



NEWS STARTUPS

Uber acquires Geometric Intelligence, creates Uber AI research labs

4 days ago Mudit Mohilay

In a bid to boost its AI prowess and create a more dedicated arm for the same, Uber has acquired Geometric Intelligence. The company has also created a new research effort, called Uber AI Labs that will be headed by Geometric Intelligence CEO Gary Marcus.

The newly created department will work under Jeff Holden, Uber's Chief Product Officer and along with improving the algorithms that power the whole driver-passenger matching, will also help propel the cab aggregator into the future. You guessed it. Uber's newly created AI research labs has also been tasked with the development of techniques for building self-driving cars.



In case you are unaware of it — which is all too likely — Geometric Intelligence is a AI startup that was founded by New York University psychologist Gary Marcus and Zoubin Ghahramani, another professor with expertise in information technology.

At the time of its acquisition, **Geometric Intelligence** had around 15 employees — all of them hardcore researchers. While fourteen of Geometric Intelligence employees will be making their way to San Francisco to work directly with Uber and help it create a dedicated AI lab, Ghahramani, will be working out of Cambridge.

Frankly speaking, the acquisition is not surprising. Uber has been quietly amping up its self-driving capabilities with time and has sourced the bulk of its researchers from places like the Carnegie Mellon University. The company has also started public tests, including in Pittsburgh. Recently, Uber acquired trucking company Otto — which made new later in the year by delivering crates of beer in an autonomous truck.

Even apart from the rush to get into self-driving, Uber has a gazillion other uses for the technology that Geometric Intelligence will be bringing on-board. For example, the company uses AI in a whole lot of departments — including its surge pricing, to better match riders and drivers — and more recently, with UberPool.

The last is particularly AI dependent considering that its no cakewalk for a computer to match a rider with a driver — much less multiple riders and their routes with their Uber driver and with each other.

The choice of Geometric Intelligence is certainly suggestive. The startup professed to be building some form of technology that according to the company, could exceed even the powerful deep learning systems being deployed and developed at companies like Google and Facebook. That is certainly a tall claim to make however, Geometric Intelligence, with its assortment of experts and hardcore researchers might just be onto something.

To say that the two year old startup has kept quite about its technology — would be an understatement. Almost no one knows what they are about except for the fact that the technology they have been deploying does not need as much data as other machine learning technologies do. So basically, once their research is completed, they can probably create AI systems that can do a lot more with the same amount of data. And considering that more available data usually leads to better systems, it could mean that GI's systems could get smarter faster than their peers. Useful right?

Uber certainly thinks so, considering that it chose to acquire the startup and create Uber AI research labs. Meanwhile, this also gives us a very interesting insight into the cab aggregator's future ambitions. Consider this for example, the company did not create a separate wing for researching and developing self-driving technology. Instead, it went to the whole hog and came up with "AI research labs".

To me, it seems as if after self-driving cars and flying automobiles, the company is looking to move into the big leagues by getting an early start in an area that has vast potential for the future. The statements

stemming from Geometric Intelligence founders appear to be affirming the same, in which they talked about working on all areas of AI and not just self-driving cars. At present Google, Amazon, Facebook, and Apple remain some of the only companies to have built dedicated AI labs. Now, Uber is about to have one as well.

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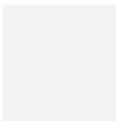
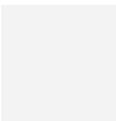
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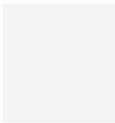
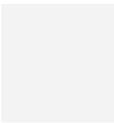
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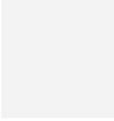
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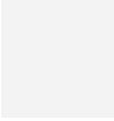
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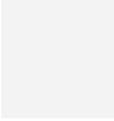
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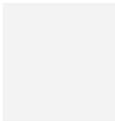
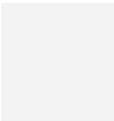
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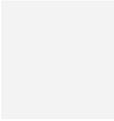
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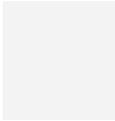
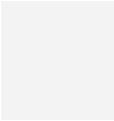
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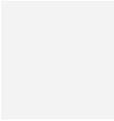
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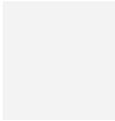
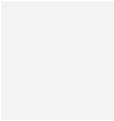
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