

# Start-up behind self-driving robots raises \$114M


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San Diego's Brain Corp, the maker of self-driving technology used in supermarket floor cleaning robots, said that it has raised \$114 million in a third round of venture capital funding led by SoftBank Vision Fund.

The deal is the largest single amount of venture money raised by a San Diego start-up so far this year, and highlights the potential that investors see in [artificial intelligence](#) and robotics technologies.

Qualcomm Ventures, which was Brain Corp's original backer, also participated in the funding round. Founded in 2009, Brain Corp was housed inside Qualcomm's research lab for several years. The wireless [technology](#) giant maintains a seat on Brain Corp's board of directors.

Brain Corp said its plans to port its BrainOS technology  which combines low cost sensors with hardware and software to control robots—onto Qualcomm's Snapdragon mobile platform to power a new generation of consumer robots that will be able to clean, sort and do other functions around homes and offices.

For now, Brain Corp's main product is EMMA, which stands for Enabling Mobile Machine Automation. Tested in Jimbo's groceries around San Diego and introduced last year at the Industrial Sanitary Supply Trade Show in Chicago, EMMA enables robots to clean floors in large buildings, such as big box retailers, schools and airports.

EMMA robots resemble industrial-sized scooters. Brain Corp has loaded

EMMA with sensors, cameras, 4G LTE connectivity and algorithms that allow it to learn its route around a store while avoiding boxes, people and other obstacles that pop up along the way.

"Brain is developing truly ground-breaking technology that transforms manually operated machines into autonomous robots," said Masayoshi Son, chief executive of SoftBank Group Corp. "Brain's team is at the forefront of creating the future and a more convenient way of life through technology. We are confident in their success and look forward to seeing them realize their vision."

The company has previously raised about \$11 million and has a staff of around 40 workers, including 15 Ph.D's. The centerpiece of Brain Corp's technology is its proprietary operating system that integrates with off-the-shelf hardware and sensors to provide a low cost "[brain](#)" for robots.

BrainOS includes computer vision and artificial intelligence libraries to speed up robots' abilities to learn their environment, even in a cluttered retail store or industrial building.

The company is partnering with makers of manually operated industrial floor clearing machines to embed its BrainOS artificial intelligence technology into their cleaners. It sells the technology as a subscription service.

"At Brain, we believe tomorrow's robots will be intelligent autonomous machines that take care of us," said Brain Corp Chief Executive Eugene Izhikevich. "Such robots will be as commonplace as computers and mobile phones are today. This funding will allow us to accelerate our mission, and we look forward to collaborating with the SoftBank Vision Fund as a long-term strategic partner."

Qualcomm Executive Chairman Paul Jacobs said Brain Corp's EMMA

technology "is already improving performance and reducing costs, generating real benefits for their customers and real.

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