



Visa Consulting & Analytics (VCA)

Agentic Commerce: Designing for autonomous payments

A strategic imperative for financial institutions in an AI assisted commerce era.





Agentic AI is becoming a key strategic component for senior executives and financial institutions at large, as agentic-powered workflows are designed to supercharge efficiencies via automation.

According to BCG, 90% of CEOs believe agents will deliver measurable ROI this year.¹

Agentic commerce is evolving from concept to early-market reality. As AI platforms become primary entry points for online users' discovery, comparison and purchase initiation, they are emerging as a new distribution channel alongside search engines and marketplaces.

This shift is already measurable:

GenAI originated retail traffic has at times surged

4,700%

with bounce rates nearly half those of traditional search and a

4.4x

higher conversion among users arriving from AI assistants.^{2,3}

While fully autonomous commerce will most likely require more time to materialize, assisted commerce has arrived.

Assisted commerce describes a model whereby AI supports and enhances human decision making (e.g., recommending, ranking or partially executing actions), but the human user remains in control and must give final approval to transact. The next frontier — autonomous payments — will unlock real agentic commerce marked by asynchronous decisioning, complex workflows, and AI systems capable of coordinating full end to end commercial actions on behalf of consumers and businesses.

1. BCG AI Radar 2026, AI Radar 2026-Web-Jan-2026-Edit

2. Forbes, Gen-AI Driven Traffic To U.S. Ecommerce Sites Up 4,700%, Adobe Reports

3. AEO Impact on Pipeline: How AI Citations Drive Qualified Leads and Revenue

However, this raises critical questions. How do institutions ensure trust when users are not present at the moment of payment? How must authentication, risk controls, data governance, and dispute processes evolve? What commercial models emerge when customers become AI intermediaries? And what infrastructure is needed to support high volume, real time autonomous decisioning at scale?

For FIs, agentic commerce creates both opportunity and urgency. Institutions that design intentionally for agent driven commerce will remain relevant, while those that delay risk disintermediation as AI platforms intermediate commercial flows. This also elevates customer expectations, requiring banks to evolve beyond payments and build agentic banking capabilities across customer experience, productivity and risk management.



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How financial institutions can compete in an agent first world

As with many other industry disruptions before, the strategic imperative is clear: Now is the time to establish a point of view and build the foundations. This article outlines the business implications of agentic commerce and provides a pragmatic roadmap for how financial institutions may unlock opportunity while also managing risk.

The transition to agent driven payments represents one of the most consequential shifts since the emergence of ecommerce.

For the shift to autonomous commerce to scale safely, several ingredients must align:



Consumer trust

structures such as permissions, boundaries, revocability or visibility



Merchant readiness

through catalogue accessibility, protocol participation and distribution strategies



Infrastructure evolution,

especially across identity, intent, cart creation, authorization and liability allocation

FIs are likely to remain integral to the transaction flow through their roles in authorization, settlement, and risk management; however, to stay relevant in agentic commerce, they will need to adapt legacy systems built for human-initiated interactions.

What are some of the foreseeable challenges?

<p>Disintermediation and erosion of loyalty economics</p>	<p>As AI agents increasingly make frequent micro-decisions on behalf of customers, banks without strong Agent Engine Optimization (AEO) and agent-ready propositions risk being bypassed as engagement shifts from human-led interactions to automated execution. Banks that rely on traditional marketing, cardholder prompts, or human centred user experience (UX) risk losing visibility and influence in payment decisions as AI intermediates the journey.</p>
<p>The rise of invisible commerce and its impact in risk</p>	<p>As transactions become background events, trust must be embedded (not manually verified). This shifts the center of gravity from user authentication to agent to institution authentication, continuous risk monitoring and pre defined spending rules. Banks that do not redesign their authentication and dispute models for autonomous flows may expose themselves to operational, fraud and regulatory risks.</p> <p>Today's systems can stretch to adopt passkeys, tokenization, standards like Visa Intelligent Commerce and Trusted Agent Protocol (TAP), but new models are needed for verifiable intent signatures, agent attestation, structured cart data and liability frameworks across human absent transactions.</p>
<p>Platform and ecosystem displacement</p>	<p>Large technology platforms will increasingly own the agentic layer, such as voice assistants, operating systems and personal AI companions. FIs lacking clear strategy may lose customer primacy as decisions shift to platform controlled agents. Those positioned only as commodity payment processors risk margin erosion and disintermediation.</p>

Opportunities also exist for new value creation. Institutions that act early can tap into meaningful advantages by using agentic technologies for commerce and beyond:

- ✔ **New product models**
(e.g., autonomous budgeting, AI led liquidity optimization, smart credit line tuning, bank-led marketplaces)
- ✔ **Embedded finance at scale**, accelerated by agents that transact on behalf of businesses
- ✔ **Deeper customer loyalty** via personalized financial guardianship managed by trusted bank aligned agents, as well as hyper-relevant rewards
- ✔ **Operational efficiencies** through automation of routine financial decisions and operations Agentic commerce is not merely a technology trend — it is a business model shift.

FIs that embrace it can create new competitive differentiators rooted in intelligence, trust and seamless integration. Those that ignore it may find themselves competing for relevance in a market where agents, not consumers, choose the financial partner.

A three pillar strategy for the agentic era

FIs can better prepare for agentic commerce by adopting a three pronged strategy that enhances an assisted commerce role today while also preparing them for autonomous commerce tomorrow.

PILLAR 1

Build the intelligent payment architecture for autonomous agents

Six foundational layers of agentic payments require adaptation:

1. intent extraction and structured payment instructions
2. agent identity (KYA) and attestation models
3. cart creation and merchant validation flows
4. delegated credential provisioning (e.g., pass through tokens)
5. authentication evolution
6. risk modelling and new liability models

PILLAR 2

Protect existing propositions and build agentic banking capabilities across experience, productivity and risk

To protect existing propositions and top-of-wallet positioning, banks must rethink SEO and embrace AEO. Leveraging transaction insights and analytics, banks should also identify opportunities for products designed for delegation, such as the following:

- autonomous subscription management
- AI guided credit optimization
- proactive smart savings automation and cash flow orchestration
- agent compatible loyalty & incentives framework

PILLAR 3

Strengthen ecosystem positioning through partnerships and protocol participation

This involves evaluating emerging agentic commerce protocols (e.g., VIC, AP2, x402) and merchant-integration patterns, revising strategies and partnership models to ensure issuers remain embedded in agent workflows rather than being bypassed by them

Together, these three pillars create an actionable strategy for capturing value, reducing risk and keeping pace with the future of digital commerce.

Designing the future of payments

Agentic commerce is advancing relentlessly. Consumers are demonstrating early readiness, merchants are experimenting, and ecosystem players are rapidly closing the infrastructure gaps required for autonomous payments. For FIs, this moment mirrors the inflection point seen in other transformative shifts, such as mobile payments, where early strategic clarity became a differentiator.

The institutions that act now will help define how autonomous payments function, secure their roles in AI mediated decision flows, and shape the trust, identity and risk standards of this new commerce era. Those that wait risk losing visibility, influence and commercial relevance as agents become the new interfaces for everyday spending.

To explore how your organization can prepare for agent driven commerce and design a future ready payments strategy, connect with your Visa account representative or reach out to a Visa Consulting and Analytics advisor.





About Visa Consulting & Analytics (VCA)

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- ✔ Our consultants are experts in strategy, product, portfolio management, risk, digital and more with decades of experience in the payments industry.
- ✔ Our data scientists are experts in statistics, advanced analytics, and machine learning, with exclusive access to insights from VisaNet, one of the largest payment networks in the world.
- ✔ Our economists understand economic conditions impacting consumer spending and provide unique and timely insights into global spending trends.

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