



BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE MACH ALLIANCE

Build to **move.**

Your game plan for future-proof, agent-ready technology.

A PRACTICAL PLAYBOOK

For technology leaders building open, composable, and connected architectures — and the agent ecosystems that will run on top of them.

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Open. Composable. Connected.

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A practical playbook for technology leaders building open, composable, and connected architectures — and the agent ecosystems that will run on top of them.

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The stakes have changed.

Every enterprise technology leader is asking the same question right now: how do we make AI work at scale, across the business, with returns we can actually point to?

The answer is architecture. **Open, composable, and connected** — the kind that lets agents coordinate across systems, share context across vendor boundaries, and act autonomously where it matters. That is the agentic enterprise. It runs on architecture designed for change.

This playbook is for the people who have to make that architecture real. **Build to move** is the operating posture: architect your stack, your contracts, and your team for continuous change rather than a fixed end-state.

6^x

Organizations with composable architecture are 6x more likely to achieve clear AI ROI than those without (78% vs. 13%).

94%

say composable architecture increases the speed of AI deployment.

98%

of composable-mature organizations can support AI at scale.

— MACH Alliance Enterprise Technology Report 2026, 600 decision-makers, 7 global markets.

This is not a coincidence. It is architecture.

Foundations and the Agent Ecosystem.

The current chapter of enterprise technology has two parts, and it helps to name them up front.

Foundations

The open, composable, connected systems that already power modern digital experiences and operations. This is the work most enterprises are still in the middle of. Get this right, and everything that follows becomes possible.

The Agent Ecosystem

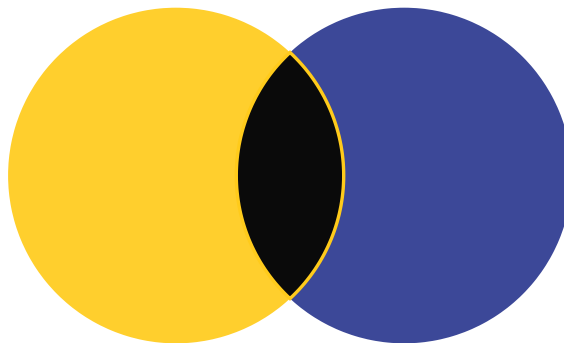
The emerging frontier where many agents, from many vendors, coordinate across the enterprise to do useful work. **It will not be one agent running an entire business. It will be many agents running many parts of one.**

The two circles depend on each other. Without solid foundations, agents have nothing reliable to plug into. Without an agent ecosystem, foundations stop short of the value they could deliver. This playbook covers both.

Foundations.

OPEN · COMPOSABLE
CONNECTED

The systems that already power modern digital experiences and operations.



Agent Ecosystem.

MANY AGENTS,
MANY VENDORS

The emerging frontier where many agents, from many vendors, coordinate.

BUILD TO MOVE

Why architecture decides who wins the agentic era.

A modern architecture is future-proof and agent-ready not because of any one product choice, but because of the principles underneath it: **open, composable, connected.**

That is what gives you the speed to adapt, to add, and to change direction without breaking what already works.

In an agentic world, that matters more, not less. Agents need to know what they are looking at, rearrange capabilities to fit a task, and act in real time across systems and vendor boundaries. Architectures designed for transparency, modularity, and interoperability are the ones that let them do useful work.

The shift this requires is more than technology. It is also a shift in posture: from anti-monolith defensiveness to active **tech independence.**

The organizations that thrive will be the ones that keep themselves free to choose, adapt, and grow.

The speed to adapt, to add, to change direction without breaking what works.



The three principles.

The three principles describe what a system must be, not which products to buy. Together they speak to the business leader and the architect in the same breath — visibility, agility, and accountability all live inside the same posture.

PRINCIPLE 01

Open.

For the business. I can see it, and I can trust it.

For the architect. Transparency and exit clarity.

WHAT IS REQUIRED

- ◆ Documented sources and behavior
- ◆ Metrics of performance, via API
- ◆ Data portability and migration paths
- ◆ Integration guides and published patterns

WHAT IT IS — AND IS NOT

- ◆ Explicit, not inferred
- ◆ Portable, not vendor-locked
- ◆ Standards-based, not proprietary
- ◆ Independently observable, not portal-only

PRINCIPLE 02

Composable.

For the business. I can rearrange it. I can evolve it.

For the architect. Modularity, independence, safe evolution.

WHAT IS REQUIRED

- ◆ SaaS delivery, non-disruptive updates
- ◆ Modular design with third-party integration
- ◆ Data and AI control and customization
- ◆ Works within multi-vendor stacks

WHAT IT IS — AND IS NOT

- ◆ Cloud-native, not fixed-capacity
- ◆ Extendable, not vendor-controlled
- ◆ Continuous deployment, not disruptive releases
- ◆ Modular, not tightly coupled

PRINCIPLE 03

Connected.

For the business. It works in real time with everything around it.

For the architect. Real-time participation and standardized interop.

WHAT IS REQUIRED

- ◆ API-first architecture
- ◆ Real-time integration capabilities
- ◆ Standardized cross-system protocols
- ◆ Externally observed, governed, approved

WHAT IT IS — AND IS NOT

- ◆ Real-time, not batch-dependent
- ◆ Common standards, not proprietary
- ◆ Programmatic, not UI-only
- ◆ Verified actors, not implicit trust

A successful strategy built on these principles must be tightly aligned with the wider business strategy. Transforming the technology and aligning the operating model — breaking down silos, empowering teams to own their services, instilling a "test, learn, adapt" mentality — is what lets the architecture deliver the outcomes it is capable of. **MACH stands for speed. The speed to adapt, to add, to change direction without breaking what works. That is what these three principles deliver.**

Where you stand today.

Not every organization starts in the same place, and that is fine. What is **not** fine is standing still. Read the three descriptions below and pick the one that best matches where you are today.

◆ 01 · CURIOUS

Early awareness, limited agility.

You are feeling the strain of legacy architecture. AI activity is ad-hoc — point experiments and copilots — and most of it underdelivers.

YOU ARE LIKELY CURIOUS IF...

- ◆ Changes require long planning cycles or significant vendor involvement.
- ◆ AI activity feels like point experiments, not connected to architecture.
- ◆ You know you need to shift, but the path forward is not yet clear.

WHAT TO DO NOW

- ◆ Identify high-friction workflows and brittle integrations.
- ◆ Launch a low-risk, principle-aligned pilot.
- ◆ Set a written success metric. Turn wins into case studies.

◆ 02 · ACTIVE

Modular in motion, scaling for change.

You have adopted composable thinking in parts of your stack. Teams are building with APIs. Legacy dependencies are being phased out.

YOU ARE LIKELY ACTIVE IF...

- ◆ You are replacing parts of the stack with composable, API-first capabilities.
- ◆ At least one AI or agent-driven feature is in production.
- ◆ You're asking how to make composable thinking the default pattern.

WHAT TO DO NOW

- ◆ Expand composability into search, personalization, checkout, service.
- ◆ Stand up a shared agent enablement layer with scoped credentials.
- ◆ Govern for modular systems and decentralized decision-making.

◆ 03 · PRO

Built for change, ready for agents.

Architecture is no longer a strategy debate — it is how you operate. The focus now is scaling intelligence and shaping the agent ecosystem.

YOU ARE LIKELY PRO IF...

- ◆ Architecture is how you operate, not a debate.
- ◆ Multiple agent workflows run in production with observability.
- ◆ You contribute to standards rather than just consume them.

WHAT TO DO NOW

- ◆ Optimize orchestration across domains and partner ecosystems.
- ◆ Scale agentic capabilities and the human oversight model.
- ◆ Contribute to at least one external standard or working group.

The agentic era will not wait. The organizations that thrive will be the ones that build for it deliberately.

Starting from where you are.

Most readers of this paper are not starting on a blank page.

There is a heavily customized platform, a long-tail of integrations, and at least one contract whose renewal is far enough away that a full replatform is not on the table this year.

That is the normal case. The principles still apply — the pattern just changes.



01

Encapsulate first

Front the legacy system with an API and event layer your composable capabilities can speak to. That buys agent-readiness for capabilities that will not move for years.

02

Replace one capability at a time

Swap capabilities behind the encapsulation layer, on a cadence the business can absorb. Each replacement compounds the last.

03

Make the next contract count

Use the next renewal to set the bar. Even if you are not switching, the conversation alone changes what your next signature commits to.

Your first moves.

Becoming agent-ready is not about swapping platforms or buying into the latest tools. It is about setting the organization up to thrive in an era defined by continuous change, real-time intelligence, and autonomous decision-making.

What follows is a sequence designed to reduce risk, accelerate learning, and build momentum. This is build to move as a sequence.

01 Define your AI imperative.

The fastest way to burn an AI budget is to start with the technology. Start with the outcome you are willing to be measured on, and work backward. Capture the top three strategic imperatives that will shape the transformation. Those become your north star.

02 Evaluate where you are.

You cannot build an adaptive enterprise on blind spots. Map your current architecture across functions and systems. Identify rigid integrations, redundant tooling, and points of friction. Do not overlook the human side — assess organizational structure, decision-making, and cross-functional collaboration.

03 Build buy-in across the business.

Architectural change touches every part of the organization, not just IT. Tailor the narrative — TCO and ROI with the CFO, speed and experience with the CMO, productivity and resilience with the COO. Engage product, marketing, and operations early so they feel ownership, not disruption.

04 Start with focused, low-risk wins.

Choose a self-contained use case: a content platform, a checkout experience, an internal service modular by nature, or a contained agent workflow. Apply the three principles and design for observability from day one. Share results to build internal momentum and confidence.

05 Choose partners who understand the principles — and the Agent Ecosystem.

Look for partners with API-first design, multi-vendor integration, and a composability mindset. Look for partners building for agent-ready ecosystems — published commitments to agent-facing protocols, clear approaches to non-human identity, and real-time event interfaces.

06 Design for continuous change.

This is not a project. It is a long-term operating posture for a world that will not stop moving. Build governance models that support decentralized decision-making while maintaining shared standards — and that can hold both human and agent actors accountable.



The Agent Ecosystem Initiative.

The MACH Alliance Agent Ecosystem Initiative exists to make the agent landscape actionable — grounded in what is real today, built for reliable operation across many systems, and oriented around outcomes you can point to. End-user contributors get decision-grade reference architectures, peer-tested adoption patterns, and early signal on what is actually shipping in production — and a seat at the table where those artifacts get shaped.

Two working groups are open to end-user contributors:

- **Agent Adoption and Operations** — patterns for getting agents into production safely and operating them at scale.
- **Enterprise Agent Architecture** — reference architectures and design guidance for agent-ready stacks.

The fastest engagement path.

Bring a real use case or procurement question to a working group session. Working group output is published through the MACH Alliance Insights Hub as it lands.

Build to move.

Adopting open, composable, and connected architecture is not just preparation for AI. It is a transformation in how the organization builds, integrates, and evolves. The first moves are not about perfection. They are about momentum.

The companies that thrive in the agentic era will not be the ones with the biggest platforms. They will be the ones that move fast, adapt constantly, and design for change — and that deploy the agent ecosystems that turn architecture into outcomes.

Start now. Start small. Start smart — and scale boldly.

Your single best move after closing this document: take the three tier descriptions to your architecture team this week, decide together where you stand, and bring that read into your next platform conversation.

About the MACH Alliance.

The MACH Alliance is the industry body that champions **tech independence** — rallying the movement for open, composable, and connected technology. Our expert community delivers the standards, frameworks, and practical guidance that turn bold ideas into valuable business outcomes.

The Alliance represents 116 member companies worldwide, including global enterprises, technology vendors, and system integrators. Through certification, an expert community, peer-led programming, and real-world guidance, the Alliance helps organizations confidently adopt open and transformative technologies — and stay free to choose, adapt, and grow.

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