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INTELLIGENCE ON THE AI FRONTIER

Agents, models, markets and the ideas worth carrying into the day

THE LEAD · AGENTS

One Agent, Fewer Keys

A 2,124-task study finds the simplest agent design matches swarms at a fraction of the cost, while this month's three agent breaches came through forgotten credentials, not new exploits.

2,124	4.7×	5 days	30.9%	25×
TASKS IN THE AGENT ARCHITECTURE STUDY	PEAK TOKEN COST OF COORDINATED DESIGNS	AN AGENT READ RECORDS UNDETECTED	OPEN-MODEL SHARE OF ENTERPRISE TOKENS	MEMORY CUT IN A RUST BROWSER AGENT

Researchers ran one frontier model through four agent designs: a single agent, a single agent with skills, an orchestrator with sub-agents, and a triage swarm. They tested 2,124 tasks drawn from 13 enterprise procedures. No design was statistically better overall. The procedure being run explained most of the variance.

Coordination cost a lot. Multi-agent designs used 1.4 to 4.7 times the tokens and up to 5.8 times the latency. Good skills lifted success from 67.4% to 73.1%, while degraded ones dropped it to 59.8%.

The security news points the same way. One agent logged into production with a test credential a developer had left behind and read customer records for five days. Neither that breach nor two others needed a new exploit class.

The lesson for builders is to start with one agent, write down the procedure, grade the skills, and give each agent a short-lived key scoped to the task in front of it.

SECURITY

Patch Window Shrinks to 30 Days

One major lab is cutting its vulnerability-disclosure window from 90 to 30 days for high and critical bugs, because AI now finds flaws faster. A critical Confluence Data Center flaw is under active attack.

TOOLING

Agents Stop Paying Twice

A new open-source plugin keeps repo lessons across coding-agent sessions and is said to cut costs by 18–31% without changing the model.

"Harnesses are sticky. Models are not."

MODELS

The Decision-Model Tier Arrives

A new class of small models returns typed, calibrated answers instead of prose. One family charges $0.02 per million input tokens, with no output charge and a calibration error of 0.8. A network company built a decision-model clone in two weeks, where the original took two years, and added an extraction model that pulls typed fields out of messy input in one pass.

Microsoft compared decision engines to relational databases. If that comparison holds, every agent will get a cheap first stage that handles routing, classification and approvals.

RESEARCH

Physics Exam Saturated Before Release

A 50-problem benchmark of unpublished, day-long theoretical physics problems was solved 49 times out of 50 at under $3 an answer, and the model found errors in the reference answers. There will be no second version.

Another model reproduced a 500-page thesis, a year of work, in ten hours. High-energy theory preprints are up about 30% year on year, against a previous record jump of 8%, and at least one senior physicist has paused new PhD admissions.

REASONING

When Thinking Longer Hurts

Extra reasoning tokens can catch a mistake or lock in a wrong reading. In one study a model produced 13 solutions to "2 + 3" after getting 5 the first time, because correctness rewards don't penalise length. Another drifted from a 9:00 timetable to "9:10" because trains usually run late.

The fair test is to run the same questions at several reasoning budgets and see whether accuracy actually rises.

SECURITY

Three Breaches in Eight Days, No New Exploits

Three intrusions driven by autonomous agents were disclosed between 6 and 12 November. In the first, an agent used a credential left over from local testing, logged into production on 25 October, and read customer records and call summaries until 30 October.

The second used a 78,000-character jailbreak built from a public template and spent more than two weeks inside a European telecom and 13 organisations hosted on it. The third coordinated twelve agents.

Scanners count 1,465 internet-exposed consoles for one attack framework, 155 of them on hosts also running Cobalt Strike-class tooling. Every missing control was ordinary: an exposed API, a dev key in production, no rate limiter.

The fix is equally ordinary, applied faster: per-task credentials that expire in minutes, rate limits on every agent-facing endpoint, and alerts when an identity is used outside its task window.

TOOLS

Browser Agent Rebuilt in Rust

A rewrite cuts per-session memory from about 190 MB to 5.6 MB and the binary from 64 MB to 4.3 MB. It needs no Playwright or Node and exposes the browser as MCP tools in your real, logged-in session.

MOBILE

Coding Agents Learn to Fold

A coding agent's Xcode plugin now folds and unfolds a foldable-phone simulator to test open, closed and half-bent layouts, then fixes resizing issues it finds. It needs Xcode 27.1 or later.

GOVERNANCE

The 96% Blind Spot in Guardrails

On 150+ roleplay jailbreaks, a classic toxicity classifier flagged one and an LLM-based judge flagged 25. The older model reads only 512 tokens and knows six labels. The suggested fix: human-review every flagged case and spot-check 10–15% of passed ones.

MODELS

New Coding Models Enter Preview

A hyperscaler's two coding models, one for long-horizon whole-repo work and a Flash tier for fast sub-agent tasks, are in private preview through a major open-source coding tool. No benchmarks or prices have been published yet.

SEMICONDUCTORS

The Chipmaker Reports Without Its Founder

The world's most valuable chip company reports earnings with its CFO as interim chief, after the founder resigned during a probe into a relationship with a suspected foreign agent. The stock fell 12.7% last week, more than $570 billion in value. Prediction markets give his return 16%.

A new 132-page export rule requires licences for Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and Brazil, and caps chip rental to Chinese firms at about 200 top-tier GPUs. It doesn't apply inside the US, so one analyst warns Northern Virginia could become "the center of China AI."

CAPITAL

A $1.4 Trillion Debut

A frontier lab's IPO is reported to be 10–20 times oversubscribed, with one fund asking for $5 billion of stock. The filing shows $16.3 billion of first-half revenue, with compute costs falling from 251% to 48% of revenue. A Gulf sovereign-fund chief is still forecasting "a nice pleasant winter."

INFERENCE

The Final Market

An answer engine passed a $1 billion revenue run rate, up fourfold this year. Open models now carry 30.9% of enterprise tokens, up from 7.3%, and switchers report per-token savings of 50–90%. One inference platform puts spending at about $2 trillion by 2030, while admitting its own forecasts have missed by up to 4×.

OPINION

The Harness Is the Product

The procedure, not the architecture, explained agent success. Swapping the model underneath cut costs by up to 90%. A plugin saved a third of spend without touching the model. The defensible asset is the layer of written procedures, graded skills and private evaluations. Treat the model as a dependency you can swap behind a gateway.

ARCHITECTURE

Route by Certainty

Calibrated decision models at two cents per million tokens make a two-speed stack practical. Structured choices go to the cheap tier, and the expensive reasoning model is called only when confidence falls below a threshold. A sub-cent "is this easy?" check can also set the reasoning budget, which deals with the overthinking problem before any tokens are spent.

SECURITY

Hygiene at Machine Speed

Attacks now take minutes and disclosure windows are shrinking toward a month. The control that fits is credentials issued per task, scoped to one step and expiring quickly. When an identity is used outside its window, an alert fires before any data moves.

MOVE 37

Build Agents That Forget on Purpose

Everyone wants agents to remember more. But the five-day breach came from a remembered credential, and drift came from a remembered prior overriding today's evidence. The proposal is a decaying lesson ledger. Each persistent fact carries its source and a trust score that halves unless fresh evidence re-confirms it, and anything shaped like a secret can't be stored at all. Lessons that keep getting confirmed stay; stale beliefs and stray tokens fade.