

QUICK GUIDE

5 ways to apply agentic AI

into your market research practice

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INTRODUCTION

Agentic AI is starting to find its place in companies today.

A recent [McKinsey survey](#) found that 62% of organizations are already experimenting with AI agents, signaling that this shift is moving from “early curiosity” to everyday practice.

Other [industry benchmarks](#) point in the same direction: that more researchers are testing agents in real workflows, reporting early gains in efficiency and expecting these systems to play a larger role over the next few years. In fact, [78% believe](#) that these agents will be running the majority of research projects by 2028.

The momentum is real but so are the questions about how to use agentic AI responsibly, transparently and in ways that actually improve the work. This guide focuses on the practical side: where to start, what to watch for and how to build habits that support long-term adoption.

Here are five moves that help insight teams build agentic AI into their everyday practice.

What is agentic AI?

Agentic AI is AI that can reason and act to complete a specific job. It combines a large language model with the ability to break tasks into steps, make decisions and use tools like search, databases or analysis functions.

Unlike a basic chatbot, an agent can plan its approach, take action and adjust as it goes. In market research, this means agents can run multi-step tasks such as drafting, checking, analyzing or packaging insights.



TIP 1

Start with a gradual approach

Agentic AI works best when it supports researchers, not when it replaces them. Treat agents as draft partners that take the first pass on tasks that take up time in a standard workflow. Ask an agent to sketch a questionnaire, uncover themes from the findings or outline a topline report, then let the researcher refine the result.

Helpful places to start:

- Early drafts of surveys or discussion guides
- Quick theming for open-ends or video
- First-pass summaries of long text
- Internal planning notes

Start with low-risk internal work so your team can practice before AI touches client deliverables.

Rival's Market Research Trends 2026 survey reveals the attitudes of insight leaders today towards AI. Conducted in November 2025 using the Rival platform, the survey also dove into AI's top use cases today.

50%

of researchers are excited for AI agents

— Rival Technologies, November 2025

90%

are excited for AI-assisted analysis and reporting

— Rival Technologies, November 2025

TIP 2

Build agents around real jobs

The strongest agents have a clear job to do. They stay focused, use only the tools they need, and hand off cleanly to the next step in your workflow. This is about intentionally designing a system that can scale.

A simple pipeline might include:

- A survey authoring agent that drafts and checks questionnaires
- A QA agent that flags bias, clarity and logic issues
- A distribution agent that launches surveys to relevant audiences
- An analysis agent that clusters themes and emotions
- A reporting agent that prepares stakeholder-ready summaries

A modular approach keeps things flexible. You can improve or replace one agent without rebuilding your entire system and keep every step aligned to your voice and standards.

TIP 3

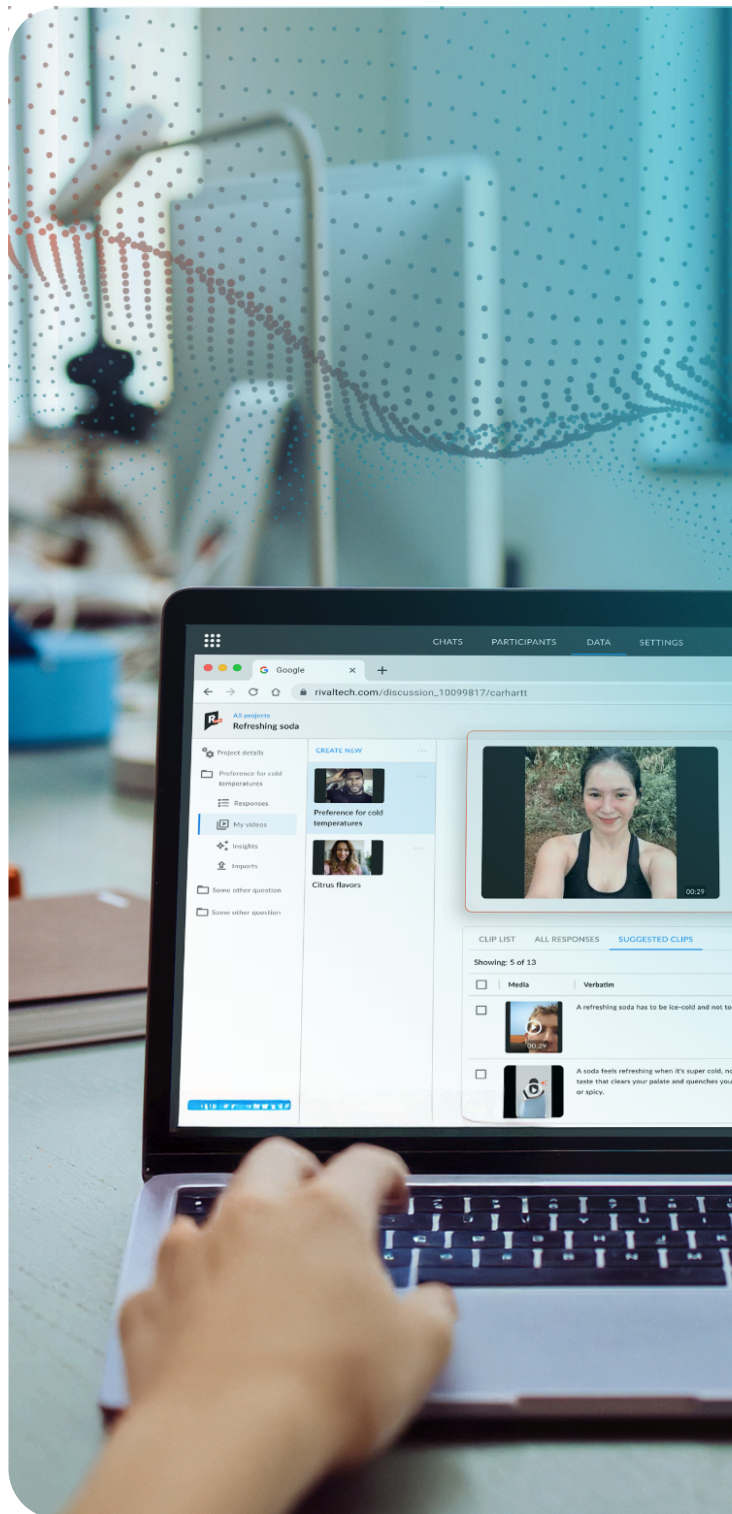
Keep a human in the loop

Agentic AI can reason and act, but it still needs human judgment to guide the work. Research decisions involve context, empathy and ethical nuance that AI cannot replicate. The goal is augmentation, not full automation. A human-in-the-loop approach protects the integrity of the work:

- Validate themes, tones and emotional cues
- Check reasoning chains for weak logic or misinterpreted context
- Correct assumptions an agent makes when the task stretches beyond its tools
- Apply ethical and methodological judgment that AI cannot match

It also protects trust which, when lost, is extremely difficult to regain. Researchers should stay involved anytime accuracy, interpretation or participant experience matter (which, let's face it, applies to the entire research continuum!).

Keeping humans at the center ensures the outputs remain reliable as your team adopts AI at a pace that feels confident and safe.



“With agents, the role of the researcher can become more of an orchestrator or creative lead. Agentic AI enables a lot of extra horsepower for us in market research, but we have to pivot appropriately and adopt them carefully. It’s about augmentation rather than automation.”



— Dale Evernden, EVP of Design and Innovation, Rival Technologies

TIP 4

Make the reasoning visible

Hidden steps create hidden risks. Researchers need to see how an agent arrived at an answer. When you evaluate tools, choose agents that give visibility into how and why actions were taken.

Things to look for:

- Clear reasoning steps
- Direct links from themes to quotes or clips
- Adjustable prompts, rules or thresholds
- Audit trails that support quality checks

Visibility helps teams catch issues early and gives colleagues and stakeholders confidence in how insights are created. In truth, transparency remains the simplest and most reliable best practice. When teams are open about how agents are used, what data they rely on and where humans guide the work, trust follows naturally.

TIP 5

Build capability, not just tools

Agentic AI evolves the day-to-day of research like nothing else has done in the history of the profession. It’s an entirely new way of working. The most successful teams invest in shared practices, not just technology.

Ways to build a strong foundation:

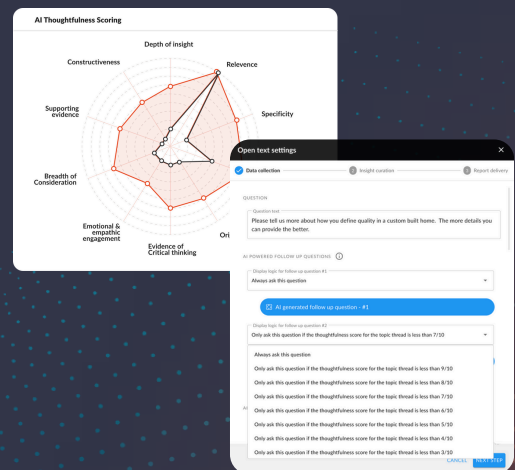
- Create a cross-functional group that meets regularly to share learning
- Build a simple library of prompts, templates or “skills”
- Define success metrics like time saved or depth of insight
- Give teams space to experiment with historical or internal data

Some organizations find it helpful to join structured learning communities that support this kind of exploration. Rival Tech’s Innovation Insiders program is one example, bringing research teams together to build skills, test ideas and learn from one another as the technology evolves.

This keeps momentum going and helps everyone learn together rather than relying on a single AI expert.

Conclusion

Great research has always relied on the same core ingredients: clarity of purpose, thoughtful design and an honest connection to the people behind the data. Agentic AI doesn’t change those fundamentals. It simply gives teams new ways to assist the work, amplify what matters and unlock possibilities that were hard to reach before. The craft stays the same, while the tools get better.



Conversational Research Trailblazers

Deeper, Authentic Connections.
Real-time Insights. Transformative Results.



Mobile-First
and Chat-Based



Quant, Qual, and
Unlimited Videos



AI-Enhanced
Tooling



Next-Gen
Communities

AI Thoughtfulness Scoring

Depth of insight, Relevance, Specificity, Clarity and coherence, Originality, Evidence of Critical thinking, Emotional & empathic engagement, Breadth of Consideration, Supporting evidence, Constructiveness.

Feedback: GENERATE AI INSIGHTS

Reviews impacted by gender

Reviews impact on decision	Female		Male		Non-binary		Prefer to self-describe	
	# of participants	%	# of participants	%	# of participants	%	# of participants	%
1 - No impact on my decision	199	9.01%	24	14.72%	4	17.39%	13	22.03%
2 - Minor influence	81	3.67%	10	6.13%	1	4.35%	4	6.78%
3 - Moderate influence	314	14.21%	26	15.95%	4	17.39%	7	11.86%
4 - Major influence	599	27.12%	36	22.09%	6	26.09%	11	18.64%
5 - Significantly influence	1,016	45.99%	67	41.10%	8	34.78%	24	40.68%

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