# Technology companies race to refine AI agents that transform office productivity



Technology companies are racing to develop artificial intelligence agents intended to enhance workplace productivity by alleviating mundane and routine tasks. The Financial Times tested a range of popular applications from AI innovators like OpenAI, Anthropic, and Perplexity, alongside tech giants such as Google, Microsoft, and Apple. These tools are increasingly accessible, each promising varying levels of assistance for everyday tasks, although many advanced features remain works in progress. Users often have the option to pay for subscriptions to access enhanced performance or additional functionalities.

In a practical examination of how these tools could assist an office worker, several tasks were completed, starting with the challenge of digesting daily news. Applications such as Google’s Gemini and Anthropic’s Claude were tested, with varied effectiveness. Gemini tended to provide broad summaries, lacking specific details, while Perplexity offered a more focused selection of stories, linking them to relevant news sources. Similarly, OpenAI’s ChatGPT performed well by categorising information into national, regional, and local news—though none of these responses were personalised to user interests without additional prompts.

When it came to drafting emails, AI tools further showcased their capabilities. A test involving notes from an interview yielded clear drafts across different applications. Microsoft 365 presented an insightful but somewhat vague narrative of the discussion, in contrast to Gemini's bullet-point summary. Apple's AI produced a cohesive email outlining key themes efficiently, indicating that while these tools are not infallible, they can substantially reduce the effort required for routine communications.

Meeting summaries were another feature tested. Both Gemini and Microsoft 365 provided overviews of discussions, highlighting action items. While Microsoft excelled in providing time-coded subheadings, both tools struggled with inaccuracies—misidentifying names or terms—which highlights the current limitations of AI in maintaining context and specificity in complex situations.

On more intricate tasks, like making restaurant reservations or planning travel, AI agents like OpenAI’s Operator and Anthropic’s Computer Use were employed. Operator handled the restaurant booking competently, though it occasionally struggled with website navigation. In travel planning, Operator outperformed its counterpart in speed and user guidance, demonstrating the potential of these AIs to handle complex, multi-step processes that one can delegate to focus on other tasks.

Conversely, the challenge of crafting social media content was tackled using visual AI tools such as Synthesia and Pika. These applications are tailored for creative outputs, though they often require fine-tuning to meet specific requirements. While Synthesia created realistic avatars for corporate videos, Pika offered imaginative yet surreal interpretations, illustrating the diverse capabilities and potential applications of AI in both corporate and personal settings.

Overall, the rapid evolution of AI tools is evident as they gradually integrate into various aspects of work life. Innovations such as cloud computing and workflow automation are advancing, fostering significant transformations in how businesses operate. For instance, companies are increasingly adopting AI to navigate labour shortages and enhance productivity, even among newer employees. This is particularly relevant in a volatile economic climate where innovative AI solutions help maintain growth despite external pressures.

As these technologies mature, the increasing personalisation of AI tools stands to enhance their functionality further. Future iterations may create agents that not only assist with general tasks but are also tailored to individual user preferences, integrating seamlessly with company-specific data. Such advancements could ultimately redefine productivity within workplaces, enabling a focus on more strategic and creative contributions.

In conclusion, while AI agents are not yet ubiquitous in fully autonomous roles, their growing capabilities suggest a future where repetitive tasks are efficiently handled, potentially revolutionising how we approach productivity and collaboration at work.

### Reference Map

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## Bibliography

* <https://www.ft.com/content/9a1736aa-45be-4f54-b05b-468e04ed8b4a> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.ft.com/content/b7674c60-8234-432a-b70b-b5b48a98cf32> - This article discusses how AI technologies, including cloud computing and workflow automation, are gaining mainstream traction in the IT industry. It highlights examples like Paris-based startup Veesion, which uses AI-powered surveillance to reduce shoplifting, and SourceWhale, which employs AI to enhance workflow automation for recruitment agencies, leading to significant revenue growth. Additionally, Polish company Solidstudio is developing AI technology to prevent fraud in the electric vehicle sector, showcasing the versatility and transformative impact of AI in modern business operations.
* <https://apnews.com/article/c1e0163d51b430fcb18f0c80e32b2d81> - This article explores how businesses in the U.S. are investing in automation and advanced technology to address chronic worker shortages, leading to a significant surge in productivity. Companies like Batesville Tool & Die have maintained high output levels despite a tight labor market, contributing to the broader economic resilience. The integration of AI and other automation tools has shown promising results in enhancing worker productivity, particularly among less experienced employees, and has helped sustain growth and low unemployment amidst high interest rates intended to curb inflation.
* <https://www.kiplinger.com/business/biggest-ai-companies-to-know> - This article highlights ten major companies shaping the artificial intelligence landscape. It discusses Amazon's AWS platform, which supports scalable AI tools like SageMaker and custom silicon chips for AI processing. It also covers Hugging Face's emergence as a hub for open-source AI models, OpenAI's global prominence with ChatGPT, and China's DeepSeek's development of competitive AI models without advanced chips. Other companies mentioned include Databricks, Meta, Google, Nvidia, Microsoft, and Anthropic, each contributing uniquely to the AI industry.
* <https://www.homesandgardens.com/solved/chatgpt-decluttering-to-do-list> - In this article, a writer recounts their experience using ChatGPT to create a decluttering to-do list after feeling overwhelmed by household chores. The AI provided a thoughtfully structured list of tasks paired with reasoning and productivity tips, enhancing time management and reducing stress. Expert input supports AI's usefulness in task management but cautions that results can be general unless detailed information is provided. Personalized training of the AI over time is recommended for better outcomes, showcasing AI's potential in managing household duties.
* <https://www.naveck.com/blog/ai-tools-daily-business-use/> - This article presents a list of AI tools designed to enhance daily business operations. It features GitHub Copilot, an AI-powered coding assistant that streamlines development workflows; DeepCode, an AI-driven code review tool that provides real-time feedback on code quality and security; and Notion AI, an AI-powered workspace that assists with writing, summarizing, and organizing tasks. These tools aim to improve efficiency and productivity in various aspects of business operations.
* <https://www.greatworklife.com/ai-tools/> - This article introduces AI tools designed to upgrade productivity and creativity. It highlights Notion AI for task management, which utilizes natural language processing to understand and interpret input from team members, automatically organizing tasks based on priority and due dates. The tool also offers predictive task completion and real-time updates, providing a personalized task dashboard for each team member. This integration of AI aims to enhance team collaboration and streamline workflows.