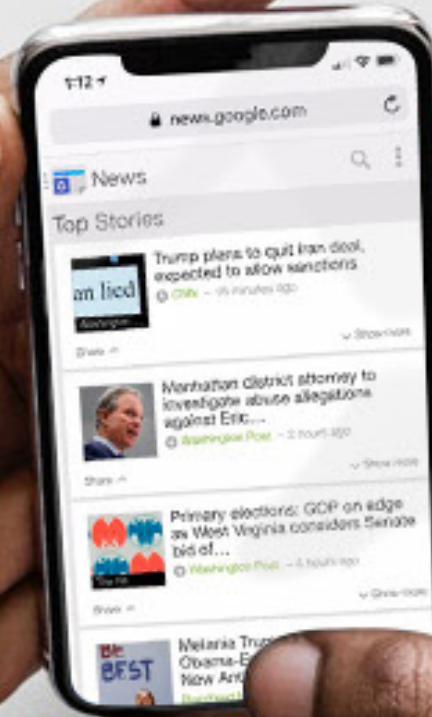




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USA OUTLOOK

Weekly newsletter | November 04 - 07



Foto: Microsoft Blog

How Autonomous Systems Use AI That Learns From the World around It

If a mine collapses or an earthquake strands people underground in a subway car, first responders can't rush into that unknown subterranean environment without potentially endangering themselves. A rescue team must ensure an area is structurally sound and air is breathable before pushing forward, which sometimes means help moves slower than anyone would like.

In a competition sponsored by DARPA, teams are designing autonomous robots that can explore and map these potentially dangerous underground landscapes and also identify objects of interest to first responders like survivors, backpacks, cell phones or fire extinguishers. "With a robot, you're able to take much more risk and potentially move much faster in a rescue", said Sebastian Scherer, Carnegie Mellon University associate research professor and co-leader of Team Explorer, which took first place in the initial leg of that Subterranean Challenge using Microsoft's AirSim technology to train its robots to recognize objects in a simulated mine.

The journey from automated to autonomous systems is a spectrum of solutions, and very few of the engagements we're seeing are in that fully autonomous with no humans in the loop zone. The vast majority are assistive technologies that work with people.



Foto: The Hustle

Subscription creep' and the terrible, true cost of free trials

There is no such thing as a 30-day free trial for anything. At least not when you look at the true costs. Whether you're signing up to access your favorite news source or check out a service, you can get a free trial, in exchange for your credit card or debit card number. It's a convenient swap if you end up liking and wanting to continue the service, but some businesses take extra steps to make it hard to cancel.

According to Bankrate's 2019 online shopping survey, 59% of US adults who signed up for a free trial were later charged, even if they didn't sign up to continue receiving the product or service. And half of the survey responders said it's unsafe to save financial information when making purchases, and yet 64% of American cardholders said yes when signing up for these things.

Some companies resort to such online alchemy as hiding terms and conditions or using pre-checked sign-up boxes as a default setting. Often, companies don't send emails alerting consumers that a free trial has started or is ending, and some make up rules that make it almost impossible to get a refund.



Foto: USATODAY.com

Microsoft Experimented with a Four-Day Work Week in Japan. Productivity Surged Nearly 40%

An experiment conducted by Microsoft employees in Japan may bolster support for the four-day work week. Over the summer, Microsoft Japan participated in challenge linked to balancing work and home life during which employees worked four days, getting Fridays off. The challenge also adjusted elements such as shorter meetings (no longer than 30 minutes) and fewer invitees to meetings, in an effort to maximize efficiency.

Results of the challenge released last week found productivity in August was up nearly 40% compared to the same time a year ago, while electricity consumption fell 23% compared to August 2016.

A growing number of businesses in the U.S. have adopted a four-day work week to boost productivity and gain edge in hiring. A survey conducted in April by the Society for Human Resource Management found 15% of organizations offer four-day work weeks, up from 13% in 2017.

Fuente

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2019/11/05/microsoft-japan-trial-4-day-work-week/4163096002/>



Foto: Morning Brew

Uber Stock Hits All-time Low as Lockup Period Ends

Uber's post-IPO share lockup period ended yesterday, exposing about 763 million tiny Ubers to the possibility of sale. Investors sent Uber stock to its lowest price ever. When early shareholders and executives are prevented from selling in the immediate aftermath of a company's IPO. Lockup expiration can cause selloffs, even if the listing was initially successful. Uber reported Q3 earnings on Monday. Revenue beat estimates, but booking and user growth disappointed. Shares sank about 5% after hours Monday and didn't stop for the next two days.

Uber investors aren't in agreement over the company's direction, particularly the role of the delivery service Uber Eats. Still, it remains a global leader in the industry.

Fuente

<https://www.morningbrew.com/daily/stories/2019/11/06/uber-stock-hits-alltime-low-lockup-period-ends>

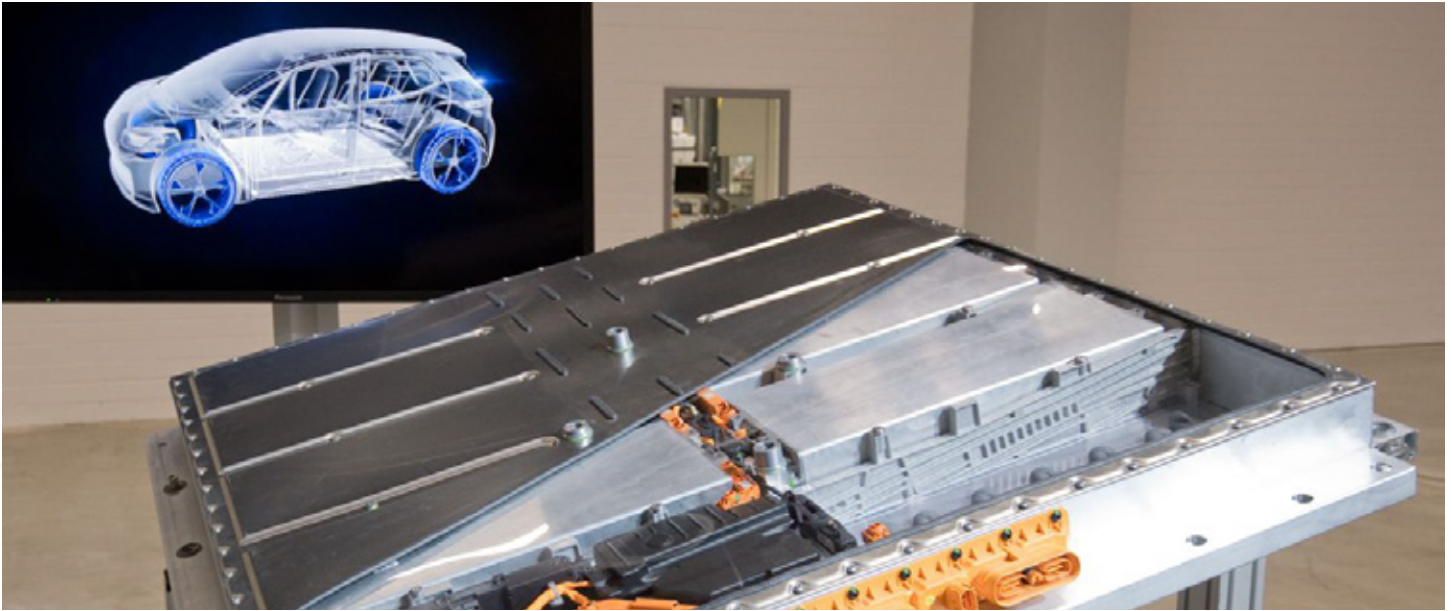


Foto: USA Today

The Electric Vehicle Industry Needs to Figure Out Its Battery Problem

Electrifying transportation is one of the biggest keys solving the looming climate crisis. With more electric vehicles on the road and fewer gas-guzzlers, drivers burn less fossil fuels and put out fewer planet-heating gases into the atmosphere. But as electric vehicles become more popular, they're posing another environmental challenge: what to do their batteries once they're off the road.

Those batteries are starting to pile up into a problem. More than 1 million electric vehicles were sold worldwide in 2017. The study authors estimate that those cars alone will ultimately result in 250,000 tons of discharged battery packs. If those were to end up in landfills, they'd run the risk of going through a process called "thermal runaway", which is basically a chemical reaction in the battery that can cause it to heat

up, potentially to the point of burning or exploding.

Exploding landfills aren't the only reason to avoid dumping old batteries. They can actually stay useful after being taken out of a vehicle. Much like your cellphone, over time, the battery in an electric car won't be able to hold a charge for as long. So drivers get a new battery or a new car. But the used battery can typically hold and discharge over up to 80 percent of the power it did when it was brand-new.

"The idea of 'design for recycle' is something that battery manufacturers should have in their heads," says Linda Gaines, a systems analyst at the Argonne National Laboratory, a research center operated by the University of Chicago and the US Department of Energy.