



Microsoft 365
COMMUNITY CONFERENCE

How Microsoft Actually Builds Agents

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Kristina Marko – Senior Product Manager

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Zava Internal Policy Agent



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Scenario Introduction

- Employees often need guidance on internal policies and operational processes
- Policy and process knowledge is often fragmented across multiple knowledge bases
- Finding the right guidance requires manual search or dependency on Legal/Finance/HR/IT

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A screenshot of a chat interface for 'My Company Policy Agent'. The interface is clean and modern, with a white background and a light blue header. The header includes the agent's name 'My Company Policy Agent' and a status 'Auto'. Below the header, the agent's name is displayed again, followed by 'Created by Power CAT'. A large text input field labeled 'Message Copilot' is centered, with a plus sign on the left and a microphone icon on the right. Below the input field, there are three suggested prompts: 'Summarize Leave' (Can you summarize all the types of leave I'm eligible for as a full...), 'New Hire' (What happens during my first 90 days, and what is the...), and 'Health Insurance' (What health insurance options are available to employees?). A 'See more' link is located at the bottom right of the suggestions.

Uhova

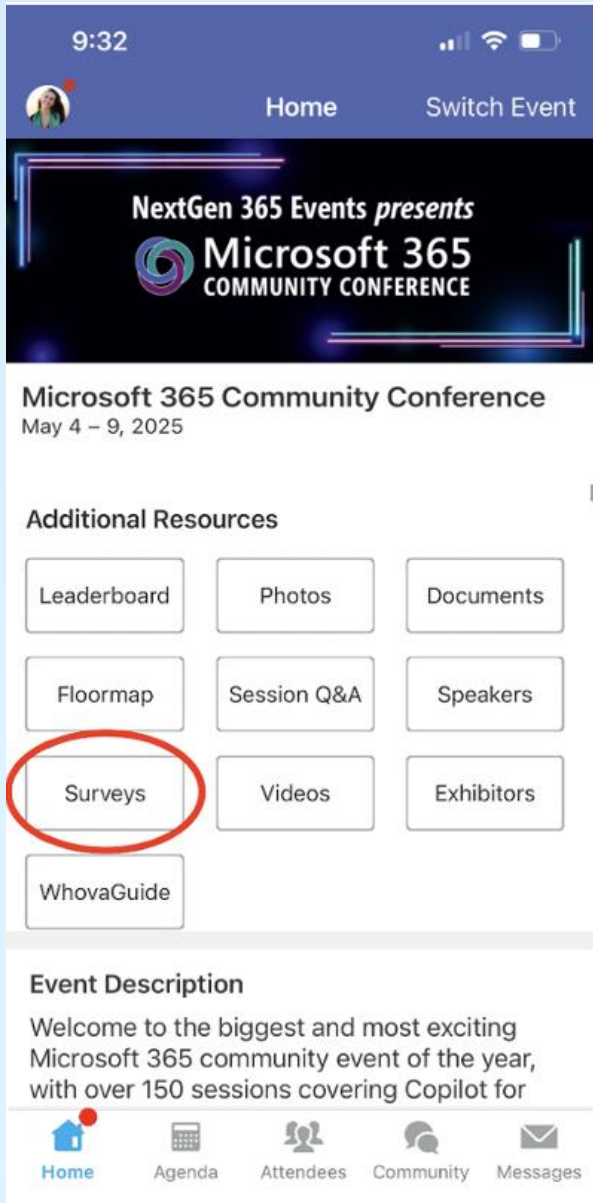
The official event app for the
Microsoft 365 Community Conference

Event invitation code: Orlando2026



Join the event app to access:

- ➔ Event announcements
- ➔ Personalized agenda, session details
- ➔ Speaker & attendee profiles
- ➔ Networking, meet-ups, messages
- ➔ Event documents



Session feedback surveys

We want to hear from YOU!

Share your feedback to make next years conference even better!

Here's how –

- Simply go to the Whova App on your smartphone.
- Scroll down on the M365 Community Conference Homepage to 'Additional Resources' to click "Surveys".
- Click Session Feedback.
- Scroll down to find this session title.
- Complete the session feedback survey.
- Finally, click 'Submit'.

It's just that easy!



Clint Williams

Principal Group Product
Manager
/clintwilliams1



Kristina Marko

Senior Product
Manager
/kristinamarko-

Who are we?

Copilot Acceleration Team (Advisory & Product Engineering)

We partner with enterprise customers **across the entire agent lifecycle:**

- Experimentation & Design
- Operationalization
- Monitoring & Evaluation

Our team operates between Product Engineering and **real customer environments**, giving us visibility into:

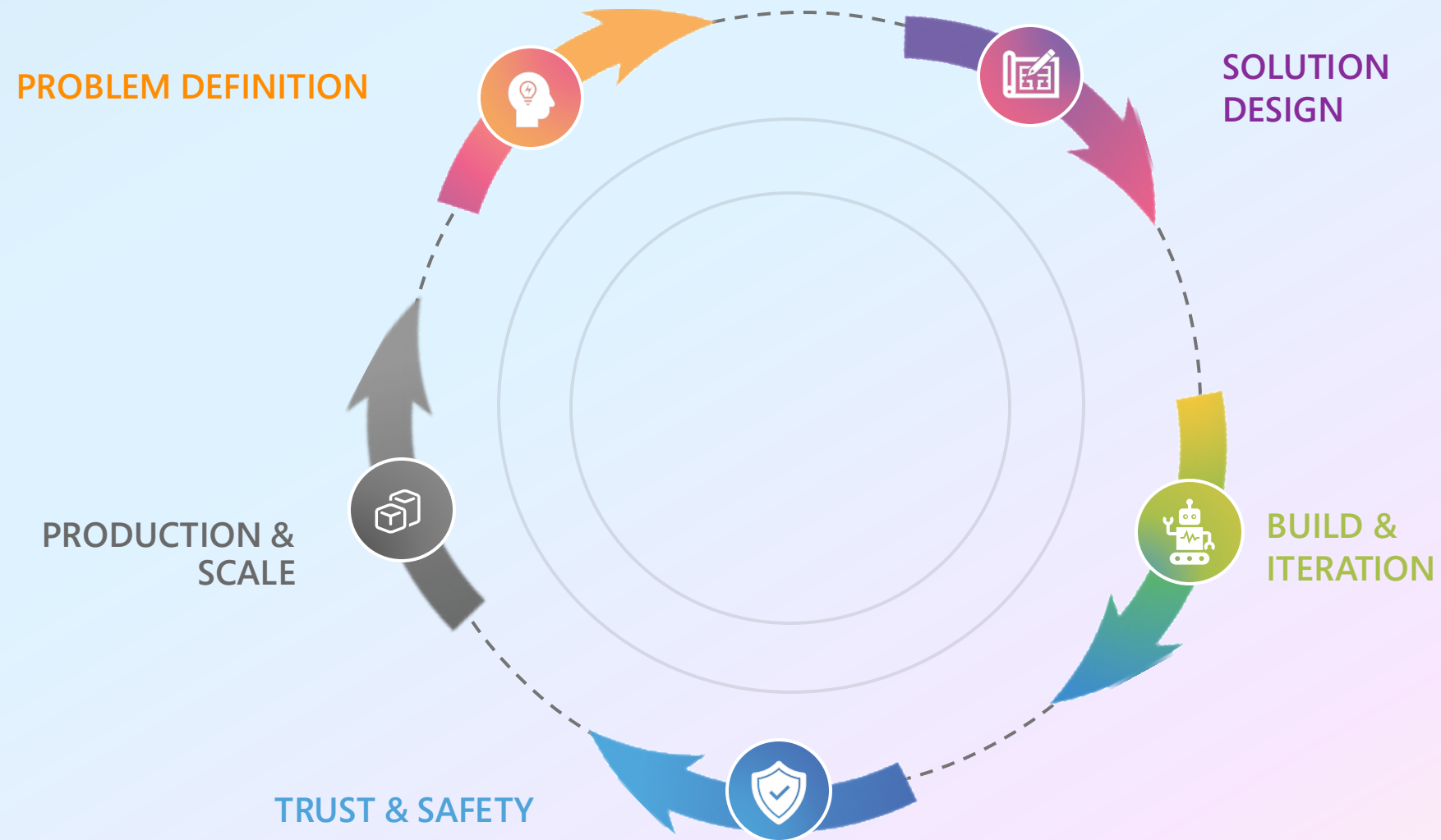
- What works
- What scales
- What survives production

Why agents?

Why now?

Agents are **powerful**, but
getting them to production
requires real
engineering discipline.

The Lifecycle Framework



Zava Internal Policy Agent



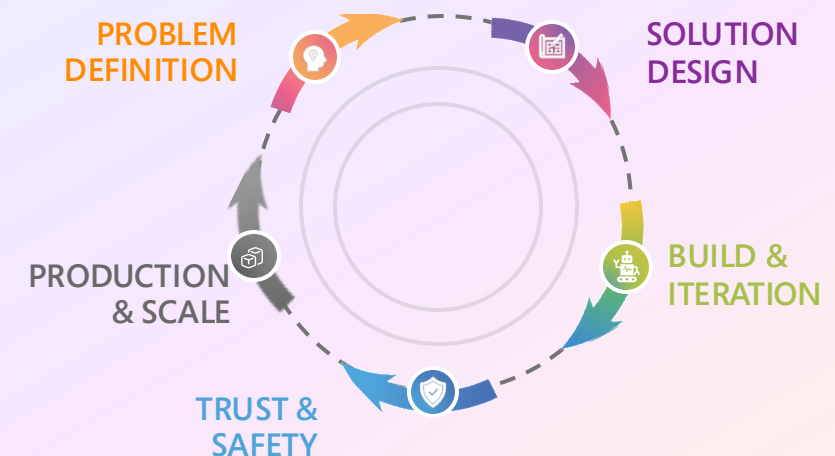
Contoso employees frequently need guidance on **internal policies and processes** such as travel approvals, vendor onboarding, customer contract exceptions or security reviews.

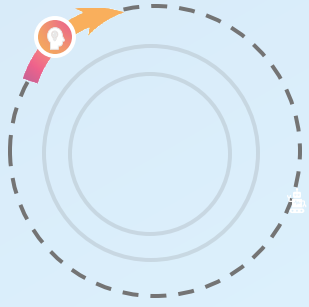
Today answers are distributed across **Sharepoint sites, SOP documents, Teams channels** and **internal knowledge bases**, requiring employees to search manually or wait for responses from Legal/Finance/IT.

To improve consistency and reduce delays, Contoso deployed an **internal agent** to:

- Interpret employee requests
- Retrieve relevant policy or process documentation
- Recommend next steps
- Identify if approval is required
- Route requests for human review when needed

Because these decisions may have financial, legal or compliance impact, incorrect guidance introduces real organizational risk and may erode user trust in the system.





Problem Definition

“Start with the problem not the technology”

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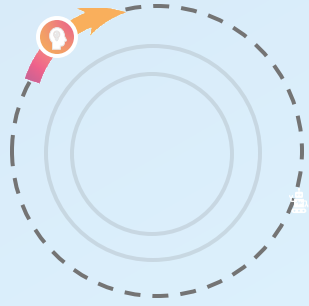
Common Pitfalls

- Starting with the Solution or Technology
- Scope is not refined
- Secure executive sponsorship
- Not considering security, guardrails, and evaluations as a prerequisite to understanding the problem.

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Questions to Ask

- What decision or task are we improving?
- How will we measure success?
- Which failures can or cannot be tolerated?
- When and how should the human user be involved?



Problem Definition - Zava



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Initial Framing

- Policy guidance treated as a knowledge retrieval task
- Goal: Provide faster answers to employee questions
- Success defined by response time and retrieval accuracy

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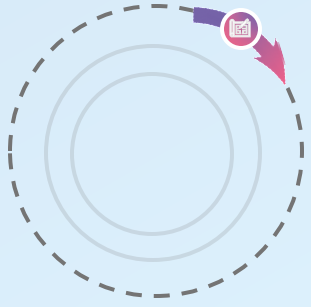
Post-Discovery Reality

- Employee requests are often incomplete or lack content
- Applicable policy varies by role, region or business unit
- Some responses require approvals or exception handling

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Key Insight / Takeaway

- Internal policy guidance is rarely a simple retrieval task
- The fastest response is not always the most compliant one
- Guidance may require interpretation across multiple policies
- Effective solutions must account for context, interpretation and escalation pathways



Solution Design

“Not every use case should become an agent”

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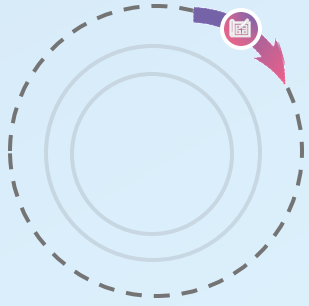
Design Dimensions

- Knowledge & Tools
- Memory & State Management
- Workflow Orchestration
- Human Oversight & Escalation

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Key tradeoffs

- Flexibility vs Reliability
- Autonomy vs Control
- Breadth vs Precision
- Speed vs Governance



Solution Design - Zava



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Design Objectives

- Improve consistency of internal policy guidance
- Support employees in interpreting policy
- Reduce manual routing of approval tasks
- Maintain compliance in high-risk decisions

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Design Decisions Made

- Introduced human-in-the-loop review for high-risk responses
- Implemented structured retrieval of validated policy sources
- Enabled exception-based escalation for ambiguous cases
- Routed approval-required decisions to designated reviewers

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Key Insight / Takeaway

- Not all policy guidance can be safely automated
- High-impact decisions require human validation
- The agent provides recommendations while routing compliance-sensitive outcomes



Build & Iteration

“Building is only ~25% of the work”

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Key Practices

- Prototype Early
- Evaluate from Day 1
- Instrument & Catch failure models early

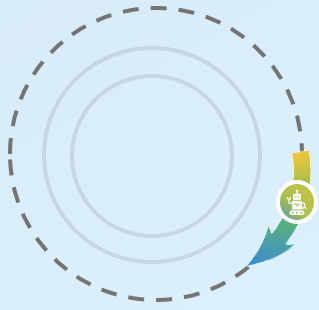
Instruction Anti-Patterns

- Too vague
- Too long
- No boundaries
- Knowledge dump

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Data Quality > Everything

- No amount of prompt engineering can fix bad data
- Traditional path:
Prompt → Build → Test → Panic → Fix Data
- Data-first path:
Audit data → Clean → Build → Test → Ship



Build & Iteration - Zava



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Initial Build Approach

- Grounded on internal policy documentation
- Retrieved SOPs from Sharepoint knowledge bases
- Generated policy-aligned recommendations
- Routed approval-required responses

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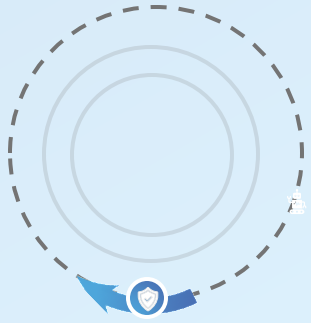
Observations during Testing

- Policy documentation varied in structure and format
- Some guidance relied on undocumented exceptions
- Content freshness differed across business units
- Employees frequently submitted incomplete requests

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Key Insight / Takeaway

- Production readiness requires iterative refinement
- Agents must account for incomplete inputs and inconsistent knowledge sources
- Evaluation is critical to ensure outputs align with policy intent
- Build → Observe → Adjust is what moves agents from demo to deployment



Trust & Safety

“Trust is designed, not bolted on”

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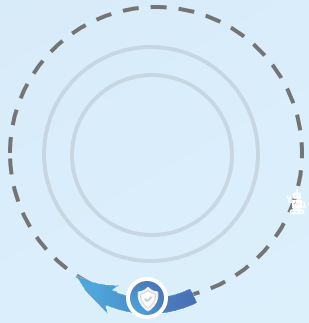
Core Principles

- Guardrails
- Human oversight
- Appropriate autonomy

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In Practice

- Responsible deployment
- Risk-aware design
- User transparency



Trust & Safety - Zava



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Risks Identified

- Some responses required approval prior to action
- Policy guidance varied by region or role
- Requests often lacked sufficient context
- Certain decisions could directly impact compliance outcomes

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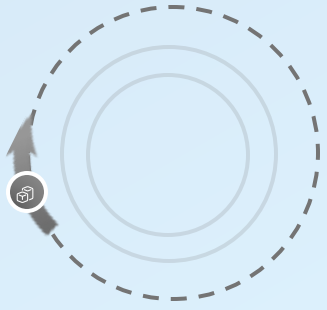
Oversight Introduced

- Human-in-the-loop review for high-risk responses
- Exception-based escalation pathways
- Clarification prompts for incomplete requests
- Transparency of agent-generated guidance

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Key Insight / Takeaway

- Trust in agent systems requires governed decision pathways
- Compliance-sensitive outcomes must be reviewed or escalated
- Oversight mechanisms ensure recommendations remain auditable
- Trust becomes structural through thresholds, audit trails and role-based access



Production & Scale

“Deployment is the beginning, not the end”

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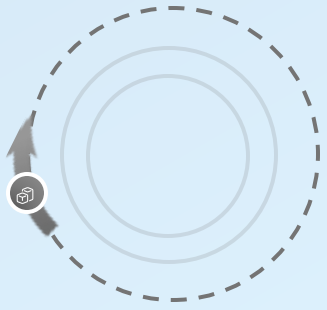
Operational Foundations

- Monitoring & Observability
- Feedback Loops
- Content Maintenance

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Evolving Post-Launch

- What 'good' looks like
- Agent Evolution
- Handoff Readiness



Production & Scale - Zava



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Monitoring Signals

- Reviewer override rate
- Escalation frequency
- Guidance acceptance rate
- Exception handling volume

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Operational Practices

- Continuous monitoring of agent-generated guidance
- Periodic review of routed decisions
- Regular updates to policy knowledge sources
- Ongoing evaluation of decision quality

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Key Insight / Takeaway

- Agent performance shifts as policy evolves across regions and business units
- Effectiveness is directly tied to the freshness of grounding data
- Monitoring signals inform threshold and routing adjustments
- Production is an ongoing operational commitment

Patterns of Success

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Start Right

- Start with a validated operational problem
- Define decision boundaries early
- Develop evaluations early

Build Right

- Treat knowledge as a product
- Design for ambiguity and incomplete inputs
- Route sensitive decisions

Run Right

- Monitor decision pathway signals
- Update grounding continuously
- Refine escalation thresholds

Key Insights

- The hardest challenges are rarely model related
- Agent effectiveness depends on knowledge freshness
- Compliance requires governed decision pathways
- Production readiness requires continuous iteration

Call to Action

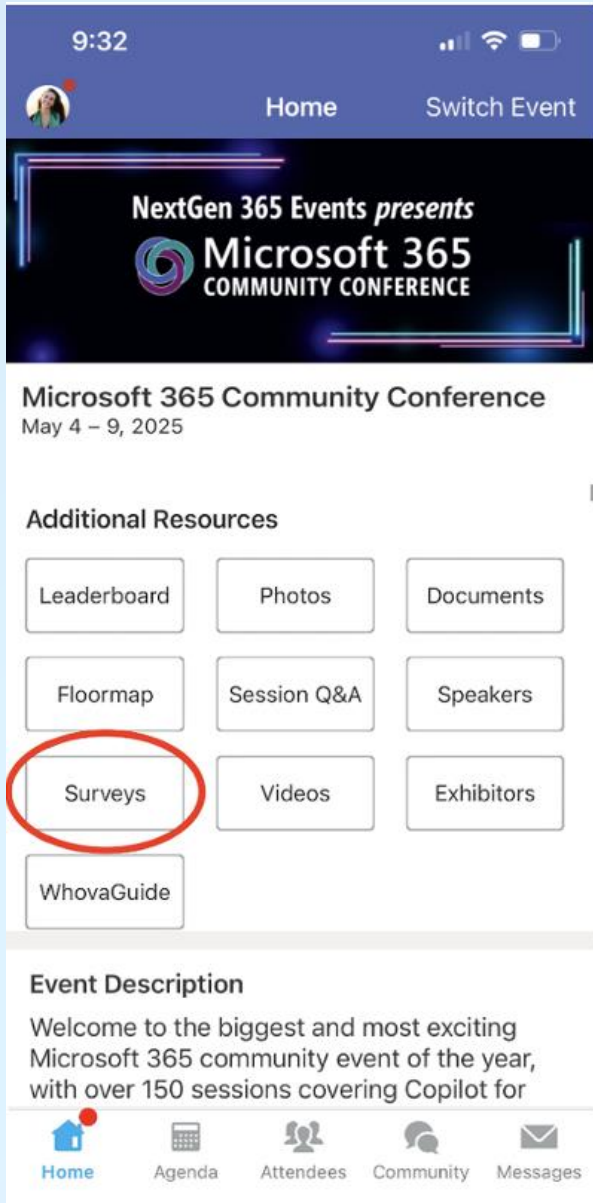
Key Insights

- Start with one focused scenario. Don't try to build a general-purpose agent on Day 1
- Define evaluations early
- Ground your agent in real enterprise data
- Pilot with real user workflows to validate reliability
- Expand autonomy as performance and confidence improves

<http://aka.ms/hpacatalog>

**We have an
exciting future ahead.**

Thank you!



Session feedback surveys

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Additional information and sessions



Upcoming Sessions

- [A New Way of Building! Child Agents, Instructions and Descriptions](#) (April 21 @ 2:45 PM)
- [Demystifying Multiagent \(Child/Connected\) and Component Collections](#) (April 21 @ 4:15 PM)
- [Supercharge your Agents with Computer Use in Copilot Studio](#) (April 22 @ 10:15 AM)
- [Operationalizing Agents at Scale: The Agentic COE Playbook](#) (April 22 @ 11:15 AM)
- [Agent Champions Roundtable: Building & Nurturing a Community to Scale Copilot and Agent Adoption](#) (April 22 @ 11:15 AM)
- [Understanding Copilot Studio 101](#) (April 23 @ 11:45 AM)



Additional Links

- [Copilot Acceleration Team](#)
- [Microsoft CAT AI Webinars](#)
- [Copilot Studio Reference Architectures & Solution Ideas](#)
- [Contribute to Power Platform and Copilot Studio Architecture Center](#)
- [Power Up Program](#)
- [Microsoft CAT Kickstarter Events](#)
- [Microsoft Copilot Agent Architecture Bootcamp](#)
- [Build-a-thon Hackathons](#)
- [Microsoft Copilot Studio Kit](#)
 - [GitHub Installation](#) or [Marketplace](#)
- [Microsoft Agent Templates and Examples](#)
- [High Potential Agents Catalog](#)

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aka.ms/Community/LearningChannel

Community led expert content on all your favorite Microsoft services.



Start your week with live news and event updates aka.ms/MondaysatMicrosoft
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Microsoft 365 Copilot

Deliver value and employee satisfaction with our tools for Microsoft 365 Copilot deployment and adoption. This powerful technology combines the power of large language models (LLMs) with your organization's data – all in the flow of work – to turn your words into one of the most powerful productivity tools on the planet.

Microsoft 365 Copilot Chat and in-app experiences provide real-time intelligent assistance, enabling users to enhance their creativity, productivity, and skills.

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Copilot Success Kit

Our Success Kit empowers you to achieve rapid value with Copilot while enabling your progressive skilling journey with AI tools.

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Copilot Chat and agent starter kit

This new kit includes guidance on IT controls, setup, and resources to help prepare your tenant and enable your users to create and use agents.

[Explore the kit >](#)

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The Microsoft 365 Copilot community is your hub for the official blog, latest news, and discussions.

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Welcome to the Microsoft 365 Copilot community. Your hub for the latest news, live events, and discussions on Microsoft 365 Copilot. For help & learning (how-to articles and training resources), please visit [Microsoft 365 Copilot Adoption hub](#).

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Microsoft 365 COMMUNITY CONFERENCE

May 6-8 Las Vegas

Your front-row seat to the future of work

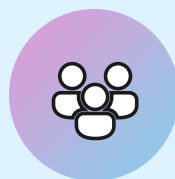
The ultimate Microsoft 365 community event

Learn directly from the experts and redefine what's possible at work—join us at the Microsoft 365 Community Conference.

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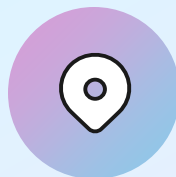
Engage with the best community in tech... There's something for everyone!



Microsoft Tech Community

The community platform for Microsoft 365 – forums, blogs, and events

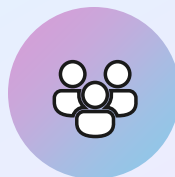
<https://aka.ms/joinMTC>



CommunityDays.org

Find or host a local event in your area or to match your interests

www.communitydays.org



Microsoft Community on LinkedIn

News, announcements and training delivered to your news feed

<https://aka.ms/microsoftcommunitylinkedin>



The one stop shop for Microsoft ecosystem community events

The screenshot displays the Microsoft Community Days website interface. At the top left is the logo "Community Days Supporting the Microsoft Community". On the right, there are navigation links for "Home", "Events", and "Calls". A large banner at the top reads "Discover Community Events happening across the world." Below this is a search bar with a magnifying glass icon and a "Search Events..." placeholder. To the right of the search bar are filters for "WHEN" (set to "Upcoming Events") and "VIEW AS" (set to "Tiles").

Below the search bar is a "WHERE" section with radio buttons for "Global", "Country", "Region", and "Sub Region". To the right is a "FILTERS" section with checkboxes for "Registration Open", "Call for Speakers", "Call for Sponsors", "Hide Paid", and "Hide Others" (which is checked).

The main content area is a grid of event cards. Each card features a colorful background image, a title, dates, location, and a "Free" or "Paid" indicator. The events shown are:

- FABRIC DATA DAYS**: Nov 4 - Dec 11, 2025. Location: Your city, Your country, United States. Format: Hybrid. Status: Free.
- SMARTCLOUD 365 - 2025**: November 25, 2025. Location: Germany. Format: Virtual. Status: Free.
- DYNUG AUTUMN CONFERENCE 2025**: November 25 - 26, 2025. Location: Oslo, Gardermoen, Norway. Status: Paid. Registration count: 1,311,883.
- SHIFT ENTER SUMMIT 2025**: November 26, 2025. Location: Budapest, Hungary. Status: Paid.
- AI COMMUNITY CONFERENCE - TORONTO 2025**: November 28, 2025. Location: Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Status: Free.
- SEASON OF AI - MCP**: November 28, 2025. Location: Gurgaon, Haryana, India. Format: Hybrid. Status: Free.
- ESPC25**: December 1 - 4, 2025. Location: Dublin, Dublin 1, Ireland. Status: Paid.
- MSREBUILD 2025**: December 2, 2025. Location: Nantes, Pays de la Loire, France. Status: Free.
- TECHBAYANIHAN 2025**: December 3 - 4, 2025. Location: Manila City, National Capital Region, Philippines. Status: Free.

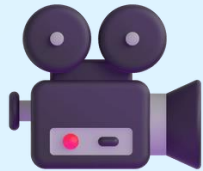
www.communitydays.org



SharePoint at 25 short film: *More than Code*

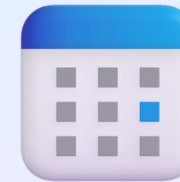
In honor of SharePoint's 25th birthday, *More Than Code* is a short film that explores the people, passion, and innovation behind one of the most transformative platforms in modern work. This film captures the stories of builders, leaders, and community champions who helped shape SharePoint into the knowledge backbone for collaboration, Copilot, and the next generation of agents.

SharePoint is more than code—it's 25 years of connection, innovation and impact.



Watch the digital premiere

Stream the documentary online globally in late April and celebrate SharePoint's 25-year journey from anywhere.



Watch the SharePoint at 25 digital event

Prepare for the film with a special digital event featuring insights, stories, and what's next for SharePoint in the era of AI.



Join MGCI – Learn, Share, Grow.

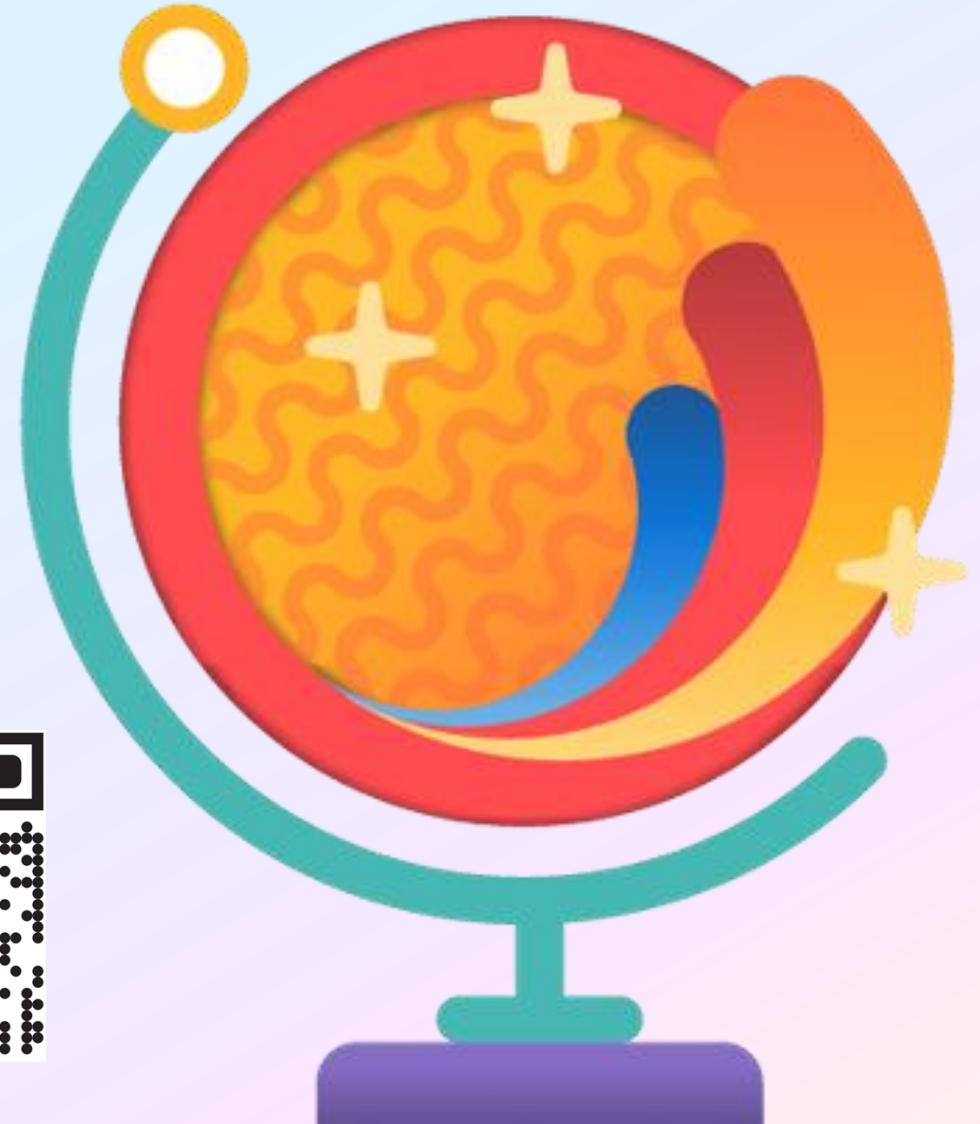
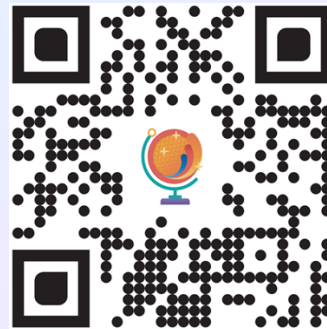
The Microsoft Global Community Initiative (MGCI) - Empowering global Microsoft communities with the tools, training, and resources to create impactful events and amplify diverse voices.

Learn, Share, Grow.

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Join MGCI today!

<https://aka.ms/MGCI>



Thank you to our
Microsoft
Most Valuable
Professionals (MVP)
and Regional Directors!

