

# Toyota forms company to make technology simpler

April 4 2016

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In this March 30, 2011 file photo, the Toyota logo is shown at Wilsonville Toyota, in Wilsonville, Ore. Toyota announced Monday, April 4, 2016, that it is forming a new data science company in partnership with Microsoft that's designed to free customers "from the tyranny of technology." The company called Toyota Connected has a goal of simplifying technology so it's easier to use. (AP Photo/Rick Bowmer, File)

Toyota is forming a new data science company in partnership with

Microsoft that's designed to free customers "from the tyranny of technology."

The company called Toyota Connected has a goal of simplifying technology so it's easier to use, perhaps even getting rid of distracting and complicated touch screens that now are in most cars and replacing them with heads-up or voice-activated technology, said Zack Hicks, the company's CEO who also is Toyota Motor America's chief information officer.

"I think people are really tired of fumbling with multiple devices and having this disjointed experience," Hicks said as Toyota announced the venture on Monday.

Like other automakers, Toyota Connected will research connecting cars to each other and to homes, as well as telematics features that learn and anticipate a driver's habits. The company, like other automakers, will explore transmitting a driver's health data to a doctor or driving patterns to an insurance company so people are insured based on where they travel, Toyota said. Also, it will look at linking with other vehicles so they can report weather and traffic conditions to people driving the same route.

The move comes as automakers prepare for big changes in transportation that are coming in the next several years including steps toward self-driving cars. Tesla Motors, General Motors, Mercedes-Benz and others are rolling out cars that can drive themselves on freeways as they take steps toward autonomous driving. Google already is testing self-driving cars on real streets in California, Texas and the state of Washington.

Toyota says the new company will support research into artificial intelligence and robots, as well as analyze data from vehicle sensors and cameras so algorithms can be developed for self-driving cars. Drivers

would have to opt in to all of the data reporting, and Toyota would disclose what data is being shared, the company said.

Microsoft engineers will work with the company at its headquarters in Plano, Texas, where Toyota is moving its U.S. operations. Microsoft bought a 5 percent equity stake in the startup company, Toyota said, but the full price wasn't disclosed.

Toyota Connect will use Microsoft's Azure cloud computing platform to collect and analyze data.

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Citation: Toyota forms company to make technology simpler (2016, April 4) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-04-toyota-company-mobility.html>

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