

The Four Levels of AI

From a chatbot you ask questions to agents that run recurring work on their own. The four levels, where my own team sits, and how to move up one.



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From my LEVELS reel caption, word for word

Most businesses say they're using AI. But there are four **very different levels**.

AT A GLANCE

Time

About 10 minutes

You need

A list of what AI does for you now

You get

Your level, and the next step up

This week I sorted my own business into the four levels of AI. My team sits at Level 3.

Level 3 means agents do the work, and I kick each one off. Level 4 is when they run on their own.

Almost everyone I talk to is still on Level 1. They paste something in, get an answer, and start over the next day.

Sources checked October 5, 2026. Where my team sits is my own read of my own setup, October 5, 2026.

01 The four levels

1

🌀 Level 1: Answers

You ask a chatbot. It answers.

2

Level 2: Actions

It does one task in a real tool.

3

✳️ Level 3: Delegation

One agent splits the job across others.

4

Level 4: Loops

It starts itself, checks, and retries.

- Level 1 is useful for thinking and drafting. The work still waits for you.
- Level 2 gives it hands: your files, your tools, one job at a time.
- Level 3 is a small team of agents, each with its own job.
- Level 4 runs until the job is done, or asks a person for help. [My LEVELS scorecard, August 8, 2026](#)

02 Your level is what you can prove

Your level is the highest one you can prove.

Not the highest one you tried.

- Level 1: you use AI to brainstorm, research or draft.
- Level 2: it takes one approved action in a real tool.
- Level 3: one request gets split across agents with the right access.
- Level 4: something starts it, it checks the result, and it retries or asks for help.

03 Where my team sits: Level 3



My content team is agents. One finds ideas, one writes, one reads the numbers. Each run still starts with me.

That's the gap to Level 4. The work is done by agents, but the start is still my hand.

04 Move up one level

- 1** Level 1 to 2.
Pick one low-risk task with a clear point where you say yes. Give it only the access that task needs.

2

Level 2 to 3.

Split the job into roles. Decide what each agent gets, what it can touch, and what a good handoff is.

3

Level 3 to 4.

Write down what starts it, what done looks like, how many retries, and who it asks for help.

Anthropic, who make Claude, say the same: start simple, and add more agents only when simpler steps fall short. [Anthropic: Building effective agents](#)

05

Copy and paste: a Level 2 start

The jump from 1 to 2 is smaller than people think. Give it something of yours, then ask it to do the task, not describe it.

```
Here are my notes from this week:
[paste them]
```

```
Draft the customer update from these notes.
Use only what's in the notes.
Mark anything you're unsure about with [CHECK].
```

06

Keep a person at the gate

Skip this

~~✗ Automating a job you can't define yet~~

~~✗ Letting it spend or post on its own~~

~~✗ Jumping from Level 1 to Level 4~~

Do this

Define what done looks like first

A person signs off on money and anything public

One level at a time

Anthropic says agents should pause for human feedback at checkpoints.
That's where my yes sits. [Anthropic: Building effective agents](#)

SOURCES

- 1. SAMethod: The four levels of AI for a service business (LEVELS scorecard, August 8, 2026).
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mO3ohCEUbR-FRIs6ndSnRJ2VHN1sHDE4/view>
- 2. Anthropic: Building effective agents. <https://www.anthropic.com/engineering/building-effective-agents>

NEXT STEP



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Not sure which level fits your business? My free Revenue Opportunity Review looks at where AI would actually pay off. [Request a free review](#)

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