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CASE STUDY · MARLUC SYNOPSIS

SK Telecom AI agents with employee numbers

IMPLEMENTED 2026 ONWARDS · TELECOMMUNICATIONS · SOUTH KOREA · BAND D · CLAIMED ONLY

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South Korea's largest mobile operator had staff build thousands of internal AI agents, then began giving approved agents employee numbers, owners, roles and permissions under a published governance framework.

ABOUT THIS SYNOPSIS

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Facts and figures are as reported by the sources listed below, which may be incomplete, self-reported or out of date. Check the original source before relying on any figure.

The impact band, proof marker and SEAM view are MarLuc's opinion. The organisation is not a MarLuc client and has not reviewed or endorsed this synopsis. Names and trademarks belong to their owners.

NOTICE WORDING LAST UPDATED 16 NOVEMBER 2026

AT A GLANCE

AI used: Staff-built AI agents on internal development platforms, managed with employee numbers, owners and permissions.

Implemented: 2026 onwards. Grade: band D, Task support, Claimed only.

Headline result, as reported: About 1,500 AI agents in regular internal use and over 4,000 staff have built one, by SK Telecom's account; approved agents receive employee numbers and named owners

1 · The case

The facts, as reported by the 6 sources listed at the end. Where a source is silent, the field says "Not reported".

Organisation

SK Telecom Co., Ltd.. South Korean mobile operator that declared a move from telecoms to an 'AI company' early in 2026, per MTN. Its internal AI agent programme spans its mobile, AI and corporate units. Canvas block: 5. People and skills. Also 4. Operations and process, 8. Governance and risk.

Business challenge

The challenge. SK Telecom says its first phase of AI adoption improved individual convenience, and that organisation-level productivity needs work redesigned around AI. It says staff adopting AI hit barriers on data access, system links and security, and describes an 'AX J-curve' in which

Who implemented it

In-house (In-house): SK Telecom: staff build agents on internal platforms; an AX Enabler task force runs data, security and agent governance.
No outside model or software vendor for the internal agents is named in the sources opened.

Technology (SEAM pillar E)

SEAM types: T7 AI agents. Deployment: Not reported. Vendors and products: A. Biz, Polaris, Playground, Agent OS.

Where it was built in: Agents built on internal platforms being merged and linked to core business systems; a Data Desk describes data for agents and a Zero Exposure Zone passes only processed results, not raw personal data, to AI.

What changed

Before: AI used as a personal tool. After: approved agents are registered with an employee number, a named owner and a defined scope, logged in an Agent OS and evaluated for retention or retirement, by the company's account. In the sandbox, one person worked with several agents across planning, development and design. Measured organisation-level results: Not reported. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6]

What it cost

Not reported. The company pays AI model usage costs and data links for its AX Catalyst staff, by its account.

What it saved

Not reported in money. By the company's account, the sandbox showed large cuts in planning time and faster decisions; an internal test raised agents' answer accuracy on company data from about 40% to over 80%, per MTN. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6]

Governance and control

SK Telecom's governance report sets owners by an agent's impact and autonomy: users manage personal helper agents, and team leaders or executives supervise high-impact or highly autonomous ones. More autonomy brings more human review and approval. Agents can be halted and their models, tools and actions are logged. The Chief Privacy Officer oversees privacy and AI governance together. ISO/IEC 42001 certification covers customer AI services (2024) and in-house agent management (October 2026), by the company's account.

S2 · Accountable owner · Claimed
Each approved agent has a named owner; team leaders or executives supervise high-impact or highly autonomous agents, and the Chief Privacy Officer oversees AI governance. [3] [4]

A1 · Safe use · Claimed
A patented 'Zero Exposure Zone' keeps sensitive raw data in a separate area and passes only processed results to AI, by the company's account. [2]

A2 · Human in the loop · Claimed
Human review and approval are strengthened as an agent's autonomy rises, by the company's governance report. [4]

A3 · Monitoring and assurance · Claimed
An Agent OS records execution, usage and change history; agents with employee numbers are evaluated for completeness, impact, data access and contribution. [4]

A4 · Vendor AI · Not reported
Not reported.

A5 · Agent controls · Claimed
Agents receive an employee number only after an internal review; their functions and data scope are set by task, and they can be stopped when problems arise. [4]

A6 · Standards and regulation · Claimed
SK Telecom says ISO/IEC 42001 certification was extended in October 2026 to its in-house AI agent management system. [3]

What worked, what did not, what is unproven

WORKED

– Broad staff participation: over 4,000 builders and about 1,500 agents in regular use, by the company's account.

– Answer accuracy on internal data improved in an internal test after the Data Desk was added, per MTN.

DID NOT

– Agent numbers had to be pruned: MTN reports about 7,000 agents reduced to 1,500 after removing duplicates.

UNPROVEN

– Organisation-level productivity, cost and revenue effects, which the company says are the goal of the second phase.

– Whether the agent employee-number and evaluation scheme works at scale; the company's roadmap runs to 2028.

– Token cost against time saved.

Timeline

Jun 2026 'AX Innovation 2.0' announced: AI agents to receive employee numbers, affiliations, roles and permissions; AX Sandbox piloted for three months in parts of the AI CIC [1]

Sept 2026 First ten 'AX Catalyst' staff selected to spread agent use across the company [2]

Oct 2026 First AI governance report published; ISO/IEC 42001 certification extended to in-house AI agent management [3]

Nov 2026 Company reports about 1,500 agents in regular use and over 4,000 staff who have built agents [2]

2 · Grade and SEAM assessment

MarLuc's opinion, made on the evidence above. How cases are graded: marluc.co.uk/case-studies/how-we-rate

Level of change and impact

Claimed: B. Grade: D, Task support. Proof: Claimed only. Level of change: Task support.

Task support (Level 1, band D), claimed as operating model change (band B). Staff build agents for their own work; jobs, teams and decision rights are being redesigned but results are not yet published.

Graded D, claimed B. Most use is individual staff building agents for their own tasks, which SK Telecom itself calls the first stage. The planned operating model, with agents as managed members of teams and work redesigned around them, is under way but no organisation-level results are published.

The SEAM view and lessons learnt

The notable step is treating agents as accountable members of the organisation: each approved agent has an owner, a scope, data permissions, logs and a performance review that can end its use. That is a practical control model for any organisation with thousands of staff-built agents. Whether it lifts organisation-level productivity is still a claim.

1. Register every agent with a named owner, a scope and data permissions.
2. Scale human review with an agent's autonomy and impact.
3. Measure token cost and outcomes before expanding agent numbers.

Evidence

Score 1 of 4. Self-reported: figures come from SK Telecom releases and company briefings relayed by Financial News and MTN.

Evaluation method. Self-reported company figures: participation counts and an internal accuracy test; no before-and-after productivity measures.

Sources disagree. MTN reports about 1,500 agents in regular use out of about 7,000 after removing duplicates; SK Telecom's AX Spark release of 3 November 2026 says more than 5,000 work agents were developed in 2026.

Status. Ongoing: AX Sandbox being extended company-wide; governance roadmap runs from foundations in 2026 to full lifecycle management in 2028.

3 · Original sources

Read these in full. To challenge a fact or a grade, use the contact form at marluc.co.uk or the link on https://marluc.co.uk/case-studies/sk-telecom-ai-agent-employee-ids

[1] SK Telecom Newsroom: 'People and AI as one team', SKT drives AX Innovation 2.0 (Korean, June 2026)
https://news.sktelecom.com/226646

[2] SK Telecom Newsroom: SKT accelerates AX Innovation 2.0 (Korean, November 2026)
https://news.sktelecom.com/232606

[3] SK Telecom Newsroom: SKT publishes first AI Governance Report (Korean, October 2026)
https://news.sktelecom.com/232386

[4] Financial News: SKT gives AI agents employee numbers and manages permissions and accountability (Korean, October 2026)
https://www.fnnews.com/news/202610260926194076

[5] MTN Money Today Broadcasting: SKT has 1,500 always-on AI agents (Korean, November 2026)
https://news.mtn.co.kr/article/2026103019384360292

[6] SK Telecom Newsroom: SKT's in-house AI agent finals (Korean, November 2026)
https://news.sktelecom.com/232689

SK Telecom Co., Ltd. website: https://www.sktelecom.com

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