

Microsoft hires Sam Altman, and OpenAI's new CEO vows to investigate his firing

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Sam Altman participates in a discussion during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) CEO Summit, Thursday, Nov. 16, 2023, in San Francisco. The board of ChatGPT-maker Open AI says it has pushed out Altman, its co-founder and CEO, and replaced him with an interim CEO Credit: AP Photo/Eric Risberg, File

Microsoft snapped up Sam Altman and another architect of OpenAI for a new venture after their sudden departures [shocked the artificial intelligence world](#), leaving the newly installed CEO of the ChatGPT maker to paper over tensions by vowing to investigate Altman's firing.

The developments Monday come after a weekend of drama and speculation about how the power dynamics would shake out at OpenAI, whose chatbot kicked off the generative AI era by producing human-like text, images, video and music.

It ended with former Twitch leader Emmett Shear taking over as OpenAI's interim chief executive and Microsoft announcing it was hiring Altman and OpenAI co-founder and former President Greg Brockman to lead Microsoft's new advanced AI research team.

Despite the rift between the key players behind ChatGPT and the company they helped build, both Shear and Microsoft Chairman and CEO Satya Nadella said they are committed to their partnership.

Microsoft has invested billions of dollars in the startup and helped provide the computing power to run its AI systems. [Nadella wrote on X](#), formerly known as Twitter, that he was "extremely excited" to bring on the former executives of OpenAI and looked "forward to getting to know" Shear and the rest of the management team.

In a reply on X, Altman said "the mission continues," while Brockman posted, "We are going to build something new & it will be incredible."

OpenAI said Friday that Altman was pushed out after a review found he was "not consistently candid in his communications" with the board of directors, which had lost confidence in his ability to lead the company.

[In an X post Monday](#), Shear said he would hire an independent

investigator to look into what led up to Altman's ouster and write a report within 30 days.

"It's clear that the process and communications around Sam's removal has been handled very badly, which has seriously damaged our trust," wrote Shear, who co-founded Twitch, an Amazon-owned livestreaming service popular with video gamers.

He said he also plans in the next month to "reform the management and leadership team in light of recent departures into an effective force" and speak with employees, investors and customers.



Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella speaks on Nov. 15, 2023, in San Francisco. Despite a rift between the key players behind ChatGPT and the company they helped build, both former Twitch leader Emmet Shear and Nadella said they are

committed to a partnership. Microsoft snapped up Sam Altman and another architect of ChatGPT maker OpenAI for a new venture after their sudden departures shocked the artificial intelligence world. It's also left OpenAI's new CEO to paper over tensions by vowing to investigate Altman's firing. The developments come Monday, Nov. 20, 2023 after a weekend of drama and speculation about how the power dynamics would shake out at OpenAI. Credit: AP Photo/Eric Risberg, file

After that, Shear said he would "drive changes in the organization," including "significant governance changes if necessary."

He noted that the reason behind the board removing Altman was not a "specific disagreement on safety." It was likely a reference to the debates that have swirled around OpenAI's mission to safely build AI that is "generally smarter than humans."

OpenAI last week declined to answer questions on what Altman's alleged lack of candor was about. Its statement said his behavior was hindering the board's ability to exercise its responsibilities.

A key driver of the shakeup, OpenAI's co-founder, chief scientist and board member Ilya Sutskever, expressed regrets for his participation in the ouster.

"I never intended to harm OpenAI. I love everything we've built together and I will do everything I can to reunite the company," he said Monday on X.

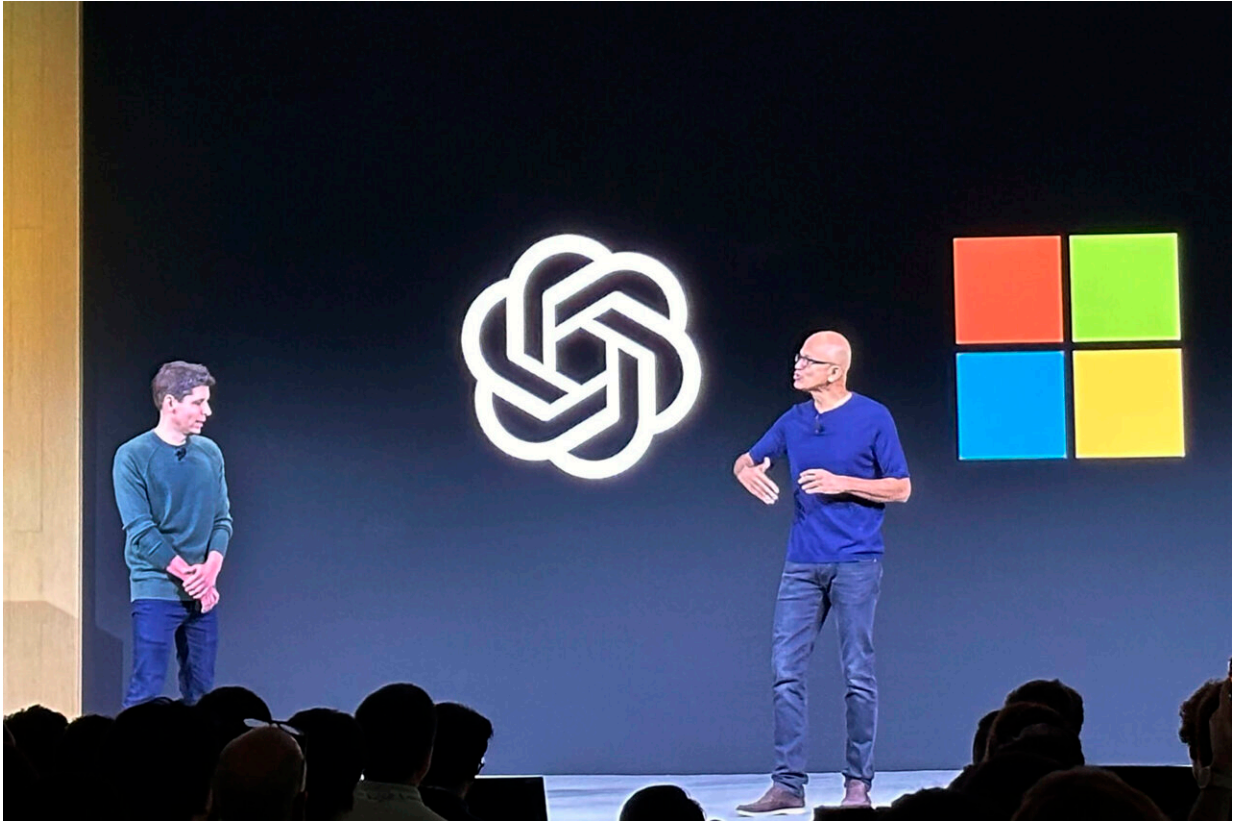
OpenAI didn't reply to emails Monday seeking comment. A Microsoft representative said the company would not be commenting beyond its CEO's statement.

After Altman was pushed out, he stirred speculation about coming back into the fold in a series of tweets. He posted a selfie with an OpenAI guest pass Sunday, saying this is "first and last time i ever wear one of these."

Hours earlier, he tweeted, "i love the openai team so much," which drew heart replies from Brockman, who quit after Altman was fired, and Mira Murati, OpenAI's chief technology officer who was initially named as interim CEO.

It's not clear what transpired between the announcement of Murati's interim role Friday and Shear's hiring, though she was among several employees Monday who tweeted, "OpenAI is nothing without its people." Altman replied to many with heart emojis.

One of OpenAI's safety-focused researchers, Jan Leike, called on the OpenAI board to resign, saying he had been working all weekend with the company's leadership team "to help with this crisis."



Sam Altman, left, appears onstage with Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella at OpenAI's first developer conference, on Nov. 6, 2023, in San Francisco. Microsoft snapped up Altman for a new venture after his sudden departure from OpenAI shocked the artificial intelligence world. Credit: AP Photo/Barbara Ortutay, File

The board consists of Sutskever, Quora CEO Adam D'Angelo, tech entrepreneur Tasha McCauley and Helen Toner of the Georgetown Center for Security and Emerging Technology.

Shear said he "took this job because I believe that OpenAI is one of the most important companies currently in existence."

On a podcast in June, Shear said he's generally optimistic about

technology but has serious concerns about the path of artificial intelligence toward building something "a lot smarter than us" that sets itself on a goal that endangers humans.

"If there is a world where we survive ... where we build an AI that's smarter than humans and survive it, it's going to be because we built smaller AIs than that, and we actually had as many smart people as we can working on that, and taking the problem seriously," Shear said in June.

It's an issue that Altman consistently faced since he helped catapult ChatGPT to global fame. In the past year, he has become Silicon Valley's most sought-after voice on the promise and potential dangers of artificial intelligence.

He went on a world tour to meet with government officials earlier this year, drawing big crowds at public events as he discussed the risks of AI and attempts to [regulate the emerging technology](#).

"If Microsoft lost Altman he could have gone to Amazon, Google, Apple, or a host of other tech companies craving to get the face of AI globally in their doors," Daniel Ives, an analyst with Wedbush Securities, said in a research note.

Microsoft is now in an even stronger position on AI, Ives said. Its shares rose nearly 2% before the opening bell and were nearing an all-time high Monday.

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