

# Top executive departures indicate a hard start to Apple Car project

Article

There's been a revolving door of executives at Apple tied to the company's autonomous car project. Apple is constantly trying to define its next big product, and autonomous vehicle tech has been in the skunkworks in Cupertino [since 2014](#). Apple has hundreds of engineers working on self-driving tech as well as a group working on an actual vehicle, [per](#) Bloomberg.

**High-profile departures and hundreds of employee layoffs point to strife within the AV division.** Departures from the top of the car group [include](#) Dave Scott who was the lead on robotics, Jaime Waydo who led autonomous car safety and regulation, and [Benjamin Lyon](#), the proponent of the Apple Car project who left in February. Apple also laid off [200 employees](#) connected to the AV division in 2019. Conversely, Apple has been [actively recruiting](#) automotive executives, namely from EV market leader [Tesla](#).

**Apple has been [testing self-driving vehicles](#) on public roads in California since 2017 using SUVs outfitted with sensors and cameras.** Apple also ramped up its [Apple Maps](#) image collection around the US for accurate and updated mapping it can use for autonomous driving applications. “We're focusing on autonomous systems. It's a core technology that we view as very important,” [said](#) CEO Tim Cook in 2017. “We sort of see it as the mother of all AI projects. It's probably one of the most difficult AI projects to actually work on.”

**Despite assembling a team of ex-Tesla executives with several hundred engineers on the project, an Apple Car is at least 5–7 years away.** Apple faces challenges including finding manufacturing partners, investing in battery technology, creating a service and charging infrastructure. They also need to safely integrate their software, hardware, and services into a vehicle platform. Granted, these are challenges faced by all new entrants, but Apple will likely aim for the premium end of the market, which will invite scrutiny from regulators and the [car industry](#) at large. “Anyone can make a car if they have the technical ability,” said Akio Toyoda, Chairman of the Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association and Toyota President. “But, once they make a car, I hope they'll recognize they have to steel themselves for 40 years of responding to customers and to various changes.”

## Forecast Sales of Vehicles by Autonomous-Driving (AD) Features, 2020, 2025 & 2030

% of total vehicle sales

2020	
Level 2 entry	23%
Level 2 advanced entry	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>24%</b>
2025	
Level 2 entry	47%
Level 2 advanced entry	12%
Level 3 highway pilot	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>63%</b>
2030	
Level 2 entry	39%
Level 2 advanced entry	17%
Level 3 highway pilot	5%
Level 4 highway pilot	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>64%</b>

Source: McKinsey, "Private Autonomous Vehicles: The Other Side of the Robo-Taxi Story," Dec 1, 2020

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