

Auto industry veteran hired to rev up Google car

SAN FRANCISCO: Google announced on Monday, 14 September, it hired auto industry veteran John Krafcik to head up its self-driving car project, as it eyes expanded road tests for autonomous vehicles.



Krafcik, most recently a top executive at consumer auto shopping service TrueCar, said the project "is a great opportunity to help Google develop the enormous potential of self-driving cars."

"This technology can save thousands of lives, give millions of people greater mobility and free us from a lot of the things we find frustrating about driving today," he said.

Krafcik previously spent 10 years at Hyundai Motor America, including five as president and chief executive of the US arm of the South Korean auto giant.

He also worked at Ford Motor Company and was an engineer at New United Motor Manufacturing Inc., the former joint-venture plant operated by Toyota and General Motors.

Google said Krafcik would join the company as CEO of the self-driving car project later this month and that his experience "will be particularly valuable as we collaborate with many different partners to achieve our goal of transforming mobility for millions of people."

"Over the last few years, we've made more progress with our self-driving car technology than we ever thought possible," Google said in a statement.

"We still have a lot to learn about how people perceive our vehicles and how they'll want to fit this technology into their lives and their communities - and that's why our vehicles are currently self-driving (some) 10,000 miles a week in Mountain View and Austin, and why we'd like to run pilot programs with our prototypes at some point."

The self-driving car project is part of the Google X-Lab working on future technologies, but the Google statement said "it's certainly a good candidate" to become an independent entity under Alphabet, the holding company that is being created as Google carves out separate units for its Internet search giant and its various other technology efforts.

Source: AFP

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