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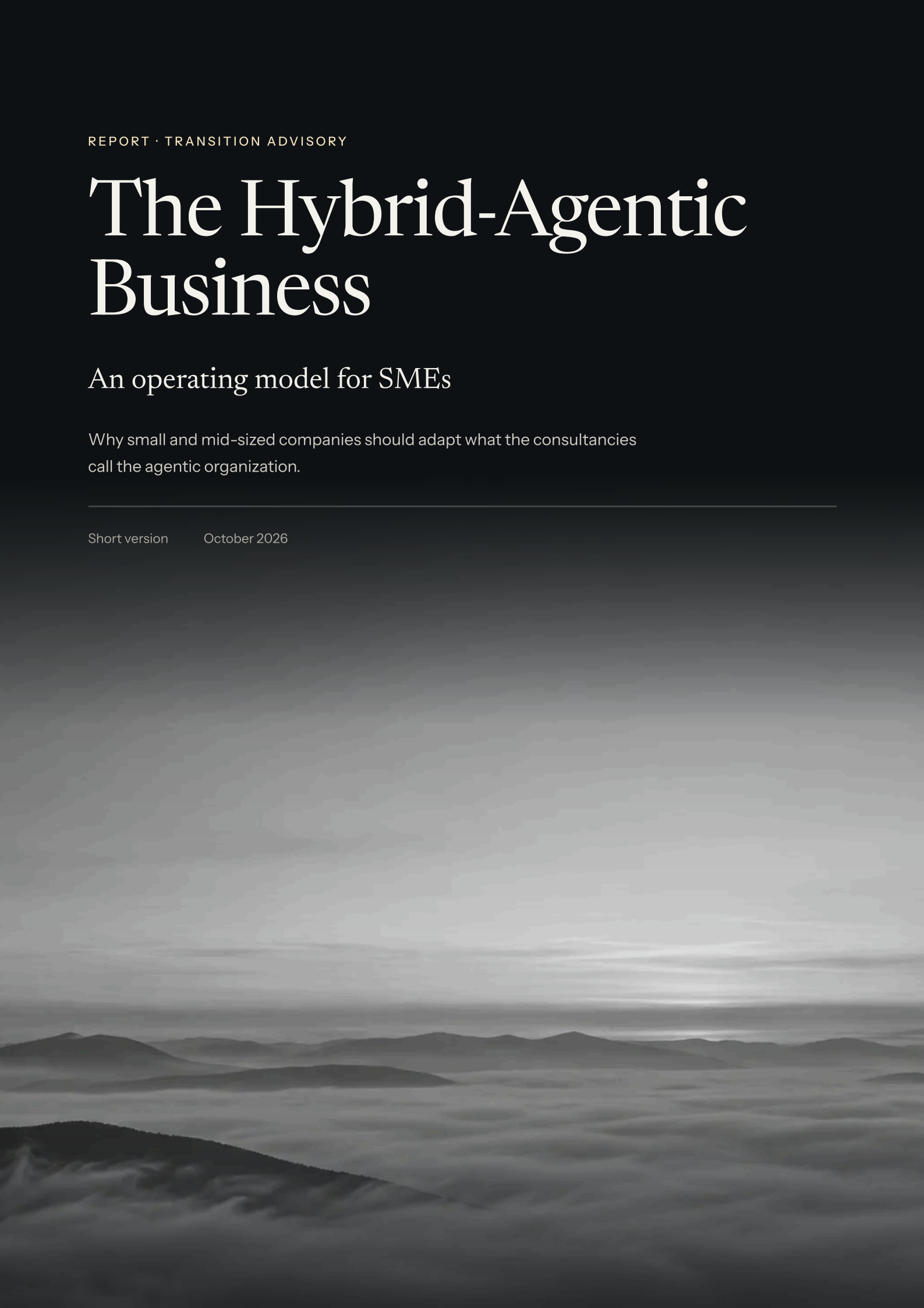
# The Hybrid-Agentic Business

## An operating model for SMEs

Why small and mid-sized companies should adapt what the consultancies call the agentic organization.

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Short version October 2026



## In brief

1 **Companies are starting to run on people and AI agents together.**

People set the goals and carry the responsibility. Agents do a large part of the work in between. This report calls the version that fits SMEs the hybrid-agentic business.

2 **The direction is not in question.**

Every major consultancy and technology company points the same way. What is open is who adapts early, and how.

3 **SMEs have the better starting position.**

Small teams, short decision paths, an owner who can change the whole model. That is exactly what the new model needs.

4 **The work starts with the business model, not with tools.**

Agents put into old processes make the past faster. They do not make the company ready.

5 **Responsibility for the people is part of the model.**

Owners who adapt early can take their people along. Owners who wait decide about them later, under pressure.

## The direction

McKinsey calls it the agentic organization. Microsoft calls it the Frontier Firm, MIT Sloan and BCG the agentic enterprise. The names differ, the picture is the same.

Small human teams that own an outcome, agents that do much of the work, an organization that is steered by goals instead of by an org chart. These concepts were made for corporations. But the gap they describe is already visible in small companies.

| 37 % | No change |
|---|---|
| of US firms with 250 or more employees use AI | among US firms with fewer than 20 employees |

Source: US Census Bureau, 2026.

At the same time, AI-native competitors work with about half the team. The question for SMEs is not whether this arrives. It is whether they shape it or react to it.

## What a hybrid-agentic business is

### Hybrid means people and AI agents working as one organization.

An AI agent is not a chatbot that answers questions. It takes a goal, plans steps, uses systems and acts. A person sets the goal, checks the result and signs. In practice, a hybrid-agentic business has three things:

#### A small crew

People who set goals, judge, decide and carry the responsibility toward clients.

#### Agents

They do the repeatable work in between: research, drafting, checking, scheduling, processing.

#### Clear rights

For every agent, someone who sets its goal, someone who can stop it, someone who signs what it produces.

The org chart becomes less important. What matters is who owns which outcome, and which agents work on it.

## Why SMEs can win

SALAMIS, 480 BC

Xerxes brought the larger fleet, with big ships. The Greeks had fewer ships, smaller and faster. Themistocles chose the narrow strait of Salamis, where the large Persian ships could not turn and got in each other's way. The small, fast Greek ships could.

*Size helps only where it can be used.*

The shift to the hybrid-agentic business is a narrow strait. Corporations have to break up layers, departments and politics to get small teams that own an outcome. Many SMEs already work like that. One owner can decide to rebuild a process end to end, without a steering committee. That is the advantage, if it is used.

## How the shift works

01

### Business model first.

Three questions. What becomes cheap when an agent can do it? What do clients pay for that is not the output itself: trust, judgment, the relationship, the fact that someone signs? How much time is there in this industry, three years or ten?

02

### One process, rebuilt from zero.

Not every process at once. One process the company would build completely differently if it were founded today. Rebuilt around the outcome, not around the existing steps.

03

### Rights before tools.

Before the first agent runs: who sets its goal, who can stop it, who signs. Agents are tools the company is responsible for. Calling them colleagues blurs exactly that responsibility.

04

### People in the right roles.

The people who know the process and the clients are usually the right ones to steer the agents. They need the authority that goes with it. People who took pride in making things do not automatically find pride in checking them. That has to be addressed, not assumed.

## Responsibility for the people

### Some owners stay because of their employees.

For these owners, the hybrid-agentic business can look like a threat to exactly what they protect. Responsibility does not mean that every role stays as it is. Doing nothing does not protect the jobs either: it moves the question to a later moment, with less room to act.

Responsibility in this shift means taking people into the new model wherever possible, telling them early what changes, and investing in those whose roles disappear. How the first people leave decides whether the others trust the rest of the plan.

FOR THOSE WHOSE ROLES CHANGE

Classic outplacement starts with the next application. When AI changes whole fields, that is not enough. Transition Advisory works with each person as the client, paid by the company: first a profile of the work that is theirs, then where their field is going, then what fits on the market today, or something of their own.

## The owner's role

When the company changes shape, the owner's role changes too. Before any plan, three questions:

- What is dead in the model?
- What is only tired?
- What does the company still need from its owner?

And if a few people can run a whole process with agents, which work does the owner keep, because only the owner can do it?

## Four ways forward

01

### Rebuild the company around AI

Starting from the business model. Transition Advisory supports owners with the architecture.

02

### Stay and lead it differently

With a new role for the owner.

03

### Hand it over or sell it

When the next chapter of the company needs someone else.

04

### Start something of one's own beside it

Keep the company running and build the next thing next to it.

## How it starts

A first conversation. Thirty minutes, no charge. About the business model, the people, and the owner's own role.

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