

Understanding apps, bots, and AI agents

You ask a computer to help answer a customer's question about an order. It might show a record, draft a reply, or investigate a delay. The terms below explain these different kinds of help using that same everyday example.

An app holds the work

An app is software for a task, such as keeping order records. An AI enabled or AI augmented app adds AI features: for example, a button that summarizes a customer's emails. These labels do not tell you how much the software can do on its own.

A bot responds and an agent can choose steps

A bot carries out an automated task; a chatbot lets you interact through messages. It might follow fixed rules or use AI. An order chatbot could answer "Where is my order?" from the record it can access.

An AI agent can use AI to choose steps and available tools toward a goal. Asked to investigate a delay, it might check the order, look for a delivery update, and ask for missing details. Its access and permission to act still need limits. The word agent is used differently by different providers. [1]

A workflow organizes how the task gets done

A workflow is a sequence of steps: check the order, draft a reply, request approval. Orchestration means coordinating those steps, including which tool or person acts next and what happens if a step fails.

Connections let tools work together

An integration connects systems so information or actions can pass between them. An API is a defined way for software to request something from other software, such as an order status. MCP, short for Model Context Protocol, is a standard for connecting AI applications to information and tools. These connections still need appropriate access controls. [2]

The information behind the answer matters

Context is the information available for the task, such as the order and a promised delivery date. Retrieval means finding relevant records for the AI to use. Headless access means using an app's capabilities through another tool, such as asking an assistant to check an order without opening the order app.

Where GrowFast looks

GrowFast looks at whether these ways of working can continue when people change.

Ask: what can the system read, what may it do, and who checks its work?

Further reading [1] Anthropic:
anthropic.com/research/building-effective-agents
[2] MCP introduction:
modelcontextprotocol.io/docs/getting-started/intro