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Uber Just Bought a Startup You've Never Heard Of. Here's Why That's Important. DECEMBER 5, 2016

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## The tech company wants to be an industry leader in artificial intelligence.

Uber is no longer just dabbling in artificial intelligence — it's going all in. On Monday, the tech giant announced the establishment of **Uber A.I. Labs**, a new research arm dedicated to A.I. and machine learning.

The move comes on the heels of Uber's acquisition of A.I. startup **Geometric Intelligence** for an undisclosed amount. The two-year-old company focuses on machine learning techniques using a cognitive science approach. Though the under-the-radar startup has **reportedly** never published research or offered a product, its value is in its 15-person staff. Geometric CEO and founder **Gary Marcus**, a neural science professor at New York University and leading figure in A.I., will serve as the director of the A.I. Labs team at Uber. Uber will absorb all of Geometric's employees, including renowned machine learning researcher **Zoubin Ghahramani** and deep learning expert specializing in evolutionary algorithms **Jeff Clune**.

This isn't Uber's first A.I.-related acquisition. In August, Uber **acquired** Otto, an autonomous truck and transportation startup for \$680 million. Otto founder Lior Ron said he could improve the truck's self-driving features using Uber's driving data to build on its A.I. technology.

*Related: [Why These Artificial Intelligence Startups Joined Salesforce, Amazon, and Uber](#)*

The move into A.I. is an important one for Uber as it reinvents itself into a tech giant and leader in the A.I. field. With a \$70 billion valuation, Uber is aggressively trying to prove that it's no longer just a ride-sharing platform.

"They're reinventing themselves as an AI company. They want to join the Big Four," **AI expert Oren Etzioni** told **Wired**, referring to **Google**, **Amazon**, Facebook, and **Apple**.

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