Inside Meta’s attempts to play catch-up with AI

Several people said Wang had also advocated placing greater emphasis on proprietary models over Meta’s longstanding open source approach.

Wang has tried to build support for his vision by cultivating a non-hierarchical start-up culture inside TBD. On a recent podcast, he argued that “the very small team where everyone is ‘cracked’ is always going to move faster than the large org where responsibility is distributed,” using gamer slang to describe highly talented engineers.

He also hosts regular boba tea-fuelled happy hours to foster camaraderie inside the secretive group, according to insiders.

Meta’s broader workforce has experienced a less convivial period. Wang’s first year has coincided with restructurings and rounds of layoffs across the company, seeking to offset the cost of its AI spending spree.

Some employees have also protested company plans to install tracking software that would capture their computer usage in order to train AI models. Meta on Tuesday told staff in a memo, seen by the FT, that it would roll back parts of the plan following the backlash.

Muse Spark has also been deployed primarily inside Meta’s own products, making it difficult for outsiders to assess. Wang had indicated that some external companies would receive access through a private API, but that rollout has been limited.

The model was trained using some third-party open-source

models, including Chinese ones. Some insiders have compared aspects of the system with DeepSeek’s latest model, although the extent of any similarities remains disputed.

Muse Spark has been praised for visual understanding, but Wang has acknowledged it trails rivals in coding. Several employees said staff asked to test the model for software development tasks continued to prefer Anthropic’s Claude.

Future Meta models are expected to focus on coding, completing agentic tasks, and more advanced multimodal capabilities, including video generation.

“It was a rough start for him to find his power at the company,” said one associate. “But he’s found his groove.”

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