

Sony unleashes the cuteness with new robot dog

by Sherisse Pham, November 1, 2017

Sony is banking on the "irresistible cuteness" of its new robot dog to win over customers.

Aibo, the artificial-intelligence-powered hound, wags its tail, chases pink balls and can learn new tricks like giving its owner a high five.

Aibo is a rebooted version of a device Sony (SNE) first launched in the 1990s and the Japanese company has made it appealingly un-robotic. Unlike past versions, it has "eyes"(two small screens capable of showing diverse and nuanced expressions), a rounded appearance and a mouth that tilts up in a smile.

Sony CEO Kazuo Hirai unveiled the new robotic pup in Tokyo on Wednesday. It will go on sale in Japan in January, priced at ¥198,000 (\$1,740) before tax.

For now, the robotic pet is being billed as an affectionate companion - one that hears and understands words of praise and eventually learns and remembers which actions make owners happy. With the owner's permission, Aibo can constantly upload and update data stored in the cloud, changing its personality over time.

Owners can also ask Aibo to take pictures. Wandering into creepy territory, the robotic pet can record everything it experiences and create a database of memories owners can browse through on the app.

The electronics maker bred the first generation of Aibo - short for Artificial Intelligence robot - back in 1999. It hoped the pup would captivate customers and make them excited to interact with artificial intelligence.

At first, it was incredibly popular. All 3,000 available units sold out in 20 minutes online. Over the next few years, Sony launched two more Aibo generations, but interest waned as more affordable robots entered the market.

Now, with global tech giants and other big companies charging into artificial intelligence, Sony is getting back in the game.

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