Apple hires former Canoo CEO as it ramps up electric car project

Ulrich Kranz, a former BMW executive and the recently departed CEO and co-founder of EV startup Canoo, has been hired by Apple, the company has confirmed to *The Verge*. Kranz will reportedly work on the Silicon Valley behemoth's electric car under Doug Field, the former Tesla executive who runs the day-to-day operations of the project, which is codenamed "Project Titan." News of Kranz joining Apple was first reported by *Bloomberg*.

Kranz was one of the executives who helped launch BMW's all-electric i3 hatchback and hybrid i8 sports car. Shortly after he left the German automaker at the end of 2016, he and fellow BMW executive Stefan Krause were tapped to help turn around struggling EV startup Faraday Future. The pair clashed with Faraday Future's founder, though, and in late 2017, they left and formed what eventually became Canoo.

Kranz, Krause, and a handful of other expats from BMW and other legacy automakers came up with an all-electric van that they planned to sell on a subscription basis only, which they revealed in 2019. The van was designed around a compact, modular platform that included the battery pack, the electric motors, and basically all of the vehicle's electronics, which Canoo hoped to sell or license to other manufacturers.

Kranz was running Canoo when it held talks with Apple in 2020
Canoo's EV platform pitch was attractive enough that Apple held talks with the startup in early 2020, as *The Verge* exclusively reported earlier this year. Talks between the two

companies eventually broke down, though, as Canoo preferred to take an investment, while Apple was interested in an acquisition. Canoo also had an agreement with Hyundai to build vehicles based on the platform, but the startup has since walked away from that deal.

Kranz now finds himself near the top of a very large team inside Apple that is working on an electric, autonomous vehicle. Apple started the project in 2014, but it has gone through multiple revisions, with the company at one point focusing solely on developing autonomous technology. But over the last year, Apple has shifted back to trying to develop a vehicle and has reportedly held talks with multiple automakers as well as battery companies like China's CATL.

Kranz was just one of a number of top executives who left Canoo over the last year. Krause, who was Canoo's first CEO, departed last year. Canoo's chief financial officer and its chief lawyer also left this year following the startup's merger with a special purpose acquisition company, or SPAC. Five of the original nine co-founders remain with the company, while those who've left have been replaced by people close to the company's new CEO, Tony Aquila, who took over after Canoo went public as a result of the SPAC merger.

Aquila has since pivoted Canoo away from the subscription model idea and is instead focused on creating commercial electric vehicles for small businesses. Aquila detailed the changes he was making to the company on Canoo's first call with investors as a public company in March. Krause was not on that call, despite still being CEO at the time. As *The Verge* first reported late last year, Kranz's contract with Canoo was renegotiated as part of the SPAC merger.

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