Machines that pay

Robotics × agent payments. What does a robot need before it can buy something on its own?

Anna, the hub robot
Nicolás · Fri 10:00, 30 min

Someone in the room says

“Anna, buy me a chai.”

What does a machine need to pay?

The same six layers as Tuesday's whiteboard. You call it out, we fill the rows.

FIND
Who sells this?

TALK
How does it connect?

WHO
Who is behind the machine?

ALLOWED
Who allowed the spend?

PAY
How does the money move?

PROVE
What did it get?

Old idea, new rails

When	What happened	Real or demo?
Nov 2015	Slock.it at Devcon 1: connected devices you rent or share, paid on Ethereum	Prototype
Oct 2019	Sergei Lonshakov at Devcon 5: robotics under Ethereum computer control	Talk and pilots
Feb 2026	Circle and OpenMind: Bits, a robot dog, pays USDC to recharge itself	Demo, on testnet
May 2026	peaq and Serve Robotics: a delivery robot gets paid and pays the cafe, with Tether WDK	Simulation

What changed: stablecoins to pay with, and x402 to ask for payment over plain HTTP.

Devcon archive (Devcon 1, Devcon 5). Circle on X, 17 Feb 2026. peaq blog and X, 12 May 2026.

“Anna, find me a Jio mobile top-up”

1 · Anna
Hears the request. Holds no key

→

2 · Hub server
Tether WDK wallet, five allowed items, a price cap

→

3 · Bitrefill
Answers 402: pay 0.002 USD₮0 on Arbitrum

4 · Wallet
Signs a USD₮0 authorisation and asks again

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5 · Bitrefill's facilitator
Checks it, settles on-chain, pays the gas

→

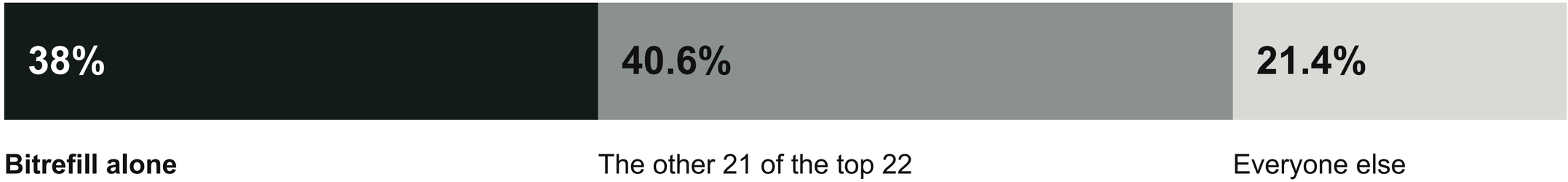
6 · Anna
Reads out the result and what she paid

The robot never holds money. The key and a tiny balance sit on the server, and it buys only from a fixed list.

Bitrefill 402 response and Tether WDK x402 guide (undated), read 6 Nov 2026.

Who sells to machines today

x402 merchant revenue over 30 days, 2,252 merchants an agent could find and pay



The median merchant made six cents. So the robot shops where the volume already is.

Zaryab Afser, decipherclub.com/why-x402-merchants-are-poor, 10 Sep 2026. 30-day window, Base.

Your turn: pick a machine

EV charger · delivery robot · farm drone · chai machine

ALLOWED

Who sets its budget?

PROVE

What proves it delivered?

WHO

Who's liable when it's wrong?

One sticky per question. 6 minutes, then two tables report back.

Where next

When	What
11:00, here	From discovery to dispute: equip your agent or marketplace to scale (Kleros)
13:00, Lotus 1	Your Device Doesn't Have to Trust Its Manufacturer, Jork Leonhardt. Devices that hold and spend value
15:00, Lotus 1	Security by obscurity is dead: how LLMs can take over hardware, Péter Szilágyi
Video, Wed	Ethereum X Robotics, Tomasz Stanczak and Arnav Bansal
Video, Tue	Can We Trust the Machines? A Live Trial, the hub on Jasmine Stage 4

