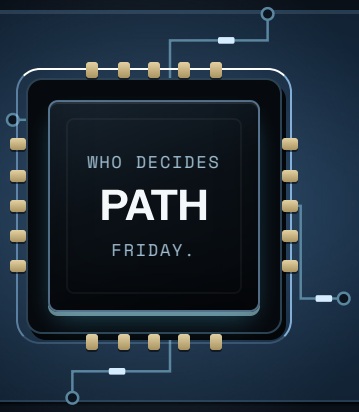
AI AGENTS · PDF DECISION SHEET

Agent or Workflow?

A workflow follows steps you define; an agent chooses its own. Answer these before you build, and use autonomy only where the task needs it.

5 SECTIONS · 12 CHECKS · PRINT AND FILL



01 Four questions to decide

FILL IN

QUESTION	IF YES	IF NO	YOUR TASK
Can you list every step in advance?	Start with a workflow	An agent may be needed	
Does any step need reading, research or judgment?	AI or an agent for that step	Fixed steps only	
Would a wrong result be costly?	Fixed steps and approvals around it	More room for autonomy	
Does it run at high volume?	Leans to a workflow	Rare, complex tasks tolerate agent costs	

02 Name the pattern

PICK ONE

- **Prompt chaining:** fixed steps with a check between them (extract, compare, draft).
- **Parallelization:** several AI calls at once, results combined.
- **Evaluator-optimizer:** one model drafts, another critiques against your checklist, in a loop.
- **Routing:** classify the input, then send it down the right path.
- **Orchestrator-workers:** one model splits a task it could not predict and hands out the parts.

Only the last two give the model real say over what happens next. If your task fits one of the first three, it is a workflow with AI steps.

03 Skill, connection, agent or workflow

MATCH

IF THE PROBLEM IS	BUILD	APPLIES TO YOU?
"The AI does not do it our way"	A skill	
"The AI cannot see our data"	An MCP connection	
"Someone has to coordinate several steps and tools"	An agent	
"The steps never change"	A workflow, not an agent	

The hybrid most businesses end up with: the workflow is the backbone (it receives the input, moves it between systems and enforces approvals); an agent handles only the step that needs judgment, then hands the result back.

04 The costs of autonomy

3 CHECKS

- **Time:** an agent that calls several tools may take minutes, not seconds.
- **Testing:** its path changes, so you test outcomes across many cases.
- **Reach:** every tool it can call is one it might call at the wrong moment; set limits on functions, permissions and high-impact actions.

05 Questions for any vendor

4 CHECKS

- **Who decides the next step:** fixed logic or the model?
- **When it is unsure,** what does it do?
- **Can you see a log** of each step it took?
- **Which actions wait** for your approval?

+ Your decision

WRITE HERE

The task in one sentence

Workflow, agent or hybrid

The one step that needs judgment

Approvals around it

NEXT STEP

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BASED ON FRIDAY FIELD NOTES

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General guidance, not legal or security advice for your specific setup. Questions: hello@doitwithfriday.com