

Tech Startups Play Critical Role in Development of Self-Driving Cars, According to Foley Survey

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Automakers and suppliers have been joined by a growing list of early-stage and established technology companies from outside the traditional automotive supply base in the race to build a truly connected car, and ultimately the first completely autonomous vehicle.

That was among the key themes that emerged in Foley's [2017 Connected Cars & Autonomous Vehicles Survey](#), where we queried a range of executives at leading automakers, suppliers, startups, investment firms and technology companies.

In many cases, startups are leading the charge with groundbreaking innovation and advancements in connected and autonomous capabilities, including Advanced Driver Assistance Systems and vehicle-to-vehicle communication technology, among other areas ripe for investment and development. These emerging players are increasingly understood and viewed by traditional automakers and suppliers as direct competitors, but also as potential collaborators, signaling a growing acceptance of these new entrants in the automotive space.

When asked about their primary strategy for developing technology for connected cars and/or autonomous vehicles, roughly half of automotive industry respondents indicated a focus on strategic or commercial partnerships with, and/or licensing technology from, startups and technology companies. Similarly, a comparable number of startup respondents said they were positioning their businesses for such arrangements or alliances, where they can retain a narrower focus and serve traditional automakers and suppliers in need of more nuanced technologies with specific applications (e.g., battery charging, visual recognition and imaging, exterior radar, fuel-efficient shifting, etc.)

"The next 15 years will be very interesting with a mixed field of technologies and approaches offering plenty of opportunities for new players to explore disruptive approaches," said one startup respondent.

We agree wholeheartedly, as the survey results affirm the important role of new technologies and how best to integrate them into traditional automotive supply chains.

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