Getting Started with AI Agents: OpenClaw & Claude Code

A Follow-Up Guide from the UMD Webinar

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What You Learned Today

In the session "OpenClaw & Agents for 10X PMs," we covered:

- **The Agentic Shift**: AI has moved from chatbots → vibe coding → autonomous agents that act on your behalf
- **Why OpenClaw Matters**: 330K+ GitHub stars, fastest-growing open source project in history, called "the next ChatGPT" by Nvidia's CEO
- **What Makes Agents Different**: Soul (identity), Heartbeat (autonomy), Memory (context persistence)
- **Live Demo**: Real multi-agent system in production — Trinity, Researcher, Sysadmin, and other agents working together
- **Security Risks**: Shadow agency, runaway costs, and how to protect yourself
- **The Future**: Software is being disrupted — agents change how PMs, engineers, and founders work

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Quick Start: 3 Paths to Your First Agent

Path A: OpenClaw (Full Agent OS)

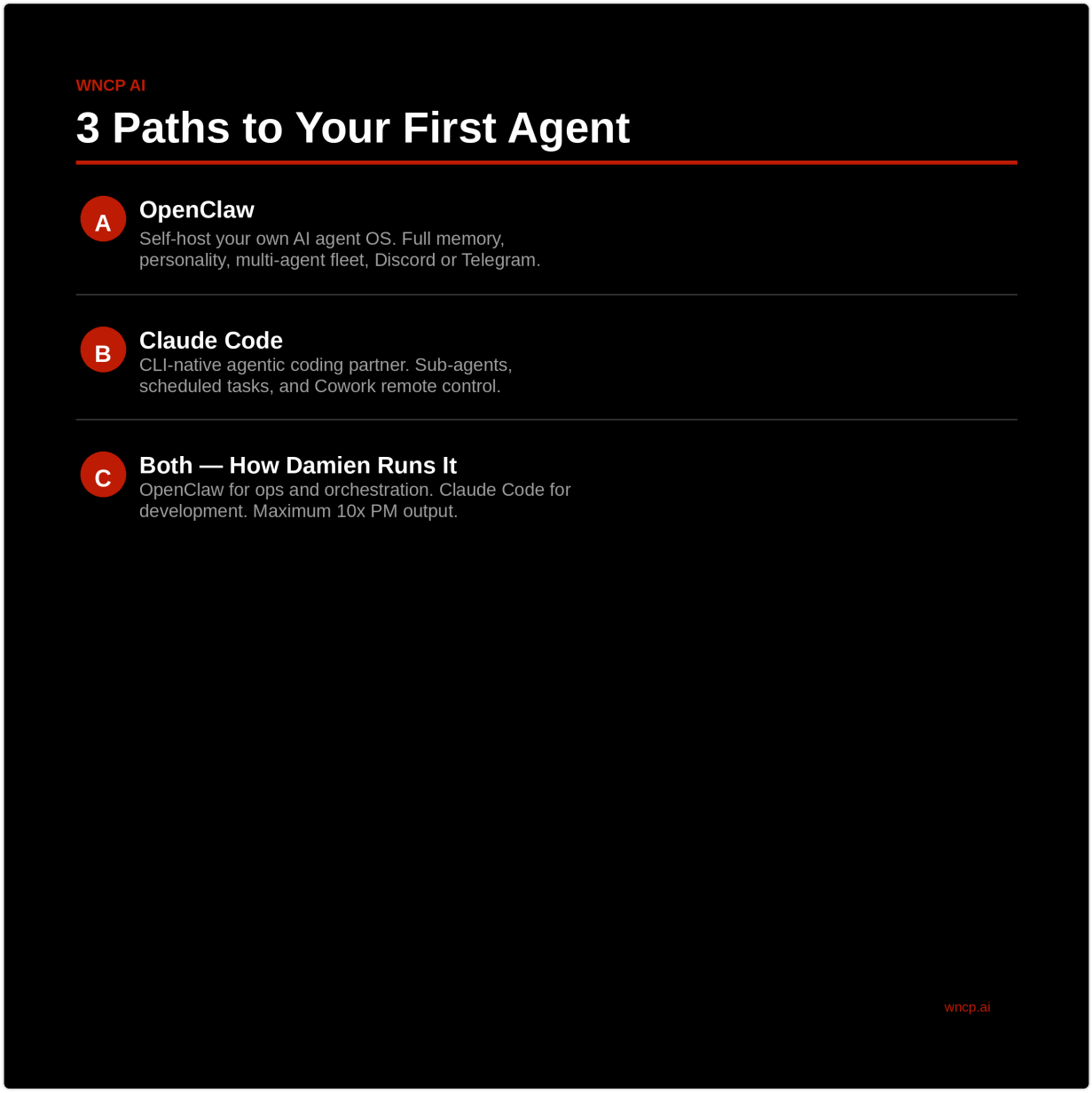
Best for: People who want a complete personal agent with memory, personality, and autonomy

Path B: Claude Code (Coding Agent)

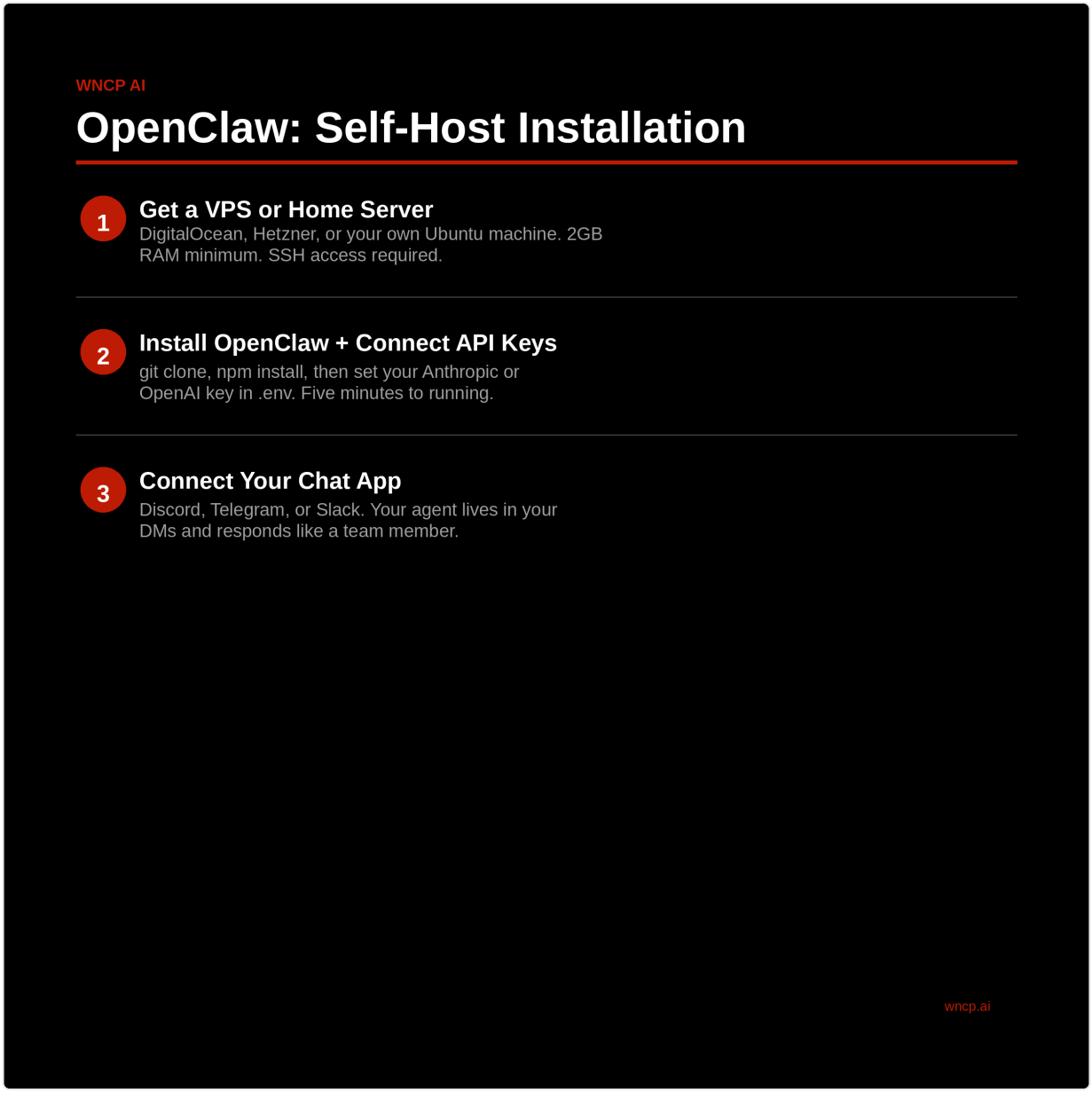
Best for: Developers and PMs who want an agentic coding partner

Path C: Both (How Damien Runs It)

Best for: Maximum productivity — OpenClaw as your agent OS orchestrating Claude Code as your coding dispatch



Installing OpenClaw



Option 1: Local Install (Free)

Prerequisites: Node.js 18+, a code editor, an API key (OpenAI, Anthropic, etc.)

```
# Clone and install
git clone https://github.com/openclaw/openclaw.git
cd openclaw
npm install

# Configure your API keys
cp .env.example .env
# Edit .env with your API keys

# Start your agent
npm start
```

Option 2: One-Click Cloud Deploy

Several providers offer one-click OpenClaw deployment: - **Railway** (railway.app) — Deploy in minutes - **Fly.io** (fly.io) — Persistent volumes, great for always-on agents - **Hostinger VPS** — Discounted VPS options

Option 3: Home Server (Advanced)

Damien's setup: Ubuntu server + Docker + Tailscale VPN for secure remote access. See the Security section below for details.

🎥 Recommended Installation Videos

VIDEO	CREATOR	LINK	DURATION	NOTES
OPENCLAW FULL COURSE 3 HOURS: Build & Sell	Simeon Yasar	youtube.com/watch?v=rv6p9R_lNxc	3h	Complete tutorial: deployment to model routing, security, Telegram, skills, memory, cron jobs, voice mode, sub-agents
OpenClaw Tutorial for Beginners — Crash Course	Matthew Berman	youtube.com/watch?v=u4ydH-QvPeg	~1h	Great crash course, includes MCP setup, Zapier, and automation
OpenClaw Full Tutorial for Beginners	freeCodeCamp (Kian)	youtube.com/watch?v=n1sfrc-RjyM	~1h	High-quality walkthrough with article companion
OpenClaw Full Course: Setup, Skills, Voice & Memory	TechWithTim	youtube.com/watch?v=vte-fDoZczE	~1.5h	Deep dive into skills, voice mode, memory, and Hostinger VPS setup

📖 Written Guides

- **Official Docs**: docs.openclaw.ai
- **Complete 2026 Setup Guide** (Reddit): r/AiForSmallBusiness

Claude Code as Your Agent

Cloud Hosting Options

Don't want to self-host? These services let you run OpenClaw in the cloud:

PROVIDER	STARTING PRICE	BEST FOR	LINK
OpenClaw Cloud	Free tier	Easiest start	openclaw.ai
Railway	~$5/mo	Quick deploy, auto-scaling	railway.app
Fly.io	~$3/mo	Persistent volumes, global	fly.io
Hostinger VPS	~$5/mo	Full control, discounted	hostinger.com

Claude Code as Your Agent

Claude Code is Anthropic's agentic coding tool — and it's a powerful way to experience the agentic shift without setting up a full OpenClaw instance.

Getting Started

```
# Install Claude Code
npm install -g @anthropic-ai/claude-code

# Start a session
claude

# Give it a task in the session
> Build me a React dashboard that shows AI agent status
```

Or use the Claude Code Desktop app for the full experience with recurring tasks and remote control.

Key Features

- **Auto/Autonomous Mode**: Claude Code can autonomously write, test, and iterate on code
- **Sub-Agents**: Create specialized agents for parallel, isolated work (official docs)
- **Agent Teams**: Orchestrate multiple agents working together (official docs)
- **Remote Control / Dispatch**: Continue sessions from any device — send instructions from your phone (official docs)
- **Cowork**: Persistent threads with scheduled recurring tasks (official guide)

Claude Code on Autopilot: Loops, Dispatch & Cowork

This is where Claude Code starts acting like OpenClaw — running autonomously on your behalf.

Recurring Tasks & Scheduled Runs

Claude Code Desktop supports **scheduled recurring tasks** — the closest equivalent to OpenClaw's heartbeat:

1. Set up a recurring task in Claude Code Desktop
2. Claude spins up the right session automatically on schedule
3. It works on your task, then waits for the next trigger

How it works like OpenClaw: - OpenClaw has a "heartbeat" that wakes it up periodically — Claude Code's scheduled tasks do the same - Both run autonomously on a schedule without manual intervention - Great for: code review loops, test-then-fix workflows, and iterative improvement

Official docs: Schedule Recurring Tasks in Claude Code Desktop

Remote Control & Dispatch

Claude Code's **Remote Control** lets you continue sessions from any device — phone, tablet, or browser:

1. Start a Claude Code session on your computer
2. Send instructions remotely via the Anthropic API or integrations
3. Your agent keeps running and working even when you step away

4. Pick up where you left off from any device

How it works like OpenClaw: - OpenClaw's heartbeat wakes it up periodically — Claude Code's dispatch wakes it from external triggers - Combined with scheduled recurring tasks, you get the same autonomous behavior - Think of it as "OpenClaw's heartbeat, built into Claude Code"

Official docs: Remote Control | Dispatch & Computer Use Blog

Sub-Agents & Agent Teams

Create specialized agents that work in parallel or coordinate together:

- **Sub-Agents**: Isolate context and run work in parallel with specialized instructions — one agent does research while another writes code
- **Agent Teams**: Orchestrate multiple Claude Code sessions with inter-agent messaging and centralized management

This mirrors OpenClaw's multi-agent architecture — instead of one agent doing everything, you have specialized agents that collaborate.

Official docs: Sub-Agents (SDK) | Agent Teams

Claude Cowork: Full Agentic Workflows

Cowork is Claude's framework for persistent, multi-agent workflows:

- **Persistent threads** that keep context across sessions
- **Assign tasks from anywhere** — phone, tablet, browser
- **Scheduled/recurring execution** — set it and forget it
- **Cross-device task delegation** — Claude spins up the right session automatically

How to use Cowork like OpenClaw: 1. Define your agents (researcher, coder, reviewer) 2. Set up their collaboration patterns with persistent threads 3. Schedule recurring tasks 4. Use remote control for event-driven triggers

Official guides: Assign Tasks from Anywhere in Cowork | Claude Code Desktop Overview

Open Source Orchestration

For more advanced multi-agent setups, check out: - **wshobson/agents** — Open-source intelligent automation and multi-agent orchestration for Claude Code - **OpenClaw's ACP (Agent Communication Protocol)** — The protocol that lets OpenClaw agents talk to each other

Security & Privacy

If You're Self-Hosting

1. **Use a VPN** (Tailscale recommended) — Never expose your agent to the public internet
2. **Set spending limits** — Prevent runaway API costs
3. **Audit agent actions** — Review what your agent does regularly
4. **Use environment variables** — Never hardcode API keys

Shadow Agency Warning

Be aware of "shadow agency" — employees using AI agents without company knowledge or approval. This creates: - Data leakage risks - Uncontrolled API spend - Compliance violations

Recommendation: Have an explicit AI agent policy at your organization.

Resources

Videos & Tutorials

- OPENCLAW FULL COURSE 3 HOURS (Simeon Yasar) — Complete tutorial
- OpenClaw Crash Course (Matthew Berman) — Beginner setup + MCP/Zapier
- OpenClaw Full Tutorial (freeCodeCamp) — Comprehensive walkthrough + article
- Full Course: Setup, Skills, Voice & Memory (TechWithTim) — Deep dive
- Claude Code Remote Control (Official) — Remote agent control
- Dispatch & Computer Use (Official Blog) — Agentic workflows

Documentation

- OpenClaw Official Docs
- Claude Code Sub-Agents (SDK)
- Claude Agent Teams
- Scheduled Recurring Tasks
- OpenClaw Security Best Practices

Community

- OpenClaw Discord — 100K+ members
- r/AiForSmallBusiness — Setup guides and discussion

From WNCP AI

- WNCP AI — AI strategy & product consulting
- CRAFT+ Framework — Proprietary AI adoption framework
- UMD Generative AI for PMs (Coursera) — Coming soon

Next Steps

1. **Pick your path** (OpenClaw, Claude Code, or both)
2. **Install today** — Follow one of the video guides above
3. **Start small** — Get one agent running one task
4. **Iterate** — Add memory, heartbeat, personality as you go
5. **Connect with us** — Questions? Reach out to WNCP AI

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