

Ford buys software startup Livio

September 26 2013, by Dee-Ann Durbin

Ford Motor Co. said Thursday that it acquired the startup company Livio in a bid to accelerate its efforts to help drivers safely access content on their smartphone while on the road.

Livio, which is based in the Detroit suburb of Ferndale, Michigan, develops software that lets drivers connect to their smartphones through their car radios or dashboard infotainment systems. It was founded five years ago by Jake Sigal, a former employee of parts supplier Delphi Corp.

Ford paid less than \$10 million for the 11-person startup, said Paul Mascarenas, Ford's chief technical officer. Though owned by Ford, Livio will keep supplying its current customers, including General Motors Co.

Livio is Ford's first technology acquisition in 13 years. Mascarenas said Livio complements Ford's efforts to allow drivers to safely access phone apps like Pandora, Major League Baseball and Spotify from their cars. Ford's AppLink system, which lets drivers access their apps through voice recognition, will be inside an estimated 7 million vehicles by 2015, Mascarenas said.

Mascarenas said he and Sigal began talking about an acquisition earlier this year.

Sigal said joining Ford will help his company's efforts to promote a single standard for in-vehicle connectivity. Car companies are now using

a variety of systems, which makes it harder for app developers to bring apps to market quickly. Ford has also promoted the development of a single standard.

"This helps us accelerate the industry standard, which is desperately needed," Sigal said. "It's a lot easier pushing a standard when you're not just a startup in metro Detroit."

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