

Samsung joins digital assistant race with acquisition of Viv

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Samsung Electronics is joining the race to create the smartest digital assistant by acquiring Viv, a Silicon Valley startup launched by the same entrepreneurs who sold Siri to Apple.

The deal announced Wednesday provides Samsung with technology to compete against Google, Amazon.com, Microsoft and Apple in the increasingly important field of programming computers to learn and respond as if they were human.

The specialty, also known as [artificial intelligence](#), has hatched a flock of voice-activated digital concierges including Siri, Amazon's Alexa, Microsoft's Cortana and Google's Assistant that work in personal computers, smartphones and internet-connected speakers.

Samsung plans to implant Viv into phones, televisions and a wide range of other devices. The South Korean company didn't disclose how much it paid for Viv, which is Latin for "life."

The name is meant to underscore Viv's mission to "breathe life into inanimate objects," according to Dag Kittlaus, the CEO and co-founder of the San Jose, California, startup.

Kittlaus started Viv in 2012, shortly after leaving his job as director of iPhone apps. He joined Apple after the iPhone maker bought Siri in 2010. Apple began including Siri in iPhones five years ago, spurring other companies to develop their own assistants.

"We see a future that is decidedly beyond apps, where you can get what you need quickly and easily no matter where you are, or what device you are near," Kittlaus said.

Besides Kittlaus, fellow Viv co-founder Chris Brigham also formerly worked on Siri.

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