

LOGITELIA

The AI Services Buying Guide

How B2B teams of 5-60 evaluate managed AI services before replacing an agency, freelancer, or inhouse hire.

2026 Edition

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Why this guide exists

Most B2B teams of 5-60 people we talk to are stuck in the same trap. Their agency is slow and expensive. Their freelancer is unreliable. Hiring a senior takes four months. Meanwhile, the backlog grows.

A new option has appeared in the last 18 months: managed AI agent teams supervised by a senior human operator. The promise is real, but so is the noise around it. This guide separates one from the other.

Who this is for

- * B2B SaaS teams that need more growth content than their current setup ships.
- * E-commerce operators with inventory, CRM, and customer follow-up backlogs.
- * Professional services firms (legal, accounting, consulting) drowning in admin.
- * Founders evaluating whether to hire, outsource to an agency, or try AI-managed services.

What you'll get

- * A framework to compare classic agencies, freelancers, in-house hires, and managed AI services.
- * 12 questions to ask before signing any services contract.
- * Pricing models explained, with real ranges for 2026.
- * Red flags that should kill a deal immediately.
- * A final checklist for the decision.

This guide is honest about when managed AI services are the wrong choice. If your work needs deep human judgment, regulatory certification, or complex stakeholder politics, the answer is still a human-led team. We say so plainly.

The four ways teams handle this work today

1. Classic agency

Four-to-eight-week onboarding. EUR 5,000-15,000 monthly retainer. 2-4 deliverables per month. A senior reviews work when they have time. Long contracts. Slow exits.

When it works

- * Complex brand strategy that needs deep human judgment.
- * Regulated industries where the agency carries compliance burden.
- * Multi-stakeholder political work (M&A communications, crisis PR).

2. Freelancer or contractor

EUR 3,000-8,000 per month plus your management time. Quality drops the moment they take a second client. You become both project manager and QA.

When it works

- * Discrete projects with a fixed scope and a clear definition of done.
- * Specialized work where you trust the individual's reputation.
- * Short-term needs you don't want to build internal capacity for.

3. In-house hire

Three-to-six months to source, interview, and onboard. EUR 60,000-110,000 annual cost including taxes and overhead. Builds institutional knowledge but slow to scale up or down.

When it works

- * The work is core to your strategy and benefits from long-term ownership.
- * You can afford the ramp-up time before you see real output.
- * You're large enough to give the role a clear career path.

4. Managed AI agent services (new)

Small operator team (often 1-3 humans) supervising AI agents that do the volume work. Pricing typically EUR 1,500-9,000 per month. Weekly deliverables. Cancel monthly. The category Logitelia and a few others operate in.

When it works

- * Structured, repeatable work: content, ops automation, bookkeeping reconciliations.
- * Teams that want output without managing freelancers or hiring overhead.
- * Backlogs where speed matters more than bespoke craft.

The honest comparison

Dimension	Agency	Freelancer	In-house	AI managed
Time to first result	4-8 wk	1-2 wk	12-24 wk	7 days
Monthly cost (EUR)	5-15k	3-8k	5-9k	1.5-9k
Output volume	2-4/mo	Variable	Steady	Weekly
Quality control	Senior	You	Built-in	Operator
Visibility	Reports	Slack	Daily	Live logs
Commit length	3-12 mo	Project	Years	Monthly
Cancellation	Slow	Project end	HR cost	1 click
Scale up speed	Quarterly	Hire more	Months	Same week

How to read this table

No row crowns a single winner. Agencies still beat AI services on bespoke strategy work. Freelancers still beat agencies on specialist tasks. In-house wins on institutional memory. The AI-managed column is strongest for repeatable, output-heavy work where speed and transparency matter.

The right question isn't 'which model wins' but 'which model fits this specific work, on this team, at this stage'. Most companies need two or three of these models running in parallel.

If 60% of your team's backlog is 'we know how to do it, we just don't have the hours', that 60% is exactly what managed AI services handle best. Leave the other 40% to humans.

12 questions to ask before signing

Ask these in writing. Insist on written answers. Vague responses are a stronger signal than the words themselves.

1. Who exactly will sign each deliverable?

Get a name and a title. If the answer is 'our team', the answer is no one.

2. What is the definition of done for the first sprint?

It should be concrete enough that a third party could judge whether it was met.

3. How fast is the first deliverable, and what penalty if it slips?

Without a penalty clause, 'one week' silently becomes 'three weeks'.

4. What is the exact pricing structure, and how does it scale?

Beware of fees that scale with your media spend or your team size.

5. How do you handle data privacy and where is data stored?

EU data residency, NDA, and DPA are baseline. Audit logs are an upgrade.

6. Can I see a live example of a deliverable in your portal or system?

Anyone can show slides. Insist on seeing actual work in motion.

7. What is the cancellation process and notice period?

Monthly with no notice is best. 30-day notice is acceptable. 90+ days is a red flag.

8. Who reviews quality before something ships to me?

Generic 'QA processes' is not an answer. Name the role.

9. How will you measure success in 30 / 90 / 180 days?

If they can't articulate this, neither will you when it's review time.

10. What happens if the AI / agent / person produces a mistake that costs me money?

The contract should answer this. Verbal assurances do not count.

11. Can I talk to two reference customers in my industry?

Hand-picked references are still useful. Refusal is the signal.

12. Will I own the artifacts, accounts, and code at the end?

Anything they create using your data should remain yours.

Pricing models explained

Monthly retainer (most common)

Fixed monthly fee in exchange for a defined scope or hour bank. Predictable for both sides. Vulnerable to scope creep on your side and under-delivery on theirs. EUR 1,500-15,000 typical range, depending on team size.

Negotiate

- * A written scope with examples of what is in and what is out.
- * Carry-over of unused capacity for 1-2 months.
- * A quarterly review where either side can re-scope.

Percentage of spend (agency PPC, media)

10-20% of your ad budget, paid to the agency on top of the spend itself. Aligns their revenue with your spend, not your results. Often a poor structure for the buyer.

Negotiate

- * A cap on the % fee in absolute euros so they don't profit from waste.
- * A floor budget under which they switch to a flat retainer.
- * Quarterly true-ups against agreed KPIs (CAC, ROAS, etc.).

Performance / outcome-based

You pay only when an agreed result is delivered: a piece of content published, a lead generated, a revenue milestone hit. Rare in services because it transfers all the risk. When offered, read the definition of 'delivered' very carefully.

Negotiate

- * A clear and tight definition of the success event.
- * A maximum monthly payout to protect you from runaway bills.
- * An audit right on the data used to measure performance.

Project / fixed bid

One price for one deliverable. Good for discrete projects. Bad for ongoing work because scope changes turn into change orders, and change orders turn into renegotiations every two weeks.

Negotiate

- * A change-order process with caps on cost and time impact.
- * Phased payment tied to acceptance milestones, not calendar dates.
- * A defined acceptance test before final payment.

Red flags that should kill the deal

They cannot show you a real artifact within 15 minutes

Working examples beat sales decks every time. If they only have slides, they only have slides.

They refuse to name the senior who will own your account

If the senior is 'shared resource', you are paying for what your account gets after everyone else.

Their pricing is 'we'll send a custom quote'

Custom is fine. Opaque is not. They should publish a starting price and explain how it scales.

They want a 6+ month contract before you've seen one deliverable

Long lock-ins protect them, not you. Insist on a monthly first period.

They claim AI does everything, with no named human reviewer

Pure-AI delivery without a human gate is the riskiest configuration. Walk.

They want full access to all your systems on day one

Scoped, read-only access first. Expansion later, after trust is established.

Their references are 2+ years old

Services companies turn over their staff and tooling. References should be from the last 12 months.

They oversell the AI angle in 2026

Healthy operators are matter-of-fact about what AI does. Sales-heavy claims signal early-stage thinking.

The final checklist

Before you sign, you should be able to answer yes to each of these.

- I know exactly what will be delivered in the first 30 days.
- I have a named senior who owns my account end-to-end.
- I have written answers to all 12 questions in this guide.
- I have seen at least one live artifact from a real client.
- I understand the pricing structure and how it scales.
- I have a monthly cancellation clause with no penalty.
- I know what happens to my data when the contract ends.
- I have a defined KPI for 90-day evaluation.
- I have a written escalation path if quality drops.
- I am comfortable that the named senior is actually senior.

If you want to see managed AI services in action

Logitelia runs six productized AI agent teams (Research, Growth, Operations, Dev, Finance, Studio) with a senior human operator on every deliverable. EU data residency, monthly billing, cancel any month.

If this guide has helped you evaluate other options as well, that is the point. We would rather lose to a better-fit choice than win a contract we cannot deliver well.

Book a 30-minute call: logitelia.com/contact

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