

Chatbot vs Workflow vs Agent

They may use the same AI — but they work in very different ways.

CHATBOT



"What is photosynthesis?"

Answers a question

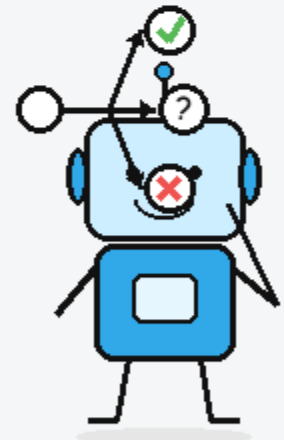
WORKFLOW



- ☒ Step 1
- ☒ Step 2

Follows fixed steps

AGENT



Chooses the next step

LET'S MAKE IT SIMPLE

The Easiest Analogy

CHATBOT

A knowledgeable friend



You ask.
It answers.

WORKFLOW

A recipe or checklist

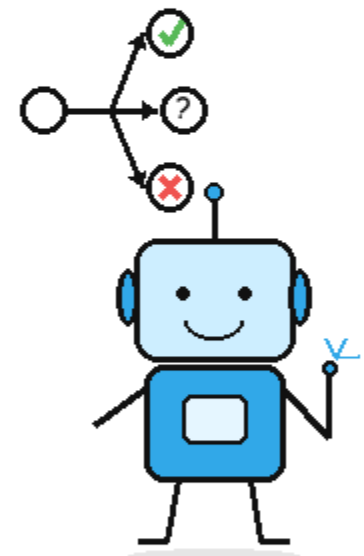
RECIPE

- ☒ Mix
- ☒ Cook
- ☒ Serve

The steps are already
decided.

AGENT

A smart helper



You give a goal.
It decides what to do
next.

Same AI building blocks. Different level of
decision-making.

One Goal. Three Behaviors.

GOAL: "I want biryani for dinner."

CHATBOT



Recommends a few biryani places.

Then waits for your next question.

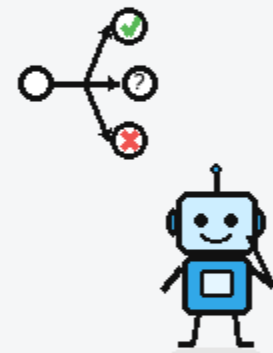
WORKFLOW



Asks your location.
Shows open restaurants.
Displays menus.

The path is fixed.

AGENT

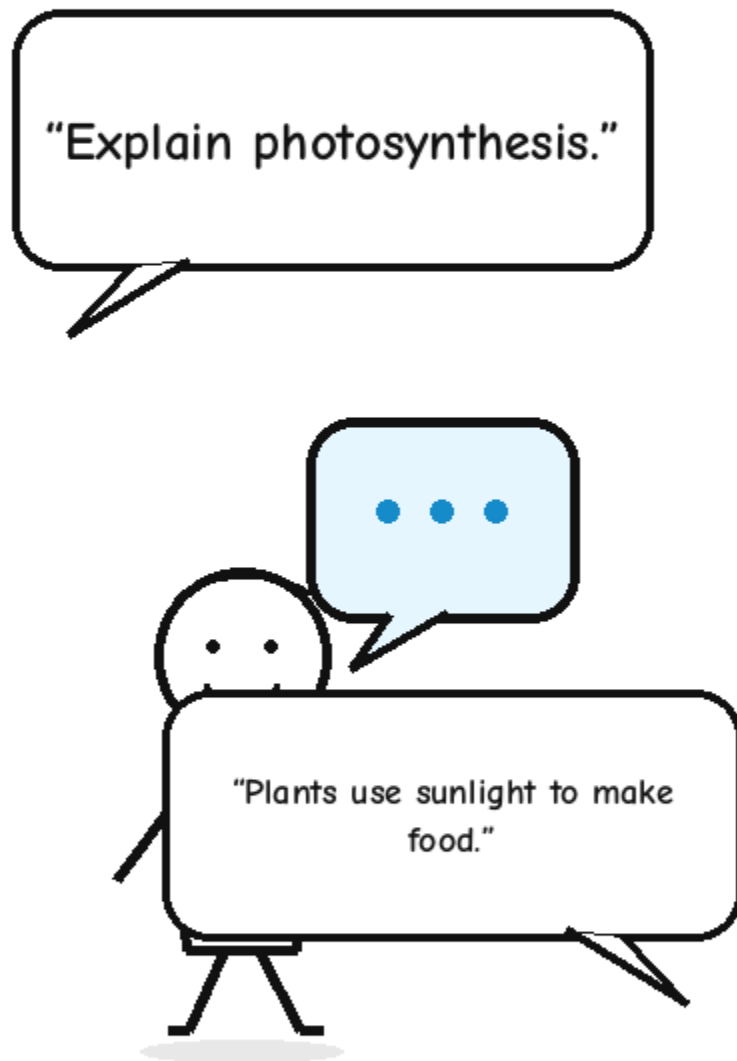


Checks preferences,
compares places,
handles changes, and
asks before ordering.

The path can change.

Same request. Different amount of freedom.

1) Chatbot: Talk, Then Answer



HOW IT WORKS

- Responds to your current question.
- Usually waits for your next instruction.
- Useful for explanations, ideas, and drafts.

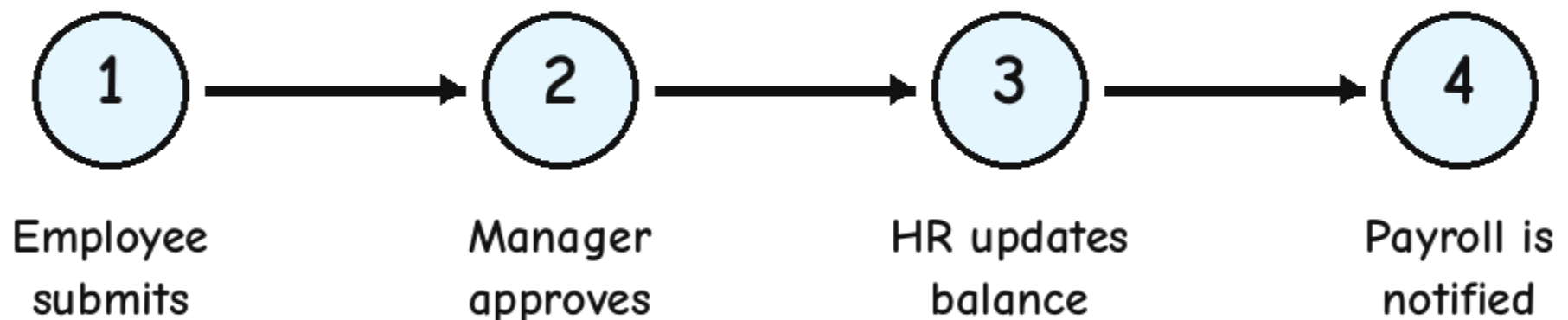
A chatbot may use search or a calculator and still remain a chatbot.

Key idea: it answers; you continue the conversation.

2) Workflow: Fixed Steps Every Time

A workflow is like an assembly line: every item moves through a process designed in advance.

EXAMPLE: LEAVE REQUEST



- **Fixed steps**

Same route

- **Predictable**

Easy to control

- **Best for**

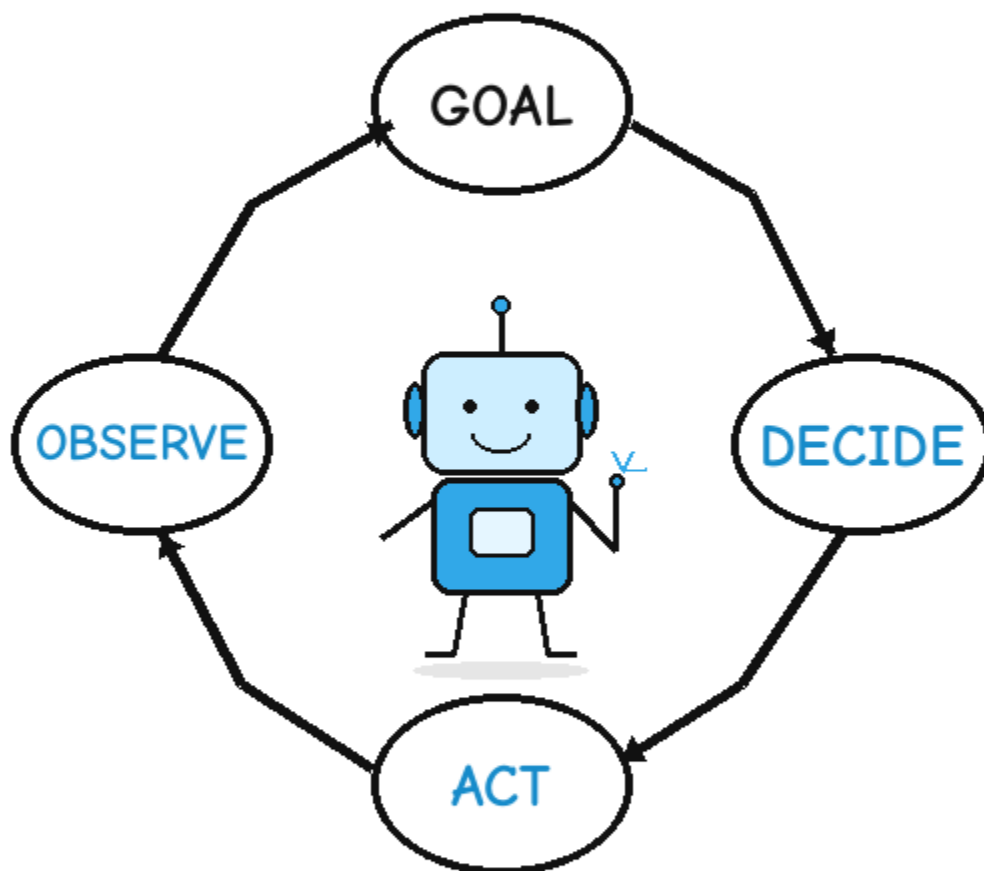
Repetitive processes

The system does not invent a new process each time.

AGENTIC AI SERIES: DAY 2

3) Agent: Goal, Decide, Act, Adapt

GOAL: Plan a 3-day Goa trip under INR 30,000.



THE AGENT MAY...

- Compare travel and hotel options
- Check weather and total cost
- Change the plan when results change
- Ask before booking

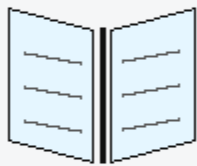
The path can change. The goal stays the same.

AGENTIC AI SERIES: DAY 2

Same Student. Three Kinds of Help.

GOAL: Learn fractions.

CHATBOT



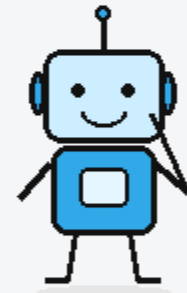
Explains fractions and answers questions.

WORKFLOW



Sends the same 7-day lesson plan in a fixed order.

AGENT



Quizzes the student, finds weak areas, and changes the next lesson.

AGENTIC AI SERIES: DAY 2

At Work: Same Goal, Different Systems

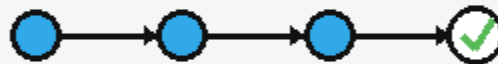
GOAL: Prepare the weekly sales update.

CHATBOT



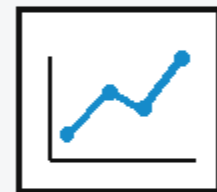
Drafts a summary from the data you paste.

WORKFLOW



Every Friday: pulls numbers, fills a template, and emails the manager.

AGENT



Finds missing data, checks unusual numbers, asks questions, drafts the report, and waits for approval.

AGENTIC AI SERIES: DAY 2

In Tech Support

GOAL: Fix a VPN connection problem.

CHATBOT



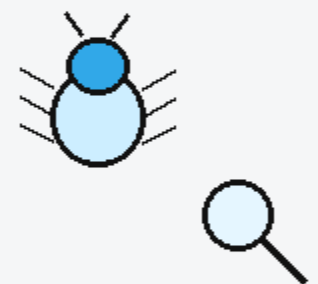
Suggests common fixes such as restarting or checking credentials.

WORKFLOW

- ☒ Check 1
- ☒ Check 2
- ☒ Check 3

Runs a predefined checklist in the same order.

AGENT



Checks logs, observes each result, chooses the next test, and escalates with evidence when needed.

Agents Aren't Always Better

The best system is the simplest one that can solve the problem safely.

USE A CHATBOT WHEN...

You mainly need an answer, idea, explanation, or draft.



USE A WORKFLOW WHEN...

The steps are stable, repetitive, and must be predictable.



USE AN AGENT WHEN...

The goal is clear, but the correct path may change.



More autonomy brings flexibility — but also more cost, risk, and need for guardrails.

A 10-Second Decision Guide

1

Do you mainly need an answer, idea, or draft?



CHATBOT

Talk and respond

2

Are the steps stable and the same every time?



WORKFLOW

Follow the process

3

Must the system choose actions and adapt?



AGENT

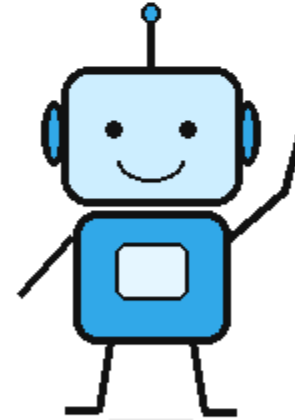
Decide and adjust

Many real products combine all three.

DAY 2 TAKEAWAY

Chatbot answers.
Workflow follows.
Agent decides.

Choose based on the problem — not the hype.



NEXT UP



Day 3: Inside an AI Agent — Brain, Tools, Memory & Rules

Which one are you building: chatbot, workflow, or agent?