

Baidu hires Microsoft expert in artificial intelligence push

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Baidu Inc., which operates China's most popular Internet search engine, said Tuesday it has hired a former Microsoft executive and artificial intelligence specialist to improve its competitiveness in the field.

The Beijing-based company said Qi Lu was named group president and chief operating officer in charge of products, technology and sales. Qi, who has a Ph.D. from Carnegie Mellon University, previously was Microsoft Corp.'s global executive vice president.

"With Dr. Lu on board, we are confident that our strategy will be executed smoothly and Baidu will become a world-class technology company and global leader in Ai," said Baidu chairman Robin Li in a statement.

Chinese Internet companies are spending heavily to develop new services and technology as they try to retain users who are shifting rapidly to going online via mobile phones and tablet computers.

Baidu is testing autonomous vehicles in China, hoping to cut road congestion. Last year it joined with Ford Motor to invest in Velodyne, a company that makes laser sensors that help guide self-driving cars.

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