The Next Wave of Digital Payments:

Strategic Opportunities in B2B FinTech at the Intersection of Agentic Commerce, Crypto and Traditional Banking

Executive Summary

The B2B payments landscape is entering its most significant transformation in decades. A powerful convergence of agentic commerce, cryptocurrency infrastructure, and traditional banking is creating new strategic opportunities for fintech innovators and incumbent banks alike.

Agentic commerce—where autonomous AI agents negotiate, execute, and settle transactions—requires payment systems that are real-time, programmable, and intelligent. Cryptocurrency, particularly stablecoins and tokenized assets, delivers 24/7 availability, atomic settlement, and dramatically lower costs. Traditional banking provides regulatory trust, liquidity, and compliance depth.

The winners will not pick sides but master the integration of all three. Hybrid solutions that combine crypto's speed and programmability with banking's stability—powered by AI agents—are unlocking lower cross-border friction, superior working capital efficiency, automated reconciliation, and new embedded finance revenue streams.

This report outlines the market forces, technology enablers, regulatory shifts, and competitive strategies defining this next wave of digital payments. It identifies the highest-potential opportunities in B2B fintech and provides a practical framework for banks and enterprises to capture advantage in this rapidly evolving environment.

Executive Summary

The way we move money is about to change more dramatically in the next five years than it has in the past five centuries.

For most of human history, payments have been fundamentally reactive. A buyer initiates, a seller confirms, banks reconcile, and regulators watch.

Even today's "instant" payments and digital wallets are still just faster versions of the same old model—centralized, permissioned, and dependent on human or rigid system oversight.

Enter the agentic era.

An agentic payment is a self-directed, goal-oriented AI agent that can perceive, reason, negotiate, execute, settle, and continuously learn from financial actions on behalf of individuals, businesses, or organizations.

These agents pursue objectives autonomously: "Optimize my cash flow while minimizing risk," "Pay suppliers the instant verified value is delivered," or "Dynamically allocate treasury across traditional rails, DeFi, and tokenized assets in real time." The agent handles route selection, negotiation, compliance, risk management, and dispute resolution—often without any human in the loop at the moment of execution.

The Agentic Payments Ecosystem is the interconnected infrastructure, protocols, identities, oracles, settlement layers, and intelligent markets that enable these autonomous financial actors to operate safely and efficiently at global scale.

New Digital Business Models, New Partner Channels

This book has a clear dual mission. First, it provides the definitive exploration of this emerging ecosystem—how it works, why it matters, and the profound impact it will have on finance, commerce, and society.

Second, and equally important, it identifies and facilitates the new channel partnerships this ecosystem will require to reach its full potential. The shift to agentic payments will not be built by any single company or sector; it demands unprecedented collaboration between AI platforms, payment rails, banks, fintechs, enterprise software providers,

regulators, identity networks, and emerging infrastructure players.

This book maps those critical intersections and equips readers with the insights needed to forge the strategic partnerships that will define the next decade of money movement.

Global Digital Trade

We will examine how agentic payments solve today's deepest frictions: the high cost of trust, latency between value creation and value transfer, compliance overhead, and the widening gap between technological possibility and legacy systems.

You will see real-world examples, such as a Vietnamese manufacturer being paid instantly by a German procurement agent the moment IoT sensors confirm specification compliance, or a creator's AI agent autonomously licensing content across platforms, collecting micropayments, and reallocating earnings—all while staying compliant across borders.

We will also confront the hard questions: What happens when money moves faster than human oversight? How do we ensure agents remain aligned with their owners' true intentions? How should regulators approach partially autonomous systems? And what new systemic risks arise when trillions flow through networks of coordinating AI agents?

The foundational technologies already exist in labs, pilots, and early deployments. The economic incentives are powerful and aligned. The transition from manual and semi-automated finance to fully agentic finance is inevitable.

Join our Partner Community

Whether you are a founder building infrastructure, a financial executive adapting your business model, a partnership or channel leader seeking new opportunities, a policymaker, or simply someone who wants to understand the future of money, this book is your essential guide.

The age of agentic money has begun. Those who identify, build, and nurture the right channel partnerships today will be the ones who shape—and thrive in—the ecosystem of tomorrow.

Agentic Commerce: Shifting from Human-to-Business to Agent-to-Business

For over 20 years, online shopping has relied on a Human-to-Business (H2B) model. Payment systems, security checks, and checkout processes assume a real person is reading the screen, filling out forms, and clicking "Buy." Agentic commerce changes this with Agent-to-Business (A2B) workflows, where AI agents act independently.

What Agentic AI Can Do

AI agents are evolving from simple tools that suggest or automate tasks into smart, independent "buyers." Instead of following rigid scripts, they use advanced reasoning (powered by large language models) to handle complex goals.

For example, an agent might be told: "Find the best price for this trip, check that the seller meets our environmental standards, and pay using the cheapest method." The agent then plans the steps, checks options, negotiates, and completes the purchase on its own. It perceives, reasons, decides, acts, and learns from results.

Challenges with Current Systems

This autonomy clashes with today's payment infrastructure, which is built for humans:

- Agents can't handle visual CAPTCHAs, SMS codes, or manual form-filling.
- Redirecting to payment pages doesn't work for non-human buyers.
- Agents can make thousands of tiny transactions per minute (like buying data or API access), far faster than people shop for groceries or tickets.

Traditional credit cards and payment networks charge high fees and take days to settle. These costs make small, high-speed machine transactions unprofitable and slow down the whole system.

In short, agentic AI is creating a new economy of autonomous transactions that the old payment rails aren't ready for. New solutions will be needed to support safe, efficient A2B commerce at scale.

Non-Human Identities (NHIs) and Machine Authentication

While payment problems are the most obvious issue, the real core problem for the agentic economy is identity. For AI agents to buy, sell, negotiate, or sign contracts, they must first prove who (or what) they are in a secure, trustworthy way.

Standard KYC (Know Your Customer) and AML rules were built for humans and companies. They require passports, home addresses, utility bills, and physical proof. AI agents have none of these — they are software, often running across cloud servers with no fixed physical location. Trying to force AI agents into human-style identity checks creates friction and blocks their independence.

Non-Human Identities (NHIs)

Companies already use Non-Human Identities like API keys, service accounts, and OAuth tokens for machines and software. AI agents are the next big wave of these. However, poorly managed NHIs create serious security risks: stolen credentials, unauthorized access, and compliance problems. Many experts believe autonomous systems need their own unique, dynamic digital identities.

New Solutions Emerging

- Zero-trust security platforms (like Beyond Identity) replace weak static keys with strong cryptographic authentication for both humans and agents. They check device health continuously and integrate with tools like CrowdStrike.
- Agent-specific infrastructure: Services like EtherMail's moltmail give AI agents their own email addresses and crypto wallets so they can operate independently without relying on a human's personal accounts. A new social network for AI agents (Moltbook) reached 1.6 million users in its first week.
- Regulatory efforts: The EU is exploring ways to issue verifiable digital credentials to AI agents through the European Digital Identity Wallet, allowing agents to prove they belong to a legitimate user while verifying the businesses they deal with.

What Fully Autonomous Agents Can Do

In the Agent-to-Business (A2B) model, AI agents move beyond simple recommendations. Given a high-level goal — such as "find the best price for this trip,

meet our ESG standards, and pay efficiently" — they can plan steps, compare options, negotiate, and complete the purchase on their own using reasoning powered by large language models.

The Big Clash with Old Systems

This autonomy breaks legacy checkout systems, which rely on CAPTCHAs, SMS codes, forms, and "click to pay" buttons that agents can't handle. Agents also work at machine speed — making thousands of micro-transactions per minute for data, API calls, or compute power. Traditional credit cards with high fees and slow settlements make these tiny, high-volume transactions impractical.

In summary, the agentic economy needs a complete overhaul of identity and payment infrastructure to let AI agents act as independent economic players safely and efficiently.

The Protocol Wars: Architecting the Execution Layer

Legacy checkout systems built for humans are incompatible with autonomous AI agents. This has sparked a major race among big tech companies, payment networks, and Web3 players to create the standard protocol for how AI agents discover products, communicate with merchants, and complete payments. The result is intense innovation but also fragmentation, with competing standards battling it out.

There are two philosophies:

1. Adapt existing payment systems for agents.
2. Build brand-new infrastructure designed from the ground up for the machine economy.

The Agentic Commerce Protocol (ACP)

- Backed by: OpenAI and Stripe (with partners like Worldpay).
- Approach: Practical and fast to adopt. It makes current online checkouts "agent-ready" without forcing merchants to rebuild everything.
- How it works: Uses Shared Payment Tokens (SPTs) — temporary, limited credentials that let an AI agent pay using a buyer's saved card or method, without ever seeing the sensitive details.

Key features:

- Merchants share real-time product catalogs, pricing, and inventory via APIs.
- Strict time limits (e.g., 4-second response windows) ensure fast, reliable transactions.
- Already live in ChatGPT and used by Etsy, Klarna, Affirm, Urban Outfitters, and others.

The Agent Payments Protocol (AP2)

- Backed by: Google + coalition of 60+ companies (Mastercard, Adyen, American Express, Coinbase, ServiceNow, etc.).
- Approach: More ambitious and long-term. Creates a payment-agnostic standard for the entire agent economy.
- How it works: Uses cryptographically signed "Mandates" (backed by Verifiable Credentials):
- Intent Mandate: User pre-approves high-level rules (e.g., "Buy tickets under $150").
- Cart Mandate: Agent creates a detailed record once it executes the task.
- Focus: Strong identity, consent, audit trails, and accountability across any payment type — cards, bank transfers, stablecoins, or crypto.

x402 Micropayment Standard

- Backed by: Coinbase and the x402 Foundation.
- Purpose: Solves tiny, high-volume machine-to-machine payments (fractions of a cent for data, API calls, or compute).
- How it works: Revives the old HTTP 402 "Payment Required" code. Enables instant, near-free micropayments over stablecoins and smart contracts — bypassing slow, expensive traditional banking rails. Google's AP2 supports it for crypto workflows.

Supporting Protocols

- UCP (Universal Commerce Protocol) – Google: Full commerce lifecycle (discovery, payments, returns).
- MCP (Model Context Protocol) – Anthropic: Lets agents safely access tools, data, and APIs.
- A2A (Agent2Agent) – Google: Allows different AI agents to talk and coordinate.

- TAP (Trusted Agent Protocol) – Visa: Helps merchants verify that incoming agents are legitimate, not malicious bots.

The Challenge Ahead

With so many competing protocols (ACP, AP2, x402, UCP, etc.), merchants face a headache integrating and maintaining all of them. This fragmentation is driving demand for middleware, orchestrators, and simplified integration services to make agentic commerce practical at scale.

Digital Payments Ecosystem

Blockchain and Stablecoins: The New Rails for Agentic Commerce

In a world increasingly powered by autonomous AI agents that negotiate deals, manage supply chains, optimize inventories, and execute transactions around the clock, traditional financial infrastructure is reaching its limits.

Blockchain technology and stablecoins are emerging as the essential rails for Agentic Commerce — a new paradigm where intelligent software agents conduct global economic activity with minimal human oversight. What began as crypto infrastructure is now becoming the trust layer and payment backbone for AI-driven commerce at machine speed and scale.

The Foundation of Agentic Commerce

Agentic Commerce refers to economic transactions initiated, negotiated, fulfilled, and settled by autonomous AI agents. These agents can represent individuals, businesses, or even other agents — dynamically sourcing suppliers, bidding on contracts, adjusting shipments based on real-time data, and handling payments without waiting for human approval.

For agents to operate effectively at global scale, they need:

- Instant, reliable value transfer that works 24/7 across borders.
- Programmable, enforceable agreements that execute automatically upon conditions being met.
- Transparent, verifiable ledgers that allow agents to audit and build trust without centralized gatekeepers.

This is where blockchain and stablecoins excel.

Blockchain serves as the immutable, decentralized ledger that records every action, transaction, and state change in a tamper-proof manner. Smart contracts — self-executing code on the blockchain — act as the “brains” of the rails, allowing agents

to encode complex business logic directly into the infrastructure.

Stablecoins provide the stable, digital medium of exchange that agents can hold, transfer, and program with confidence. Pegged to fiat currencies like the USD (e.g., USDC, USDT, and newer institutional variants), they eliminate the volatility that would make autonomous decision-making risky, while offering near-instant settlement and microscopic fees.

Why Legacy Rails Fail Agentic Systems

Traditional banking systems were designed for human-paced commerce: batch processing, business hours, manual compliance checks, and multi-day settlement cycles. In an agentic world, these create insurmountable bottlenecks.

An AI agent optimizing a just-in-time supply chain cannot wait 3–5 days for cross-border wires or absorb 3–6% fees on frequent micro-transactions. Legacy systems lack native programmability, making it difficult for agents to trigger conditional payments, dynamic escrow, or automated invoicing at scale.

Blockchain and stablecoins solve this by delivering:

- Sub-second to near-instant finality on modern networks and layer-2 solutions.
- Ultra-low costs enabling high-frequency, low-value agentic interactions.
- Native programmability via smart contracts that agents can read, write, and interact with autonomously.
- Composability allowing agents to chain actions across DeFi protocols, tokenized assets, and oracles that feed real-world data.

Real-World Emergence of Agentic Rails

Early examples are already operational. AI-powered trading and arbitrage agents routinely use stablecoins on decentralized exchanges. Supply chain platforms integrate blockchain for automated payments triggered by IoT sensors confirming delivery. Companies are piloting “agent treasuries” where autonomous systems manage working capital using stablecoins across multiple jurisdictions.

Payment networks and fintechs like Stripe and PayPal have added stablecoin support, enabling agents to move value seamlessly between traditional systems and on-chain environments. Institutional players, including banks issuing their own blockchain-based

stablecoins or tokenized deposits, are positioning themselves as on-ramps for agentic flows. Cross-chain protocols and intent-based architectures further allow agents to specify desired outcomes ("move $X to supplier Y when goods arrive") while the infrastructure handles the routing and execution.

In emerging markets, agentic systems using stablecoins are helping small businesses and autonomous bots participate in global trade without traditional banking access.

Challenges for Scalable Agentic Commerce

Realizing the full potential requires addressing several hurdles:

- Regulation and Compliance: Agents must operate within legal bounds. Frameworks like the EU's MiCA and evolving U.S. stablecoin rules will provide clarity on reserves, audits, and AML/KYC requirements. On-chain compliance tools (zero-knowledge proofs, decentralized identity) will be critical for agents to self-attest compliance without sacrificing privacy or speed.
- Scalability and Interoperability: Agentic commerce demands high throughput and seamless movement across chains. Layer-2 solutions, modular blockchains, and advanced bridging protocols are progressing rapidly.
- Trust and Security: Agents require verifiable collateral, transparent reserves, and robust oracle networks. High-assurance auditing and insurance mechanisms will build confidence.
- Orchestration and Safety: As agents gain more autonomy, guardrails — such as multi-agent consensus, human-in-the-loop overrides, and on-chain dispute resolution — become essential.

Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) and tokenized bank deposits may integrate with or compete against private stablecoins, potentially creating hybrid rails optimized for regulated agentic activity.

The Future: An Agent-Native Financial System

By the early 2030s, stablecoin volumes are projected to surge as agentic commerce mainstreams. Tokenization of real-world assets (RWAs) — from invoices and inventory to bonds and carbon credits — will create a fully programmable economy where agents trade, finance, and settle natively on-chain using stablecoins as the primary medium.

This represents a profound shift: from human-mediated, account-based finance to

agent-native, token-based economics. Trust moves from institutions to verifiable code, cryptography, and transparent on-chain data. Commerce becomes faster, more efficient, globally accessible, and capable of operating at the speed of thought.

Blockchain and stablecoins are no longer just faster versions of old rails — they are the native infrastructure for a world where AI agents are the primary economic actors. Businesses and developers building with these technologies today will define the commerce platforms of tomorrow. Those relying solely on legacy systems risk being unable to participate in the agent-driven economy.

The rails are live. The agents are boarding. The era of Agentic Commerce has begun.

Open Banking and APIs: The Universal Connectivity Layer for Agentic Commerce

If stablecoins provide the new rails for global payments, Open Banking provides the universal "on-ramps and off-ramps" that connect this new infrastructure to the existing financial world.

Enabled by secure Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), Open Banking is a regulatory-driven movement that mandates traditional banks to allow third-party financial service providers to access customer account data and initiate payments, with the customer's explicit consent.

As AI agents increasingly act as autonomous buyers, sellers, and treasury managers, they need real-time, secure access to bank accounts, balances, and payment systems worldwide. Open Banking and standardized APIs provide the universal connectivity layer for Agentic Commerce, allowing agents to read data, initiate payments, and orchestrate financial workflows at machine speed without human intervention.

The Core Connectivity Layer

Open Banking requires or enables banks to securely expose customer data and payment services through APIs with explicit user consent. Building on regulations like Europe’s PSD2 and the UK’s Open Banking framework, it is expanding globally.

Financial APIs deliver real-time account information, payment initiation, funds confirmation, and rich transaction data. For AI agents, this means programmable,

scoped access — such as reading balances or executing payments within defined limits and durations — turning banks into on-demand infrastructure.

Why Legacy Systems Fall Short

Traditional banking relies on slow batch processes, manual approvals, and proprietary formats ill-suited for agentic operations. Agents cannot wait days for settlements or parse unstructured statements while optimizing global supply chains or executing high-frequency decisions.

Open Banking and APIs address this with instant data access, automated payment triggers, strong consent management, and seamless composability with blockchain, stablecoins, and other agent tools.

Current Adoption and Use Cases

Open Banking is already enabling early agentic applications. In Europe and the UK, agents use APIs for real-time cash visibility, automated reconciliation, and instant supplier payments triggered by delivery confirmation. Platforms like Plaid, TrueLayer, and bank BaaS offerings support autonomous treasury agents and end-to-end commerce flows. Global standards such as ISO 20022 are improving interoperability across borders.

The Agentic Future

Key hurdles include regulatory fragmentation, varying API maturity, security and consent management for autonomous agents, liability questions, and privacy protections. Harmonization and advanced authorization standards will be essential for scaled adoption.

Open Banking and APIs are evolving into the default plug-and-play layer for finance, enabling AI agents to treat banks as composable services within larger autonomous ecosystems. Combined with stablecoins and tokenized assets, they create a programmable, interconnected financial system where commerce operates faster, more efficiently, and at truly global scale.

This connectivity layer shifts finance from closed, human-centric processes to open, agent-native infrastructure. Organizations integrating deeply with open APIs today will

power the agent-driven economy of tomorrow.

The connectivity layer is open. Agentic Commerce is accelerating.

Niche Market Opportunities for Fintechs and Innovators

The shift to "agentic commerce"—where AI agents handle buying and selling autonomously—is creating friction with old financial systems. That friction creates big profit opportunities for fintechs, startups, and banks. Here are five key niches:

1. Non-Human Identity (NHI) Issuance and Management

Traditional banks can't easily verify or underwrite AI agents under current "Know Your Customer" rules.

- Opportunity: Create specialized platforms that issue secure digital identities for AI agents. These tie agents to real companies, set spending limits, and revoke access if rules are broken.
- Solution: Use zero-trust security with dynamic tokens instead of static API keys. Solutions that work with European regulations (like EUDI wallets) will be especially valuable for compliance.

2. AI-Powered Dynamic Pricing for Suppliers

Sellers using fixed prices or slow human teams can't compete with smart AI buyers.

- Opportunity: Offer easy-to-use pricing software for retailers, distributors, and brands. It combines internal data (like inventory) with external data (competitor prices, demand) to adjust prices instantly.
- Solution: Platforms that connect via standard AI protocols to optimize prices across online stores and protect profits while boosting sales.

3. Machine-to-Machine (M2M) Micropayments and Stablecoins

- Standard credit cards don't work well for tiny, frequent payments between AI systems (e.g., buying data or compute power).
- Opportunity: Build fast, low-cost payment systems for the "machine economy."

- Solution: Use protocols like x402 with stablecoins and smart contracts for instant settlements without high fees. This enables seamless micro-transactions between AI agents.

4. AI Dispute Resolution, Auditing, and Insurance

AI agents can make mistakes, leading to disputes, chargebacks, and liability issues.

- Opportunity: Develop automated tools to review AI actions and specialized insurance for AI-related risks.
- Solution: "Audit-as-a-service" platforms that check cryptographic records to prove whether an agent followed rules or failed. This helps price insurance accurately and reduces banks' dispute workload.

5. Cross-Border FX and Liquidity for Agents

AI agents need clear, instant foreign exchange rates for international deals, but traditional banking is slow and opaque.

- Opportunity: Provide embedded tools for real-time currency handling in agent workflows.
- Solution: APIs that lock in FX rates upfront using global ledgers and smart contracts, removing currency risk for faster cross-border trade.

These niches focus on solving real friction points in the emerging AI-driven economy. Fintechs that build the right tools and partnerships can capture significant value as agentic commerce grows.