

**Level: B1****Starting up**

- Do you think self-driving cars are a good idea? Why or why not?

**Vocabulary 1 – working together in the car industry**

Match the terms that have a similar meaning.

- |                   |              |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 1 self-driving    | a electric   |
| 2 partnership     | b alliance   |
| 3 battery-powered | c concluded  |
| 4 ended           | d grows      |
| 5 matures         | e autonomous |

**Reading 1**

Which two statements are true, according to the article?

- Ford is going to work with Aurora on electric vehicles.
- Volkswagen is now going to work with Ford on autonomous vehicles.
- Aurora is going to work with Fiat-Chrysler on driving software.
- Fiat-Chrysler is going to work with Volkswagen on an autonomous car platform.

**Vocabulary 2 – vocabulary in context**

Match the bold words (1–11) in the article with the best meaning.

- a within our business
- b happen suddenly
- c preparing
- d test period
- e combine with
- f uncertain
- g group
- h leaders or early developers
- i not impressed by
- j angry
- k convinced someone to change jobs
- l fired
- m agree to marry

## Volkswagen breaks with Silicon Valley self-driving start-up Aurora

Volkswagen has ended its relationship with Aurora, the Silicon Valley self-driving start-up backed by Amazon, <sup>1</sup>**paving the way** for the world's largest carmaker to enter into partnership with Ford's autonomous unit Argo AI.

The move follows VW and Ford's launch of a new global alliance in January to develop some future vehicles together as they prepare for a new age of electric and self-driving cars.

VW said "the activities <sup>2</sup>**under our parameters** have been concluded in regard to Aurora" and that talks with Ford "are progressing very well".

One person said a deal between VW and Argo AI could be reached by the summer. VW has previously said it hopes Ford will build battery-powered vehicles on its electric car platform.

Aurora this week announced a deal with Fiat Chrysler to <sup>3</sup>**integrate** its driving software **into** the Italian-American carmaker's vehicles, one of the many partnerships to <sup>4</sup>**spring up** as technology plays an increasingly important role in the industry.

Three people familiar with the VW and Aurora partnership say that after a <sup>5</sup>**trial-run** lasting many months, VW declined to renew the contract. Some projects ended in February or March and a final project concluded this month.

Aurora said: "Volkswagen Group has been a wonderful partner to Aurora since the early days of development of the Aurora Driver. As our Driver matures and our platform grows in strength, we continue to work with a growing <sup>6</sup>**array** of partners who complement our expertise and expand the reach of our product."

Johann Jungwirth, the VW executive overseeing the Aurora partnership who previously worked for Apple, left the German carmaker this month.

Multiple people said Mr Jungwirth's position had been <sup>7</sup>**tenuous** since Matthias Mueller was <sup>8</sup>**ousted** as VW chief executive in April 2018 and replaced by Herbert Diess.

JJ, as he is known, oversaw "moon shot" projects such as Sedric, a concept autonomous van showcased at the world's leading motor shows.

He was Mr Mueller's choice to run autonomous projects, but he worked directly for the VW Group rather than one of its 12 brands.

Mr Diess was never fond of the structure and in January he <sup>9</sup>**poached** Alexander Hitzinger, a former Porsche executive then at Apple's "Titan" car project. Mr Hitzinger now runs VW's autonomy projects.

Aurora was founded less than three years ago by three self-driving <sup>10</sup>**pioneers** from Tesla, Uber and Waymo, Google's self-driving car project.

People familiar with the matter say a partnership between VW and Ford's Argo AI makes more sense, as it will help the carmakers reduce costs but maintain control over the development of both the hardware and software.

Geographically, the set-up would make sense, as Ford is a leader in the US, whereas VW is a leader in Europe and China.

One person said the break with Aurora was not <sup>11</sup>**contentious**, describing it in terms of how a person might date many people but then only <sup>12</sup>**become engaged to** one.

Another person, however, said VW was <sup>13</sup>**underwhelmed** by Aurora's technology.

Aurora's most recent funding round of \$530m in February, led by Sequoia Capital and involving Amazon, valued the company at more than \$2.5bn.



## Reading 2

Choose the best answer to each question.

- 1 Which company has Amazon invested in?
  - a) Volkswagen
  - b) Ford
  - c) Aurora
  
- 2 Which company owns Argos AI?
  - a) Volkswagen
  - b) Ford
  - c) Aurora
  
- 3 What does VW want Ford to do?
  - a) Use VW's electric car platform
  - b) Sell Argo AI to VW
  - c) Develop new battery systems
  
- 4 What Aurora technology will Fiat Chrysler use?
  - a) computers
  - b) batteries
  - c) computer programs
  
- 5 Who ended the relationship between VW and Aurora?
  - a) VW
  - b) Aurora
  - c) both companies
  
- 6 What does Aurora plan to do now?
  - a) find one new partner
  - b) try to be taken over
  - c) work with a variety of companies
  
- 7 Which of these people works for VW now?
  - a) Alexander Hitzinger
  - b) Johann Jungwirth
  - c) Matthias Mueller
  
- 8 What do people in the industry think about the VW-Ford alliance?
  - a) It's bad for competition.
  - b) It's a good idea.
  - c) It doesn't make sense.

### Grammar – linking words for time

Choose the correct words to complete the tips.

#### Tips for improving electric car battery life

- 1 *When / As soon as* parking, try to find a place with shade. Heat from the sun reduces battery life.
- 2 *After / During* trips in the car, use heating and cooling as little as possible.
- 3 *Until / While* driving, increase speed slowly. This uses less electricity than increasing speed quickly.
- 4 *Before / During* driving, check the tyres. If they don't have enough air, you will waste power.
- 5 *As soon as / While* you stop, turn off the lights. They use a lot of power.
- 6 If you have a nickel metal hydride battery, charge it *until / during* it is 100% charged.

### Further discussion

A “moon shot” project is one that is challenging and develops and uses the newest technology, like the original project to go to the moon. The example in the article is VW's Sedric autonomous van.

What “moon shot” projects do you know about? What problems in the world today need “moon shot” solutions?

### Group work

Work together to answer these questions.

- 1 What reasons does the article give for VW's break with Aurora? And what are the benefits of VW's possible partnership with Argo AI?
- 2 What problems do electric-powered, autonomous cars address? Do you think electric-powered, autonomous cars are good solutions? Do you think other solutions are also necessary to address these problems?

**ANSWER KEY****Starting up**

Example answers:

Yes, because they're safer and more fuel efficient.

No, because it's important for people to be in control of cars.

**Vocabulary 1**

- |     |     |
|-----|-----|
| 1 e | 6 c |
| 2 b | 7 d |
| 3 a |     |

**Reading 1**

Volkswagen is now going to work with Ford on autonomous vehicles.

Aurora is going to work with Fiat-Chrysler.

**Vocabulary 2**

- |     |      |
|-----|------|
| 1 c | 8 l  |
| 2 a | 9 k  |
| 3 e | 10 h |
| 4 b | 11 j |
| 5 d | 12 m |
| 6 g | 13 i |
| 7 f |      |

**Reading 2**

- |     |     |
|-----|-----|
| 1 c | 5 a |
| 2 b | 6 c |
| 3 a | 7 a |
| 4 c | 8 b |

**Grammar**

- |          |              |
|----------|--------------|
| 1 When   | 4 Before     |
| 2 During | 5 As soon as |
| 3 While  | 6 until      |

**Further discussion (possible answers)**

The world faces serious environmental problems. Any big solution to these might be considered a moon shot. Getting people to Mars is technically a 'Mars shot' project, but could be considered a moon shot.

**Group work (possible answers)**

- Volkswagen was underwhelmed with Aurora's technology. Working with Argo AI will help keep costs down while controlling development of hardware and software together. Ford is a leader in the US, while VW is a leader in Europe and China. This will give them good access to global markets.
- They address the problems of fossil fuel use and the pollution caused by car exhaust. They also address road safety, if we accept that a computer is a better driver than a car. They may do this very well, but they may also put computers in charge of making life and death decisions. If a computer is programmed to keep a driver safe, does that put other people on or near the roads in danger? In addition to re-designing cars, it may be important also to improve public transport, and to get people to drive less.

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