

UNIT

WHITEPAPER

AI Agents vs. AI Workers: How UNIT Turns a Manual Process Into a Deployed AI Worker

Every UNIT AI Worker starts as a manual process, not a prompt. This paper explains the distinction between AI agents as a technology category and AI Workers as UNIT's validated implementation of that category — and the four-stage process that turns a team's existing workflow into a deployed, human-supervised AI Worker.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Short Version

An AI agent is software that takes real actions toward a goal, instead of just answering questions. That is the technology category. An **AI Worker** is UNIT's name for what we build on top of that category: an AI agent that has been trained on one specific, validated business workflow — not a general-purpose assistant pointed at your business.

The difference between the two is not branding. It is process. Every UNIT AI Worker is built by taking a workflow a team already runs manually, documenting it as a standard operating procedure, testing an AI agent against that procedure until it holds up, and only then deploying it — with a human approval gate built in from day one. This paper walks through that process, using AVA, UNIT's live AI Renewal Agent, as the concrete example throughout.

DEFINITIONS

What Is an AI Agent?

An AI agent is software that monitors a workflow, makes decisions inside defined rules, and completes tasks end-to-end — without waiting for someone to type a prompt for every step. That is what separates an agent from a chatbot: a chatbot answers what you ask it; an agent decides when action is needed and acts.

"AI agent" describes a category of technology, not a specific product. Plenty of AI agents exist that are general-purpose — pointed at a broad task and left to figure out the specifics on their own. UNIT takes a different position.

DEFINITIONS

What Is an AI Worker?

AI Worker is UNIT's name for the AI agents we build. Every AI Worker is a specialized agent trained for one job — like managing renewals — not a general-purpose assistant asked to handle whatever comes up. It owns that one workflow completely: detecting the work, gathering the context it needs, producing a result, and routing that result to a person for approval.

The distinction matters because it changes what you can expect. A general AI agent is only as reliable as the prompt someone wrote for it that day. An AI Worker is only as reliable as the validated procedure it was built against — and that procedure does not change unless someone deliberately updates it.

METHODOLOGY

How UNIT Builds an AI Worker

No UNIT AI Worker starts as a prompt. Each one starts as a real workflow a team is already running by hand, and goes through the same four stages before it is trusted with live work.

1. Manual Process

Start with how the work actually gets done today — by a person, in an inbox, a spreadsheet, or a shared drive. This is the baseline. Nothing gets automated before it is understood.

2. SOP Conversion

The manual process is documented as a structured standard operating procedure — written down as a defined sequence of steps, decision points, and exceptions, instead of living only in one person's head.

3. QA Process

An AI agent is built against that SOP and tested against real and edge-case scenarios until its output reliably matches what the documented procedure calls for. This is where most of the work happens, and where a workflow either earns its way into production or gets sent back for more definition.

4. Deployment as an AI Worker

Once validated, the agent is deployed as a live AI Worker — with a human-approval gate built in. The AI Worker executes the workflow; a person still makes the final call before anything goes out.

AVA, UNIT's AI Renewal Agent, went through exactly this process. Renewal coordination was — and for most teams still is — a manual inbox process: read the notice, look up the account, draft a response, remember to follow up. That process became AVA's defined pipeline: read the incoming email, classify it, check stored client history, draft a response, log the transaction, and route the draft to a human for approval. AVA never sends an email on her own — that decision stays with a person, by design, not as a limitation.

COMPARISON

AI Agent vs. AI Worker

Every AI Worker is an AI agent. Not every AI agent is an AI Worker. The table below lays out the difference in practice.

	General AI Agent	UNIT AI Worker
Scope	Broad, whatever it's pointed at	One validated workflow
Reliability source	The prompt written that day	A tested, documented SOP
Oversight	Varies by implementation	Human approval built in
Change process	Ad-hoc prompt edits	Formal QA before redeployment
Audit trail	Often none	Every transaction logged

WHY IT MATTERS

Reliability Over Generic Prompting

The appeal of a general-purpose AI agent is flexibility — point it at anything and it will attempt an answer. The cost of that flexibility is consistency: the same request can produce a different quality of output depending on how it is phrased, what context happens to be available, and what changed in the underlying model since the last time it worked.

An AI Worker trades some of that flexibility for reliability. It is built to do one thing the same way every time, validated against a documented procedure rather than a prompt, and reviewed by a person before its output goes anywhere. For workflows with real consequences — a missed renewal, a compliance filing, a client communication — that trade is the point, not a limitation.

This is also why UNIT does not offer a general chat interface. Every AI Worker on the platform is scoped to a job it was actually built and tested for.

GET STARTED

Deploy Your First AI Worker

AVA, UNIT's AI Renewal Agent, is live today and free to try. Additional AI Workers — for documents, brand monitoring, and publishing — are in development, following the same manual-process-to-validated-agent methodology described in this paper.

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