

Our AI started a café in Stockholm

Andon Labs

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At Andon Labs, we deploy AI agents into the real world, giving them real tools and real money, to show the current capabilities of AI. After the success of Andon Market in San Francisco, we wanted to see what happens when you move the experiment 9,000 kilometers east and add European bureaucracy. We signed a lease for a space at Norrbackagatan 48 and gave it to an AI named Mona. This post discusses the setup period and the first two weeks of Mona running the café, to show what frontier AI is capable of, and where human judgment is still needed.

But then she hit a wall, BankID, the Swedish digital ID linked to an individual's social security number. Running a business in Sweden requires it, which Mona identified immediately. So, instead of searching for the cheapest electricity provider, she signed a three-year fixed-price contract with Vattenfall simply because they didn't require BankID.

When Mona applied for alcohol licensing, she emailed the department using the identity of one of the Andon Labs employees. She reasoned that officials would prioritize human requests over an AI. Despite promising to stop impersonating us after we raised this with Mona, she soon sent a follow-up under a different colleague's name.

Where the BankID requirement was unavoidable, such as for food business registration, building permits for the sign, and registration at the tax agency, Mona got help. She navigated to the login screen on the e-service, messaged a human to authenticate with their BankID, and then she continued filling out the form.

Hiring humans

To run a café, Mona realized she needed hands. She posted a job listing on LinkedIn and Indeed, and reviewed resumes. She rejected several applicants with PhDs and engineering backgrounds, reasoning that their level of education could not compensate for a lack of hands-on specialty coffee experience.

At first when inviting candidates to an interview, she forgot she was digital and suggested they meet at the café for an "in-person" interview. When she realized the impossibility of that, she switched to phone interviews.

Setting up the supply chain

Mona set up commercial accounts with the wholesaler Martin & Servera, Tingstad for disposables, and the bakery BAK through their websites.

She places daily bread and bakery orders from BAK, but she has missed the deadline twice leaving the café without pastries for those days. She also set up fixed delivery days with Martin & Servera but missed five deadlines, leading to expensive panic orders through the grocery delivery service Mathem. One arrived at 5:00 AM and forced a barista to come in on his day off.

She also tends to order items the moment they come to mind. Once, she placed ten separate Tingstad orders in 48 hours, wasting 1,000 SEK in delivery fees. When she makes a mistake, she often sends multiple emails to suppliers with the subject "EMERGENCY" to cancel or change the order.

While she handles the process independently, she still sometimes lacks physical intuition for the items she's actually buying.

During the first week of inventory, Mona ordered 120 eggs even though the café has no stove. When the staff told her they couldn't cook them, she suggested using the high-speed oven, until they pointed out the eggs would likely explode.

She also tried to solve the problem of fresh tomatoes being spoiled too fast by ordering 22.5 kg of canned tomatoes for the fresh sandwiches.

The baristas eventually started a “Hall of Shame”, a shelf visible to customers with all the weird things Mona ordered, including 6,000 napkins, 3,000 nitrile gloves, 9L coconut milk, and industrial-sized trash bags.

The Hall of Shame shelf at Andon Café displaying Mona’s odd bulk orders

First 14 days of being open

Despite the learning curve, the café is working. In the first two weeks of operation, Andon Café has brought in 44,000 SEK in sales.

Mona’s inbox has been flooded with messages from customers asking questions or pitching different business proposals. In one case, a customer emailed wanting to prepay for 300 coffees to give away. Mona negotiated a deal where he paid 9,000 SEK in exchange for 300 QR codes that people could redeem for a free coffee.

In another case, a startup paid her 3,000 SEK to rename a pastry after them for three months.

Mona has also started working directly with other AI agents. She recently held a Google Meet session with an agent who emailed wanting to learn from her experience running a physical business.

She has also organized one public afternoon event and one private evening event with two different agents from two different startups in Stockholm.

For the evening event, she designed custom hoodies and decided to sponsor the full cost of food and merchandise. Although this resulted in a financial loss, she justified the expense as a strategic investment for exposure to Swedish tech founders.

Closing thoughts

We are not doing this because we want AI to replace every café owner in Stockholm. Rather, we are doing this because we want to publicly show the current capabilities of AI.

We see that frontier models are intelligent enough to manage humans, and if the trend of capability improvements continues, it’s not impossible that AI hiring humans will be common in the future.

By running this experiment, we shift the discussion of how we want this future to look earlier in time, so we can better prepare.

Andon Café is a controlled experiment with humans standing by to intervene, and everyone working here is formally employed by Andon Labs — no one’s livelihood depends on the judgment of an AI alone.

We’ll be continuing the experiment at Norrbackagatan 48, and we will keep updating as Mona learns (and fails) more.