

2026 AGENDA

INFO~TECH
RESEARCH GROUP

IGNITE

POWERED BY INFO-TECH LIVE

Austin, TX

September 17-18



IGNITE Agenda

Sept 17, 2026

Time	Session Type	Session	Track	Role	Description
9:00 am	LEVEL-UP EVENT	AI Workforce Development – Operationalizing AI: From Ambition to Architecture Speaker: Jai Hebel	AI	All Roles	This interactive session establishes a shared foundation for understanding LLMs, tools, and agentic behavior by clarifying how these systems operate beyond the user interface and by providing a framework for interpretation and implementation. It examines practical design patterns used within organizations to show how agents are applied to real tasks with appropriate technical grounding. We will address key risks and the mechanisms required to manage them, including access control, observability, and logging, along with the relevant regulatory and organizational context. The outcome is a structured understanding of how AI agents function, how they can be used safely, and how organizations can support their use through appropriate controls and governance practices. Access this link to register: https://go.infotech.com/level-up-austin-ai-workforce
1:30 pm	REGISTRATION & NETWORKING				
2:00 pm	OPENING REMARKS	Welcome and Opening Remarks Speaker: Amanda Mathieson			
2:15 pm	TECHNOLOGY KEYNOTE	Agentic IT: From Hype to Value Speaker: Gord Harrison	Agentic IT	All Roles	In this age of AI, you're expected to make confident bets on emerging technology while balancing credibility, delivery pressure, and board-level expectations. This opening keynote reframes the conversation, challenges familiar narratives, and sets out how CIOs and senior IT leaders can drive sustained, enterprise-level impact beyond the hype.

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2:45 pm	TECHNOLOGY KEYNOTE	Designed for Autonomy: Inside the Agentic Enterprise Speaker: Rob Garmaise	Agentic IT	All Roles	Most organizations will add agents. Very few will become agentic. As AI systems move from assisting tasks to executing workflows, the challenge is no longer adoption, it's design. Agentic AI exposes process ambiguity, data fragmentation, and decision chaos. It demands clarity in architecture, governance, and accountability. We're about to discover which enterprises were truly digital, and which were only digitized. This session explores what it takes to build an enterprise architected for autonomy, from orchestration and integration to governance, structure, and decision design. The future won't belong to those experimenting at the edges. It will belong to those bold enough to redesign the core.
3:15pm	NETWORKING BREAK				
3:45 pm	ACTIVITY	Build Your AI Strategy & Roadmap Speaker: Altaz Valani	AI	CIO	In this interactive session, we will help you derive an initial shortlist of AI use cases to guide the foundational steps of creating an AI strategy and roadmap.
3:45 pm	ACTIVITY	Accelerate AI Literacy and Adoption Speaker: Rob Garmaise	AI	All Roles	Being able to use AI effectively and responsibly is a non-negotiable skill in the modern workplace. As the organization's technology leader, you're being asked to teach everyone from frontline staff to the board of directors how AI works, how to use it proficiently, how to identify and avoid risks, and how to make better decisions around the technology. Join us for this practical session on leading the AI training initiative to support effective, responsible AI adoption.

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3:45 pm	BREAKOUT	Smaller, Smarter, Safer: The Enterprise AI Architecture Most Leaders Get Backwards Speaker: Ricky Thakrar, Head of Sales and Account Management, Zoho	Exhibitors	All Roles	The biggest mistake enterprises make with AI isn't choosing the wrong model, it's building on the wrong foundation. In this session, we'll challenge the assumption that more powerful AI automatically delivers better business outcomes, and make the case that constrained, context-rich, deterministic architectures consistently outperform expensive models bolted onto fragmented systems. You'll leave with a practical framework to rethinking your AI stack- one that prioritizes the context layer your organization needs to build before any model can deliver results worth measuring.
4:30 pm	TECHNOLOGY KEYNOTE	Securing Agentic AI and the New Security Reality Speaker: Cameron Smith	Agentic IT	Security & Privacy	Agentic AI is moving fast. Autonomous systems that can reason, plan, and take action across your enterprise are the new reality. With the AI risk landscape changing rapidly, it is difficult to prioritize which security control to tackle first. Whether you are implementing your first AI agent or evaluating vendor solutions, this session will help you gain clarity on what to focus on now, what to wait on, and the right conversations to have with your security teams starting tomorrow.
5:00pm	CLOSING AND RECEPTION				
6:30pm	NETWORKING DINNER				

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8:00 am	NETWORKING BREAKFAST				
9:00 am	TECHNOLOGY KEYNOTE	IT Talent Trends 2026 Speaker: Amanda Mathieson	Adaptive IT Workforce	All Roles	Explore IT talent trends for 2026 and beyond. The session examines what the IT talent trends mean for IT leaders with a forward-looking view on human–AI teams and securing and retaining top IT talent amid technological advancement.
9:45 am	ACTIVITY	Reinvent Zero Trust for the Agentic Era Speaker: Cameron Smith	Agentic IT	Security & Privacy	Zero trust was built for today’s threat landscape, yet most implementations remain manual and policy-heavy. Agentic AI introduces a new operating model: autonomous security agents that continuously verify identity, adapt access in real time, and contain threats without waiting for human intervention. This session explores how agentic AI is transforming Zero Trust into a dynamic, self-regulating system, highlighting practical use cases, measurable outcomes, vendor capabilities, and the governance guardrails CISOs need to deploy autonomous enforcement responsibly.
9:45 am	ACTIVITY	Establish Effective AI Governance Speaker: Rob Garmaise	AI	All Roles	Governance is about innovating at a speed and scale, and in line with the organization's goals. Organizations that treat governance as a dusty compliance exercise will find themselves exposed to unacceptable risks as systems become more dynamic, agentic, and embedded in decision-making. This practical, discussion-driven session outlines how you can build effective AI governance within a framework of guiding principles, decision-making structures, policy, and assurance.
9:45 am	ACTIVITY	Agent Lab: Intelligent Invoicing and Finance Operations Speaker: Jai Hebel	Agentic IT	All Roles	This lab focuses on how AI agents can streamline invoicing and reduce manual effort in finance operations. We will walk through the business context, value, design choices, and build process, followed by a live demo of the agent. Participants can interact throughout, ask questions, and test how the approach would hold up in their environment. You will see how to improve accuracy, handle exceptions, and accelerate processing cycles.
10:15am	NETWORKING BREAK				

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10:45 am	LIGHTNING	Lightning Talks Speakers: Cameron Smith, Rob Garmaise, Altaz Valani, Allen Wuescher, Amanda Mathieson	All Tracks	All Roles	Lightning round presentations offer attendees brief but incisive looks into the most critical topics impacting IT today, guided by some of the best thinkers and researchers in the field.
10:45 am	BREAKOUT	The End of Enterprise UI - Lessons from Building an AI-Native Networking Platform Speaker: Paul Gray, EVP of Engineering Network Observability, BlueCat	Exhibitors	All Roles	Drawing on BlueCat’s journey from machine learning and predictive analytics to large language models and agentic AI, this presentation explores five lessons about the changing nature of enterprise software. It shows why strong models alone do not transform customer workflows, why natural-language interaction became the first meaningful LLM breakthrough, and why customers increasingly expect their preferred AI assistant to understand every product they use.
10:45 am	BREAKOUT	The Future of AI: Reassessing Workloads in the Cloud – And at the Edge with HP and AMD Speakers: Kirk Godkin, South Commercial District Manager, HP, Jon Mormile, AMD Senior Manager, HP	Exhibitors	All Roles	As more organizations employ agentic AI workflows, business and IT leaders have become increasingly concerned about cost and security. Many AI providers are going to be a consumption-based model. The result: ballooning costs as tokens go back and forth to the public cloud – and concern about data / model leakage. That’s why so many enterprises look to hybrid AI workflows that can leverage edge-based AI PCs. The other advantage of computing at the edge: company data stays in-house.
11:30 am	TECHNOLOGY KEYNOTE	Rise of Agents 2.0: From Theory to Evidence Speaker: Jai Hebel	Agentic IT	All Roles	One year after launching Rise of Agents, we return with implementation proof. After building and testing 60+ agents, from single-task automations to orchestrated multi-agent systems, we’ve moved beyond theory to operational evidence. This keynote shares what actually works in production: why tool-first architectures outperform prompt-centric builds, why orchestration is essential for reliability, and why guardrails, observability, evaluation, and cost design must be embedded from day one. Across all of this, one core truth stands out: the agent isn’t the product. The operational system around it is what determines success.

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12:00pm	NETWORKING LUNCH				
1:00 pm	CLIENT/ EXPERT PANEL	AI Impact on the IT Organization Speaker: Tom Hawley, Rafael Pimentel Pinto, CIO Texas State Board of Pharmacy	All Tracks	All Roles	AI is reshaping the IT organization faster than most staffing and governance models can keep up. This session examines headcount implications, shifting skill requirements, and the rise of citizen developers who now need real oversight, alongside strategies for scaling and governing agentic AI safely. Attendees will leave with practical guidance for restructuring teams, building governance guardrails, and preparing their workforce for an AI-driven IT function.
1:00 pm	CLIENT/ EXPERT PANEL	AI Economics, Budgeting & Cost Engineering Speaker: Allen Wuescher, Prarthana Basireddy, CTO Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Tom Clark, CIO Cornerstone Capital Bank	All Tracks	All Roles	As AI adoption accelerates, unpredictable token costs and inference sprawl are turning IT budgets into moving targets. This session breaks down FinOps practices built specifically for AI workloads, covering cost forecasting, spend predictability, and budget prioritization frameworks that scale as usage grows. Attendees will walk away with cost-engineering techniques to forecast AI spend accurately to confidently defend their budget.
1:00 pm	ACTIMTY	Agent Lab: HR Onboarding Experience Speaker: Jai Hebel	Agentic IT	All Roles	This session explores how an AI agent can transform HR onboarding from a fragmented process into a seamless experience. We will walk through the business case, success measures, design approach, and build, then demonstrate the agent in action. Participants are encouraged to engage throughout, ask questions, and reflect on how this could translate to their organization. The focus is on improving employee experience while ensuring coordination and consistency from day one.
1:45 pm	TECHNOLOGY KEYNOTE	AI Trends 2027 Speaker: Altaz Valani	AI	All Roles	Discover the trends we're seeing in AI for 2027 in a keynote session you won't want to miss. Using data and information collected from a variety of sources, our deep subject matter experts will synthesize and analyze the trends.

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2:15 pm	TECHNOLOGY KEYNOTE	Five Key Takeaways from Info-Tech IGNITE Speaker: Amanda Mathieson	All Tracks	All Roles	At every conference, you're supposed to learn things, bring back your insights, and share them with your colleagues. But that can be hard when there's so much great information packed into such a short period. Please allow us to help you out. In this keynote, we'll walk you through what we think the five most important takeaways are and what your next steps should be. Make your trip home stress-free!
2:30pm	EVENT WRAP UP				