

Procurement Automations with AI Agents: 2025–2026 Industry Outlook

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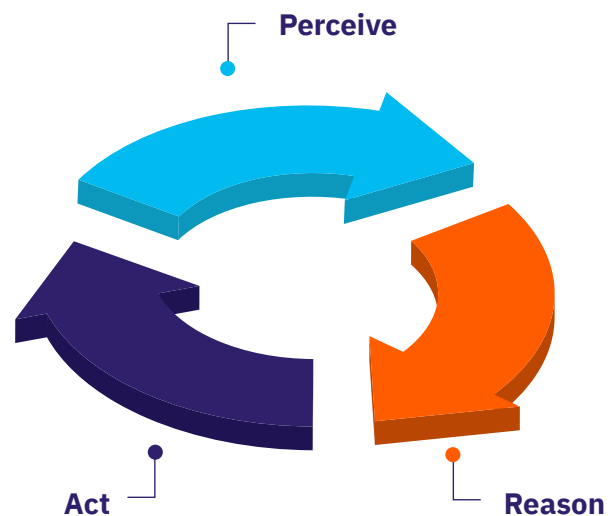


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INTRODUCTION

AI is moving beyond static prompts and single-use outputs into a new era of autonomous and semi-autonomous agents. Unlike traditional automation scripts or large language models that wait for the next prompt, AI agents are designed to perceive their environment, reason about information, and act in pursuit of a defined goal.

This agent loop — **perceive → reason → act** — allows them to manage workflows with far greater continuity and context.



In practical terms, an AI agent can be triggered by an event such as a new email, a scheduled meeting, or an update in a procurement system. Once activated, it gathers the relevant information, interprets the context, and takes purposeful actions.

For example, a morning inbox agent can review emails, highlight priority messages from suppliers, and generate a short daily briefing. A meeting-prep agent can scan calendars, collect agendas, retrieve prior communications with attendees, and deliver a tailored audio briefing before the session begins. These are not gimmicks, they free professionals from repetitive searching and manual preparation, allowing them to focus on higher-value decisions.

This is where the concept of Agentic AI becomes central. Agentic AI refers to AI systems designed with a higher degree of autonomy, giving them the ability not only to process tasks but also to adapt, take initiative within defined boundaries, and continue working toward outcomes without constant human input.

In other words, while traditional AI tools respond only when prompted, Agentic AI enables agents to act like proactive digital colleagues, monitoring environments, anticipating needs, and executing actions aligned with organizational goals.

INTRODUCTION

The degree of autonomy varies. Fully autonomous agents can operate with minimal oversight, while semi-autonomous agents still require human approval for sensitive judgments, such as supplier evaluations or contract recommendations. This balance ensures efficiency gains without losing human control over ethical, contextual, or strategic decisions.

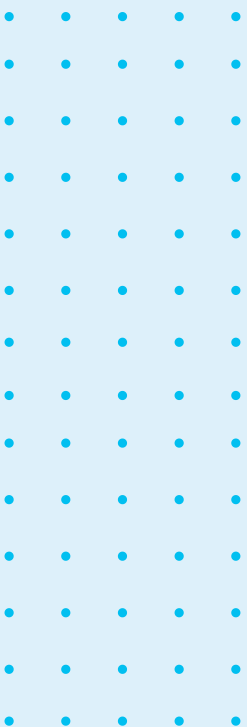
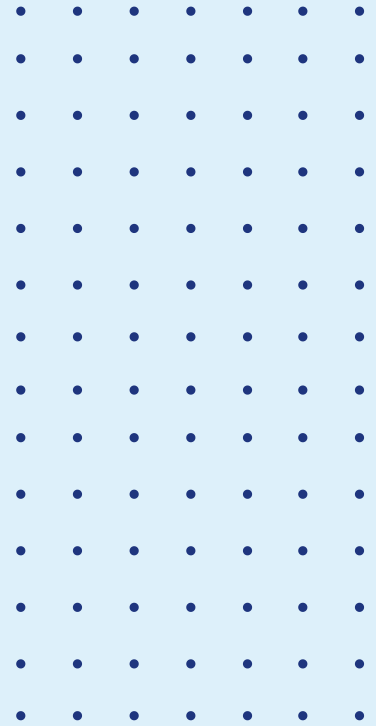
As organizations enter 2025, these capabilities are moving from isolated demonstrations to practical pilots. Procurement leaders now face a defining moment: understanding what AI agents are, what makes Agentic AI unique, and how to harness them responsibly. The rest of this report builds on that foundation, showing where procurement teams stand today, what they expect from agents, the use cases most likely to scale, and the barriers that must be addressed before adoption accelerates in 2026.

Next step → Do you want us to train your team on how to build AI agents? Have a look at our [AI Fundamentals for Procurement Teams](#) program.



Procurement Automations with AI Agents

Chapter 1: **Executive Summary**



1 | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AI agents are moving from concept to reality in procurement. The conversations we had in 2024 about “potential” are now shifting into pilots and experiments across procurement teams worldwide. Yet adoption is still early.

Our survey of procurement professionals shows a clear pattern: 2025 is the practice year. Leaders are experimenting with supplier follow-ups, contract checks, and RFQ automation, but few teams have scaled beyond prototypes. The interest is high, the expectations are bold, but maturity is low.

That won't last long. By 2026, procurement will hit its turning point. We expect AI agents to move from small pilots to mainstream adoption. Tasks that once relied on manual effort, like bid evaluations, spend analysis, supplier compliance, and invoice checks will be increasingly handled by agents operating in the background. The result will be a function that's faster, more data-driven, and more responsive to business needs.

This report, *Procurement Automations with AI Agents: 2025–2026 Industry Outlook*, gives procurement leaders a grounded view of what's happening right now, and where things are headed next:

- **The current state:** how procurement teams are starting to use AI agents in 2025
- **The expectations:** what professionals want these agents to deliver, and what's realistic
- **The top 10 use cases:** where we believe agents will be most widely applied by 2026
- **The challenges:** what holds adoption back today, from IT restrictions to trust gaps
- **The outlook:** why 2026 will be the year agents move from pilots to scale

For procurement leaders, the message is clear: 2025 is your opportunity to prepare. Teams that invest this year in skills, workflows, and governance will not just keep pace, they'll set the standard.

At Procurement Tactics, we're helping leaders close that gap. Our AI Fundamentals for Procurement Teams program is designed to bring entire teams up to speed, fast, including how to scope, build, and use AI agents responsibly. Alongside it, our upcoming AI Agents in Procurement course will provide concrete, ready-to-build examples that teams can adapt immediately.

The future of procurement won't wait. This is the year to prepare. 2026 is the year to scale.



Procurement Automations with AI Agents

Chapter 2:

Procurement in 2025: Where We Stand Today

2 | PROCUREMENT IN 2025: WHERE WE STAND TODAY

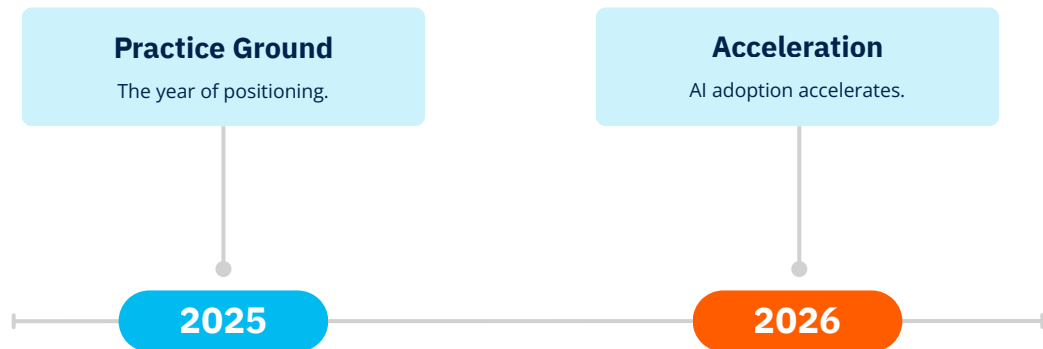
When we asked procurement professionals about their current use of AI, the responses told a familiar story: curiosity is high, but systematic adoption is rare. Many professionals are already testing AI for writing emails, summarizing documents, or analyzing quotes. A smaller group has started experimenting with procurement-specific agents, from automating RFQ checks to monitoring contract compliance. But for most, this is still a series of disconnected experiments rather than a coordinated strategy.

THE CURRENT PICTURE

- **Experimentation without scale:** Procurement teams are trying out AI in isolated tasks but haven't yet embedded agents across core workflows.
- **Early wins in admin-heavy areas:** Survey respondents most often pointed to repetitive, rule-based processes, like RFQ analysis, bid evaluation, and supplier follow-ups as the first automation targets.
- **Fragmentation of tools:** Some respondents use general AI platforms like ChatGPT or Copilot, while others experiment with procurement suites. There is no dominant standard yet.
- **Low maturity, high expectations:** Many leaders expect AI agents to deliver efficiency, speed, and improved compliance. Yet only a fraction of teams have actually implemented working agents beyond prototypes.

2 | PROCUREMENT IN 2025: WHERE WE STAND TODAY

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PROCUREMENT LEADERS



2025 is not the year of full-scale adoption, it is the year of positioning. Leaders who treat 2025 as their practice ground will have a major advantage when adoption accelerates in 2026.

This means:

ENCOURAGING PILOTS

Allow teams to test AI agents in safe, low-risk processes.

CAPTURING LESSONS LEARNED

Every experiment reveals integration issues, data quality challenges, or approval bottlenecks that can be solved before scaling.

AVOIDING “AI THEATER”

The temptation is to showcase flashy pilots without real business impact. Leaders need to focus on experiments that genuinely cut cycle times, reduce risk, or improve compliance.

Procurement has always been shaped by timing. In 2025, the timing is clear: this is the window to explore, test, and learn. By 2026, the teams that used this year wisely will be in a position to scale, and those that waited will find themselves playing catch-up.



Procurement Automations with AI Agents

Chapter 3:

What Procurement Expects from AI Agents

3 | WHAT PROCUREMENT EXPECTS FROM AI AGENTS

Procurement professionals aren't short on expectations when it comes to AI agents.

In our survey, respondents pointed to a wide range of hopes, from freeing up time on routine tasks to enabling faster, smarter decision-making. The ambitions are broad, but they all share one common thread: leaders see AI agents as a way to shift focus from administrative work to strategic work.

THE CORE EXPECTATIONS (BENEFITS OF USING AI AGENTS)



3 | WHAT PROCUREMENT EXPECTS FROM AI AGENTS

THE REALITY CHECK

While the expectations are valid, most teams are not yet set up to deliver on them. A gap exists between ambition and maturity:

- Many leaders hope for **fully autonomous agents** by 2026, but today's experiments are still **basic** or **semi-automated**.
- **Data quality and integration limits remain significant barriers** — agents can only perform as well as the systems and inputs they work with.
- **Skills are still catching up.** Few procurement teams today have the technical fluency to design, monitor, and troubleshoot agents at scale.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PROCUREMENT LEADERS

Expectation management is critical in 2025. Overpromising on what AI agents can deliver today risks damaging credibility. Instead, leaders should:

- **Set staged goals:** Use 2025 for proof-of-concept pilots; aim for scaled adoption in 2026.
- **Anchor in business outcomes:** Frame every agent in terms of cycle time saved, risks avoided, or compliance improved — not just “AI for AI’s sake.”
- **Invest in capability:** Teams need to understand how to scope, test, and run AI agents responsibly before expecting measurable business impact.

By recognizing both the potential and the current limits, procurement leaders can ensure 2025 is a year of learning, not of disappointment. That foundation will make the ambitious expectations for 2026 far more realistic.



Procurement Automations with AI Agents

Chapter 4:

The Top 10 Use Cases to Watch in 2026

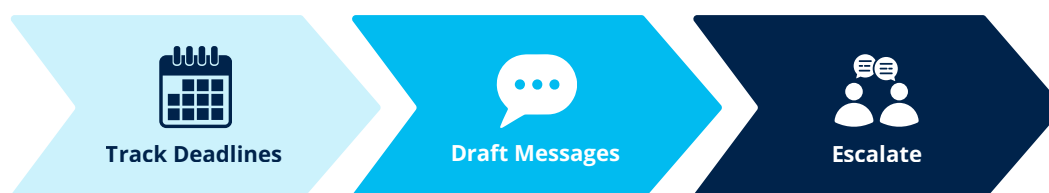
4 | TOP 10 USE CASES TO WATCH IN 2026

Our survey asked procurement professionals which tasks they would most like to automate with AI. The answers were clear: teams are eager to hand off repetitive, time-consuming processes to agents, so they can focus on higher-value work.

Based on the results, here are the ten use cases we expect to dominate procurement automation by 2026.

1. SUPPLIER MANAGEMENT & FOLLOW-UPS

Procurement teams spend countless hours chasing suppliers for updates, reminders, and responses. **AI agents can track deadlines, draft follow-up messages, and escalate when suppliers fail to respond.**



What this means for procurement leaders:

Piloting supplier-follow-up agents in 2025 is a safe, high-impact starting point. These automations deliver immediate time savings without touching sensitive data.

2. BID & QUOTE EVALUATION

Survey respondents highlighted the burden of manually analyzing bids and quotes. Agents can compare responses, score suppliers against predefined criteria, and flag discrepancies.

What this means for procurement leaders:

Start small with agents that automate compliance checks on RFQs. This builds trust in AI output before moving to full bid evaluation in 2026.

3. SPEND ANALYSIS & REPORTING

Teams want real-time visibility into spent data without manually cleaning spreadsheets. AI agents can categorize transactions, detect anomalies, and generate dashboards or summaries.

What this means for procurement leaders:

Invest in improving data quality in 2025. Without clean inputs, spend analysis agents won't deliver accurate insights in 2026.

4 | TOP 10 USE CASES TO WATCH IN 2026

4. RFQ / RFX AUTOMATION

“RFQ administration is ripe for automation. Agents can monitor submissions, highlight missing fields, and produce compliance reports automatically.”

What this means for procurement leaders:

Automating RFQ administration in 2025 is low-hanging fruit that reduces cycle times and sets the stage for more advanced sourcing automation.

5. SOURCING & VENDOR SELECTION

Finding and shortlisting vendors is still largely manual. AI agents can score suppliers on cost, lead time, and ESG performance, then propose ranked lists.

What this means for procurement leaders:

In 2025, test agents on smaller sourcing events. By 2026, extend them to broader supplier scouting and category management.

6. CONTRACT MONITORING & CREATION

Survey participants consistently mentioned contract work. Agents can flag expiring agreements, detect missing clauses, and even draft standard templates.

What this means for procurement leaders:

Contract agents require high trust. Start pilots with expiry notifications and clause monitoring before moving to automated drafting.

7. COMPLIANCE & POLICY CHECKS

Ensuring adherence to procurement policies is tedious but essential. AI agents can review purchase requests, approvals, and supplier documents against internal rules.

What this means for procurement leaders:

Work closely with IT and legal in 2025 to define clear compliance rules. This prevents errors when agents begin enforcing policies at scale.

4 | TOP 10 USE CASES TO WATCH IN 2026

8. RISK MONITORING

Procurement leaders are looking to agents to scan supplier data, news feeds, and market signals for early warning signs of risk.

What this means for procurement leaders:

Risk agents depend on external data feeds. Building the right integrations in 2025 will make real-time monitoring realistic in 2026.

9. INVOICE & PAYMENT VALIDATION

Matching invoices against POs and contracts remains a pain point. AI agents can flag mismatches instantly and prevent overpayments.

What this means for procurement leaders:

Introduce invoice-validation agents in controlled environments in 2025. By 2026, they can handle routine checks across all spend categories.

10. ESG & SUSTAINABILITY TRACKING

Though mentioned less often, ESG tracking is rising in importance. AI agents can evaluate supplier ESG disclosures, flag gaps, and prepare sustainability reports.

What this means for procurement leaders:

Start testing ESG agents now. By 2026, reporting demands will be stricter, and teams that prepare early will avoid scrambling for data.

PULLING THE THREAD TOGETHER

Taken together, these use cases point to a clear trend: procurement leaders don't want AI agents for novelty — they want them for reliability. The focus is on repetitive, structured tasks where agents can provide consistent output and free teams for strategic work.

By 2026, we expect these ten use cases to be widely adopted across procurement. The leaders who invest in pilots this year will enter 2026 with proven workflows, trusted data, and teams ready to scale.



Procurement Automations with AI Agents

Chapter 5: **The Biggest Barriers to Adoption**

5 | THE BIGGEST BARRIERS TO ADOPTION



If procurement leaders agree on the potential of AI agents, why isn't adoption happening faster?

Our survey and course development work reveal a consistent set of barriers. They are less about technology itself and more about the ecosystem around it: systems, skills, governance, and trust.

1. IT RESTRICTIONS AND TOOL LIMITS

Corporate policies often dictate which platforms can and cannot be used. While tools like n8n or Zapier allow flexible agent building, many enterprises are restricted to Microsoft Copilot Studio, which has far narrower capabilities. This slows experimentation and reduces the ability to scale.

What this means for procurement leaders:

Clarify IT guardrails early in 2025. Work with IT to identify approved tools and align procurement's needs with enterprise standards.

2. DATA QUALITY AND INTEGRATION

AI agents are only as good as the data they receive. Inconsistent formats, missing fields, and siloed systems make it difficult for agents to run smoothly. Without reliable inputs, agents can't deliver the promised efficiency or accuracy.

What this means for procurement leaders:

Use 2025 to clean data sources and build reliable integrations. This isn't glamorous work, but it's the foundation for scalable automation in 2026.

5 | THE BIGGEST BARRIERS TO ADOPTION

3. TRUST IN OUTPUTS

Many professionals hesitate to rely on AI-generated outputs without human oversight. Agents that summarize contracts or evaluate bids face skepticism if results aren't consistent. Until teams build trust, adoption will remain patchy.

What this means for procurement leaders:

Use 2025 to clean data sources and build reliable integrations. This isn't glamorous work, but it's the foundation for scalable automation in 2026.

4. SKILL AND CONFIDENCE

Procurement professionals don't need to be coders, but they do need to understand how agents work, where they fit, and how to monitor them. Today, most teams lack this confidence.

What this means for procurement leaders:

Training is non-negotiable. Programs like our **AI Fundamentals for Procurement Teams** exist to close this gap quickly, ensuring staff can scope and manage agents responsibly.

5. GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT

Without clear rules on approvals, privacy, and accountability, agents can create risk instead of reducing it. Companies that skip governance often run into compliance concerns before pilots can expand.

What this means for procurement leaders:

Build governance into every pilot. Define who approves outputs, how data is stored, and what escalation paths exist if an agent fails

PULLING THE THREAD TOGETHER

The barriers to AI agent adoption are not insurmountable. But they won't solve it themselves. Leaders who invest in clearing these obstacles in 2025, aligning with IT, cleaning data, building trust, training teams, and embedding governance, will be in position to scale confidently in 2026.



Procurement Automations with AI Agents

Chapter 6:

The Turning Point: What 2026 Will Look Like

6 | WHAT 2026 WILL LOOK LIKE

Every transformation has a tipping point. For AI agents in procurement, that moment will arrive in 2026. Our survey shows professionals already experimenting in 2025, but not yet scaling. The coming year will be different. By 2026, AI agents will shift from side projects to mainstream procurement operations.

FROM PILOTS TO SCALE

2025 = PILOTS

Isolated use cases, learning how tools work, experimenting with small workflows.

2026 = SCALE

Agents embedded in sourcing, supplier management, compliance, and reporting. Not just tested — trusted.

THE CURRENT PICTURE

1. **Supplier interactions** will increasingly be managed by agents, from follow-up reminders to automated RFQ checks.
2. **Contract oversight** will move from periodic manual checks to continuous monitoring by agents.
3. **Spend visibility** will become real-time, with agents categorizing data and generating live dashboards.
4. **Risk and compliance monitoring** will shift from after-the-fact audits to proactive alerts.
5. **Decision support** will be powered by agents summarizing data across systems before leaders even ask.

MATURITY CURVE

- **Basic Agents (today):** triggered by humans, like uploading a contract for analysis.
- **Automated Agents (2026):** running in the background, monitoring RFQs, contracts, and spending data automatically.
- **Semi-autonomous Agents (beyond 2026):** pursuing defined goals independently, with humans providing oversight rather than step-by-step instructions.

6 | WHAT 2026 WILL LOOK LIKE

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PROCUREMENT LEADERS

Waiting until 2026 to act will be too late. By then, the leaders who treated 2025 as their practice year will already have:

- Trusted workflows that deliver measurable savings and efficiency.
- Teams trained to scope, monitor, and adjust agents.
- Governance models aligned with IT and compliance.

Those who delay risk falling behind suppliers, competitors, and even internal stakeholders who will expect procurement to operate at the speed of automation.

2026 will not just be another year of experimentation. It will be the year AI agents become part of the procurement operating model. Leaders who act now will be the ones setting that standard.



Procurement Automations with AI Agents

Chapter 7:

Preparing Your Team in 2025

7 | PREPARING YOUR TEAM IN 2025

If 2026 is the year of adoption, then 2025 must be the year of preparation. The survey results show that procurement professionals see the potential of AI agents, but most teams don't yet have the skills, workflows, or governance in place to scale them. That's the gap leaders need to close now.

BUILDING THE RIGHT CAPABILITIES

Adoption won't be held back by technology alone. The bigger bottlenecks will be:

- **Skills:** Do teams know how to identify good use cases, scope an agent, and monitor it responsibly?
- **Governance:** Are rules clear on privacy, approvals, and escalation paths?
- **Mindset:** Are teams confident enough to move beyond "AI as an experiment" and trust agents in daily work?

Leaders who address these bottlenecks in 2025 will enter 2026 with teams ready to automate at scale.

THE TRAINING PATH

At Procurement Tactics, we see a two-step journey that works:

AI FUNDAMENTALS FOR PROCUREMENT TEAMS

AI AGENTS IN PROCUREMENT COURSE

AI FUNDAMENTALS FOR PROCUREMENT TEAMS

- This program gets entire teams up to speed on the basics: how AI agents differ from traditional automation, how to spot opportunities in daily procurement work, and how to work with tools like Copilot Studio, Zapier, and n8n.
- The goal is to give every professional, not just the tech-savvy ones — the confidence to engage with AI agents.

7 | PREPARING YOUR TEAM IN 2025

AI AGENTS IN PROCUREMENT COURSE

- Once teams understand the fundamentals, this course dives into concrete, buildable examples: supplier follow-up agents, contract clause monitors, price discrepancy alerts, and more.
- Participants leave not just with theory but with ready-to-adapt templates they can use immediately in their own workflows.

Together, these programs form a bridge: from curiosity in 2025 to competence and confidence in 2026.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PROCUREMENT LEADERS

Training isn't a side note, it's the strategy. If your team doesn't understand how to work with AI agents, the technology will stall at the pilot stage. Leaders should use 2025 to:

2025



Enroll their teams in foundational training



Identify 2-3 pilot use cases aligned with business goals



Put in place simple governance frameworks for safe experimentation

The outcome isn't just more automation. It's a procurement team that's ready to meet 2026 with confidence, not hesitation.

Next step → Do you want us to train your team on how to build AI agents? Have a look at our [AI Fundamentals for Procurement Teams](#) program.



Procurement Automations with AI Agents

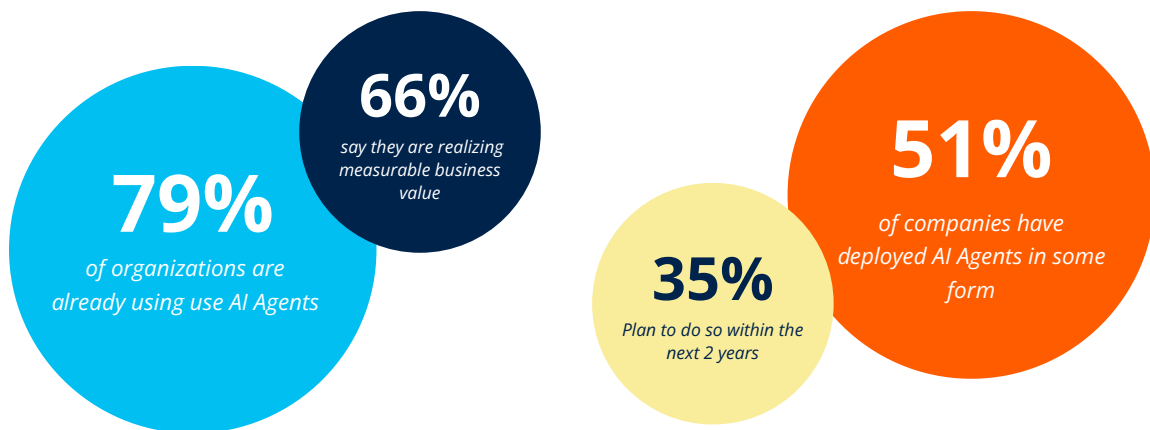
Chapter 8:

AI Agent Statistics

8 | AI AGENT STATISTICS

Before diving into our own survey results, it is useful to look at the broader landscape. Across industries and geographies, AI agents are no longer a theoretical concept, they are already being deployed, tested, and scaled. Recent studies give us a clear picture of where organizations stand today, and where procurement is headed.

GLOBAL ADOPTION TRENDS



- According to PwC, 79% of organizations report already using AI agents, and two-thirds of them (66%) say they are realizing measurable business value.
- Another survey shows that 51% of companies have deployed AI agents in some form, while an additional 35% plan to do so within the next two years. This signals a tipping point: adoption is moving rapidly from early pilots to mainstream use.

8 | AI AGENT STATISTICS

PROCUREMENT-SPECIFIC INSIGHTS

- A study sponsored by Icertis found that 90% of procurement leaders are either already using or planning to adopt AI agents in 2025 to optimize their operations.
- Complementing this, recent data shows that while 85% of procurement leaders are piloting or using AI, only 49% say their teams fully understand agentic AI. This highlights a gap between enthusiasm and readiness.

Taken together, these statistics show a field in transition. On the one hand, adoption is accelerating at a pace few predicted. On the other hand, real capability and understanding are still catching up. For procurement leaders, this duality creates both urgency and opportunity: teams that prepare now will scale with confidence, while those that hesitate risk falling behind.

With this global perspective in mind, the next chapter turns to our own survey findings, giving a closer look at how procurement professionals today are experimenting with AI agents, where they see the most value, and what barriers stand in their way.

SURVEY INSIGHTS ON AI IN PROCUREMENT

Our survey of procurement professionals revealed a mix of curiosity, early experimentation, and clear expectations for where AI agents should deliver value. The numbers tell a revealing story.



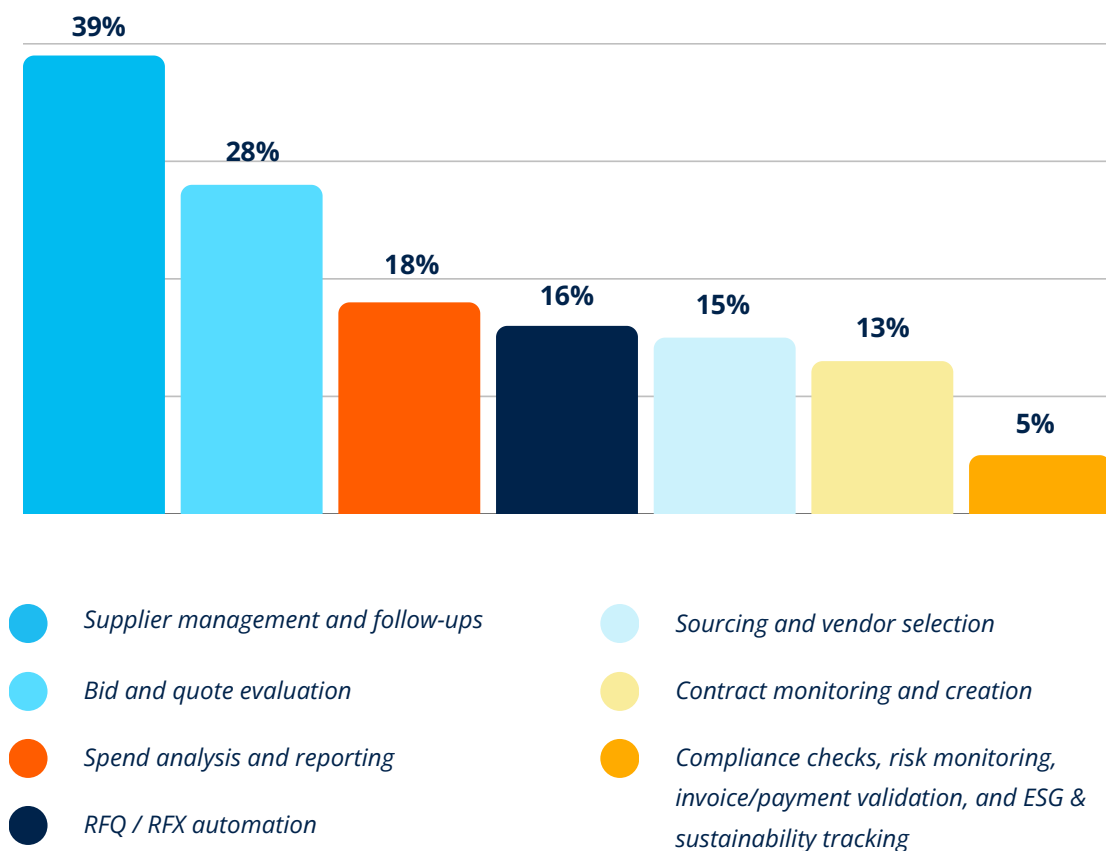
8 | AI AGENT STATISTICS

INTEREST IN LEARNING

A remarkable 93% of respondents said they want to be notified about the [AI Agents in Procurement course](#), showing both high curiosity and a strong appetite for structured guidance.

TOP USE CASES FOR AI AGENTS

When asked which procurement processes they most wanted to automate with AI agents, the responses were clear:



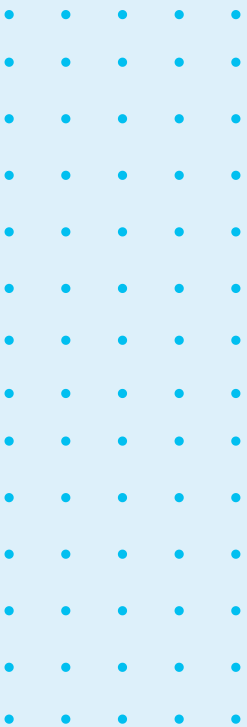
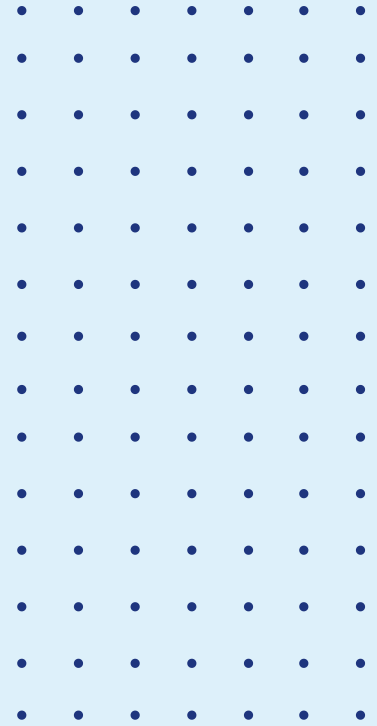
EXPECTATIONS FOR 2026

- **39%** of respondents expect supplier follow-ups to be fully automated by AI agents within the next year.
- **28%** believe bid and quote evaluation will soon be handled by AI.



Procurement Automations with AI Agents

Chapter 9: Conclusion



9 | CONCLUSION

Procurement has always been shaped by timing. The survey results, combined with what we see in the market, point to a simple truth: 2025 is the year of preparation, 2026 will be the year of adoption.

In 2025, procurement leaders have the rare opportunity to shape how AI agents will be used inside their organizations. Teams are curious, expectations are high, and pilots are already underway. But the real shift is coming. By 2026, we expect AI agents to be woven into supplier management, sourcing, contract oversight, compliance, and reporting. At that point, adoption will no longer be optional — it will be the baseline.

Leaders who use 2025 to experiment, train their teams, and build governance will set the standard. Those who wait will find themselves playing catch-up to competitors, suppliers, and stakeholders who have already embraced automation.

At Procurement Tactics, we believe the difference between falling behind and taking the lead comes down to preparation. That's why we've built programs like AI Fundamentals for Procurement Teams and our upcoming AI Agents in Procurement course — to help procurement teams make the leap from curiosity to competence.

The future of procurement automation is not years away. It is one year away. And the decisions you make in 2025 will define how ready your team is when 2026 arrives.

Next step → Do you want us to train your team on how to build AI agents? Have a look at our [AI Fundamentals for Procurement Teams](#) program.

PROCUREMENT AUTOMATIONS WITH AI AGENTS:
2025-2026 INDUSTRY OUTLOOK

Thank You!

Presented by:



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October 1, 2025