Microsoft hires former OpenAI CEO Sam Altman

Microsoft is hiring former OpenAI CEO Sam Altman and co-founder Greg Brockman.

Altman was fired from OpenAI on Friday, after the board said it "no longer has confidence in his ability to continue leading OpenAI." After a weekend of negotiations to potentially bring Altman back to OpenAI, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella announced that both Sam Altman and Greg Brockman will be joining to lead Microsoft's new advanced AI research team.

"We're extremely excited to share the news that Sam Altman and Greg Brockman, together with colleagues, will be joining Microsoft to lead a new advanced AI research team," says Nadella. "We look forward to moving quickly to provide them with the resources needed for their success."

In a post on X (formerly Twitter), Altman acknowledged he was joining Microsoft by reposting Nadella with the message "the mission continues." Nadella responded by providing some hints at how he sees Altman's role at Microsoft. "We've learned a lot over the years about how to give founders and innovators space to build independent identities and cultures within Microsoft, including GitHub, Mojang Studios, and LinkedIn, and I'm looking forward to having you do the same."

Brockman has also revealed that the new advanced AI research team at Microsoft will also include some key OpenAI talent. Jakub Pachocki, director of research at OpenAI, will join an unnamed leadership position in Microsoft's advanced AI research team. OpenAI research scientist Szymon Sidor and head of preparedness Aleksander Madry are also joining Microsoft in

leadership positions, according to Brockman. OpenAI employees are also posting “OpenAI is nothing without its people” to X, in a sign of more resignations to come.

Altman’s hiring comes just hours after negotiations with OpenAI’s board failed to bring him back as OpenAI CEO. Instead, former Twitch CEO and co-founder Emmett Shear has been named as interim CEO. He will take over from Mira Murati, who was named interim OpenAI CEO following Altman’s shock firing on Friday.

Altman had been negotiating to return as OpenAI CEO, but OpenAI’s four-person board refused to step down and let him return, according to multiple sources speaking to *The Verge*. He had reportedly been pitching a separate startup to build custom, Nvidia-rivaling AI Tensor Processing Unit (TPU) chips to investors recently, according to *The New York Times*. The TPU project was codenamed “Tigris,” attracting a number of prominent venture firms and even interest from Microsoft.

Microsoft has now formed a new advanced AI research team to be lead by Altman and Brockman. It comes just a week after Microsoft announced it has built its own custom AI chip that can be used to train large language models and potentially avoid a costly reliance on Nvidia. Microsoft has also built its own Arm-based CPU for cloud workloads. Both custom silicon chips are designed to power its Azure data centers.

a:hover]:text-gray-63 [&>a:hover]:shadow-underline-black dark:[&>a:hover]:text-gray-bd dark:[&>a:hover]:shadow-underline-gray [&>a]:shadow-underline-gray-63 dark:[&>a]:text-gray-bd dark:[&>a]:shadow-underline-gray”>Image: Microsoft
Altman and OpenAI had been working with Microsoft to refine and test the Maia AI chip. Microsoft was quick to downplay its the chip’s impact on its close Nvidia partnership, but the Maia GPU is part of a series and the company is already working on a second generation.

Microsoft still has a “multibillion dollar investment” in OpenAI, rumored to be worth around $10 billion. Microsoft is the exclusive cloud partner for OpenAI, and Microsoft’s cloud services power all OpenAI workloads across products, API services, and research.

“We remain committed to our partnership with OpenAI and have confidence in our product roadmap, our ability to continue to innovate with everything we announced at Microsoft Ignite, and in continuing to support our customers and partners,” Nadella said in his statement. “We look forward to getting to know Emmett Shear and OAI’s new leadership team and working with them.”

***Update, November 20th 3:28AM ET**: Article updated with additional details from Satya Nadella on Altman’s hiring.*

***Update, November 20th 4:33AM ET**: Article updated with more details on Microsoft’s new AI team and confirmation of OpenAI’s new CEO, Twitch co-founder Emmett Shear.*

https://www.theverge.com/2023/11/20/23968829/microsoft-hires-sam-altman-greg-brockman-employees-openai