

America's oldest bank rebuilds itself around AI

BNY is adding agentic "digital employees" to its workforce, and that has the bank preparing for a scenario in which human roles in the organization evolve from a pyramid to a diamond.

BNY built an internal AI platform called Eliza, which runs partly on Microsoft Azure and allows what the bank calls "digital employees" to operate inside the same systems, workflows, and audit trails that govern its human workforce.

For a bank that clears most US Treasury bills and holds \$59.4T in assets on behalf of institutions worldwide, the challenge wasn't technical—it was organizational: how to introduce AI inside heavily regulated, high-stakes processes without sacrificing accountability or human judgment.



Scale and complexity

<p>ASSETS UNDER CUSTODY</p> <p>\$59.4T</p> <p>Systemic-scale pressure to get AI governance right</p>	<p>DAILY TRANSACTIONS</p> <p>\$2.5T</p> <p>High-volume execution inside regulated financial systems</p>	<p>TECH INVESTMENT</p> <p>\$3.8B</p> <p>Nearly 19% of annual revenue committed to transformation</p>
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The transformation

BNY used agents to turn fragmented, manual work into organizational intelligence, shifting employees from repetitive tasks to strategic insight.



AI is changing how work gets done. We're investing in our people to do more with AI — not merely less of the mundane, but more of everything.



Michael Demissie
Head of Applied AI,
BNY

The four-step playbook

How BNY scaled AI from pilot program to operating model—and what your organization can replicate.

01

Start with infrastructure, not use cases

Build secure, compliant infrastructure before any use cases. Identity management, encryption, and audit trails are nonnegotiable. Win legal and risk stakeholders early—they become champions, not blockers.

02

Give agents real identity

Key "digital employees" get unique IDs, credentials, supervisors, and reporting lines—just like regular employees. Every action is logged in an audit trail. Performance reviews measure output and accuracy. Agents produce signals; signals become intelligence.

03

Hand off the tedious, reclaim the valuable

Start by delegating to agents the work that grinds at attention and patience—the repetitive, rules-bound tasks that pile up around the clock. Keep scope deliberately tight; that's what makes agents trustworthy and auditable. Measure before and after: time saved, errors reduced, capacity freed.

04

Reshape the org, don't shrink it

The goal isn't headcount reduction. As agents absorb repetitive processing work, human analytical and creative roles in the middle expand. Strategic leadership at the top keeps making the calls that matter. BNY aims to continue adding agents but still plans to hire thousands of human employees every year.

The organization becomes a learning system: intelligence compounds as a competitive advantage.

Frontier lessons from BNY



Lead with governance, not use cases

At a bank where a misrouted payment can freeze a billion-dollar transfer, governance isn't caution—it's the prerequisite for trust. Every AI action must be observable, controllable, and safe enough to trust before it touches a live system.



Make every agent accountable

BNY's agents have login credentials, employee numbers, supervisors, and structured offboarding. Managing them looks more like running a performance-review process than operating software—coaching, recalibration, and retraining included.



Measure momentum, not just ROI

The goal is an organization that can design work, not just execute. Track time saved and capacity freed—then watch human roles move upstream, from clearing queues to benchmarking clients, making strategic decisions, and building the next agent.