poorly linked, and naming conventions vary widely. Without normalization and stable identifiers, agents cannot reliably determine whether two options are equivalent or meaningfully different. In these cases, value is not lost because it is weak, but because it is inconsistently represented. Consumer packaged goods (CPG) environments, by contrast, are closer to being normalized by default.

More complex areas of commerce such as digital services are structurally harder for agents to parse. Layered configurations, promotional pricing, eligibility rules, and contractual terms introduce conditional logic that is difficult to normalize into machine-readable formats. This hasn't stopped enterprises from making inroads: [Channel3](#), a startup that structures and normalizes product catalogs for AI systems, has worked with a major US telco to make its products agent-ready, albeit with caveats – agreeing to put phones on the platform, but not services. The distinction underscores the gap between SKU-based products and rule-bound service offerings in terms of machine readiness.

Agent-mediated evaluation exposes a hidden failure mode in many existing catalogs:
INCONSISTENCY

In practice, the distinction between near-term and longer-term agent suitability maps to a handful of structural characteristics:

HIGH AGENT SUITABILITY	LOWER AGENT SUITABILITY
Standardized SKUs	Configurable Services
Fixed Pricing	Conditional Pricing
Simple Fulfillment	Eligibility/Serviceability Logic
Easily Normalized Attributes	Bundles/Promotions/Contracts
Low Emotional Complexity	High Trust/Advisory Complexity

AGENTS ARE CURRENTLY BEST SUITED FOR STANDARDIZED, LOW-AMBIGUITY PURCHASES WHERE EVALUATION CRITERIA CAN BE EXPRESSED STRUCTURALLY.

Regardless of sequencing, the preparation requirement is the same:

offerings must be structured and legible enough to be interpreted, compared, and surfaced accurately by agents – whether that opportunity arrives in months or years.

MAKING VALUE LEGIBLE TO MACHINES

AI agents evaluate offerings through structured inputs such as pricing, specifications, eligibility rules, policies, and constraints. Information that is unclear, inconsistent, or embedded solely in unstructured text introduces ambiguity. In agentic commerce, ambiguity puts brands at risk of being ignored. As **Geoff Gibbins** observes in his Agentonomics framework, agents are **“extremely sensitive to ambiguity. When something is unclear, they don’t hesitate. They just skip it.”** On the other hand, AI can process far larger quantities of information simultaneously than a human can, meaning that being exhaustive and comprehensive is helpful to agents in ways that would be overwhelming to humans.

In practice, this legibility gap is often structural rather than intentional. Many enterprises present polished product pages to humans while relying on fragmented backend systems to manage the underlying data. Specifications, variants, and policies are frequently scattered across spreadsheets, documents, feeds, and disconnected platforms. The same product may be described differently across merchants and systems, with poorly linked variants and inconsistent naming conventions. As a result, offerings that appear coherent to humans can be difficult for agents to interpret consistently, even when the information technically exists.



*All of those experiences need good product data to start. The problem is, product data is horrible... They present their product pages really nicely, but behind the scenes some of them have Excel sheets and Google Docs and four different systems. **It’s not ready for agent commerce.**”*

ALEXANDER SCHIFF
Co-Founder & CEO, **Channel3**

This Reframes Competition.

Success increasingly depends not only on differentiation, but on comparability. Offerings that are easier for agents to discover tend to surface more reliably during selection. In this environment, structured data becomes the effective shelf space.

AX AS THE NEW PERSONALIZATION VECTOR

Structured representation doesn't just determine whether an offering gets evaluated – it also determines how precisely it gets matched. **Brands transacting with and through agents rather than with humans is an opportunity to provide the 1:1 customer journey personalization that is the holy grail of marketing.** Today, brands rely on marketing to consumer bases divided up into a small number of broad segments rather than framing value propositions to fit the needs of the individual.

This is because true personalization requires large-scale context for consumer understanding, as well as the capacity to dynamically frame a brand in relation to that understanding. In an agent-forward digital marketplace, AI assistants already possess massive quantities of context about users while enterprise AI-powered marketing tools such as LIFT Labs portfolio company [Auxia](#) allow for components of a brand's value proposition to be infinitely composable along countless vectors.

This means that rather than building advertising campaigns aimed at 18–35 suburban women in the market for a new car, brands can instead craft messaging specifically targeted to a 32-year-old consultant.

According to Josh Blyskal, Head of Strategy and Research at [Profound](#), a generative engine optimization (GEO) startup and LIFT Labs portfolio company, brands optimizing for AX can craft specialized messaging for micro-segments across virtually every variation of buyer intent through a second, text-only agent layer of their digital presence.

A brand could have “billions and billions of pages that are just talking about every possible answer about their brand,” allowing agents to more easily find a fit for the user's intent. This is what makes AX both a defensive requirement and an offensive opportunity, and why it is the right starting point for enterprises exploring agentic commerce.

AGENTIC EXPERIENCE AS AN ENTERPRISE LEVER

AX is the logical starting point for enterprises exploring agentic commerce because it governs how value is structured and exposed, and because it can be acted on now, regardless of how the broader agent ecosystem evolves.

AX focuses on how value is exposed to agents, independent of which assistant, platform, or protocol ultimately mediates the interaction. Importantly, improving agentic experience does not require exhaustive manual catalog cleanup. AI can be employed by enterprises to prepare their digital posture for AI-powered commerce, with emerging approaches emphasizing automated ingestion, normalization, and enrichment of existing product data, lowering the barrier for enterprises to become legible to agents without starting from scratch.

In practice, AX centers on a small set of capability areas:

- 01 Machine-readable offers** with clearly defined pricing, bundles, and eligibility logic
- 02 Explicit policy expression** without ambiguity
- 03 Preference capture** mechanisms that agents can apply consistently

Getting these right establishes the foundation for everything that follows: agent decisioning, commerce surfaces, and monetization models – none of which can function reliably without representation as the base layer.

EARLY STEPS ENTERPRISES CAN TAKE

In the early stages, preparing for agentic commerce does not require wholesale rip-and-replace of existing digital commerce infrastructure.

Rather than standing up entirely new data pipelines, enterprises can begin by leveraging the data they already possess. Companies such as [Envive](#) surface insights from conversations consumers are already having about a brand in chatbots, social media, and online forums. By aggregating recurring intents, objections, and comparison criteria from multi-turn interactions, brands can transform real consumer language into structured product intelligence.

For service-oriented enterprises such as Comcast, this is relevant. Services are often described in abstract marketing language, but consumer dialogue reveals concrete concerns: speed thresholds, streaming compatibility, reliability, contract flexibility. Translating those patterns into structured representation makes intangible offerings legible to agents, and strengthens human conversion in the process.

CLOSING THOUGHT

Agentic experience ensures that when agents evaluate options on behalf of users, they can understand what is being offered, how it compares, and whether it meets defined priorities. Agentic commerce does not eliminate human-centered design – it introduces an additional layer: value must also be machine-readable. In a delegated commerce economy, being legible is becoming as important as being compelling.



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