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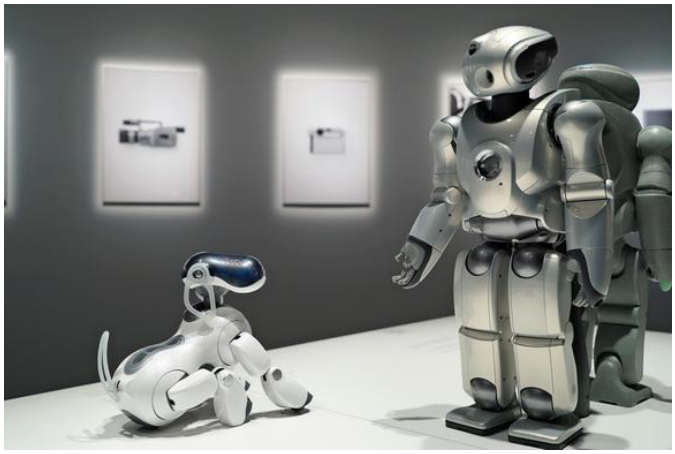
Sony plans to return to household robots, Nikkei reports-- specifically through what sounds like a sequel to Aibo, the much loved robot dog first launched back in 1999.



The Japanese giant abandoned robot development in 2005, but unnamed sources tell Nikkei the company is bringing together a number of former Aibo team members, such as AI expert Masahiro Fujita. Interestingly, while the robot will act like a dog it will also take the role of an Amazon Alexa or Google Home, allowing users to control smart home appliances through voice commands.

Behind the robot dog is a proprietary OS based on an open platform allowing developers to work additional features, as well as "advanced technologies" ensuring the robot can, well, act like a dog.

According to Nikkei the return to robots "represents a strategic shift for Sony." Last year CEO Kazuo Hirai suggested Sony may develop industrial robots, but that particular market is already dominated by big players. As a result, Sony changed tracks to household robots, a still-nascent market with some potential, at least in Japan.

Will Sony actually bring Aibo back? After all, Japan has been beaten at the forefront of technology by American giants, and even Sony admits it cannot compete with the likes of Google and Amazon in the sheer amount of processing horsepower required for AI. Still, it does have a good amount of engineering expertise, so maybe it will manage to combine the two fields into something appealing for consumers.

Go Sony Jumps Back into Robotics After 12-Year Hiatus