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Confirmed: Apple Buys Virtual Personal Assistant Startup Siri

by Leena Rao on Apr 28, 2010

On the heels of the report that Apple purchased [chip maker Intrinsity](#), Apple appears to have made another purchase: [Siri](#), a personal assistant for the iPhone. According to a [pre-merger notification](#) released by the Federal Trade Commission, and [first noticed](#) by Robert Scoble, the transaction will not be held up by any antitrust reviews. The deal was likely small from Apple's perspective. Siri is a small startup that has raised \$24 million in funding. *Update:* Siri board member Gary Morgenthaler confirmed the transaction.

Siri brings a conversational interface to the iPhone which allows you to ask it to perform tasks for you such as find a French restaurant nearby and book a table, look up movie listings, order a taxi, or look up the phone number and address of a local business. You can read our full review of the app [here](#).

As we've written in the past, Siri combines an impressive array of technologies and brings them together on the iPhone. These include natural language processing and semantic analysis. The underlying technology was developed at SRI with \$200 million worth of Darpa grants. Siri was spun off to commercialize it and bring it to consumers. It's last funding round was led by Hong Kong billionaire Li Ka-shing (a fact never disclosed before), who also is an investor in Facebook.

In a way, Siri is the "mother of all mashups." The iPhone app is a conversational interface with Siri's servers on the Web, which tied into nearly 30 different APIs at launch, with more on the way. These include OpenTable, TaxiMagic, MovieTikets.com, Rotten Tomatoes, WeatherBug, Yahoo Local, Yahoo Boss, StubHub, Bing, Eventful Freebase, Citysearch, AllMenus.com, Gayot, and Wolfram Alpha.

This acquisition can mean two things: Apple will add Siri as a standard app on future iPhones and iPads or it is interested in the underlying natural language processing and semantic search technology to incorporate into its apps more broadly. Its second option seems more likely.

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