



Automation vs Agentic

Stop the confusion

They both involve machines doing work without you watching every step. That's where the similarity ends. Understanding which one you're actually using isn't a semantic point, it determines how you build, govern, and recover when something goes wrong.

TYPE

Automation

A sequence of steps you defined in advance. The system follows them. Every path is mapped before it runs.

DRIVEN BY

Rules and triggers. You decided the logic. The system executes it.

BEHAVIOUR

Deterministic. Same input, same output. No surprises by design.

WHEN IT BREAKS

Loudly. Unexpected input hits an unmapped path and stops. You know immediately.

YOU AUDIT

Deterministic. Same input, same output. No surprises by design.

YOU'RE HERE IF

"I built a workflow. It runs the same way every time. I know every step it takes."

TYPE

Agentic

A goal you assigned. The system reasons about how to reach it. The path is decided at runtime, not in advance.

DRIVEN BY

Goals and context. You set the destination. The agent chooses the route.

BEHAVIOUR

Non-deterministic. Same input may produce different approaches. Adaptability is the point.

WHEN IT BREAKS

Quietly. It can complete the task while missing the intent entirely. You may not know.

YOU AUDIT

The outcomes. The reasoning trace. Whether the intent was actually met.

YOU'RE HERE IF

"I gave it a goal. I'm not sure exactly what steps it took and I'm watching what it produced."

THE QUICK TEST

Could you replace the AI with a well-written script and get the same result?

YES It's Automation

NO It's Agentic

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