



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on August 30, 2017

Ford, Domino's Team Up to Deliver Pizza Next Week in Driverless Cars

This coming Monday night someone in Ann Arbor, Michigan — more than likely a student at the University of Michigan — will order a pizza from Domino's, and [the conversation is going to be a little different](#). After confirming the order, the order taker will then ask: "Is it all right if we deliver it driverless?" If the answer is yes, then instructions will be provided about what to do when the Ford Fusion, driverless but containing the pizza, arrives in front. There will be instructions on the side of the car pointing to the back hatch which will open automatically. Inside is the "heatwave" container — large enough for five pizzas and three sides — with a keypad. When the last four digits of the customer's phone number are punched in, the container opens. That's it. No fuss, no mess, no tip. Enjoy your pizza and have a nice night.

It will be the first in a series of test runs announced by Ford on Tuesday. Sherif Marakby, who just left Uber in April, has a title that explains everything: He's the vice president of Autonomous and Electric Vehicles. He stated:

As we increase our understanding of the business opportunity for self-driving vehicles to support the movement of people and goods, we're pleased to have Domino's join us in this important part of the development process.

Notice, please, the change in Ford's business model. It is no longer in the car manufacturing business. It is in the business of "supporting the movement of people and goods." And Domino's is fully on board with the concept, as told by Patrick Doyle, the company's president and CEO: "As delivery experts, we've been watching the development of self-driving vehicles with great interest as we believe transportation is undergoing fundamental, dramatic change."

That could be one of the understatements of the year. Once people open their minds to the possibilities — linking delivery with products, instead of baking pizzas and selling cars — the future rolls out ahead. Think of self-driving vehicles (also called AVs, for autonomous vehicles) delivering anything one can think of to the place where it is needed: building materials to a construction site, soldiers to a battle front, furniture from the maker to the local American Furniture Warehouse.

In Ann Arbor on Monday night the driverless car will have two passengers: an engineer from Ford to make sure everything works right, and a customer service analyst from Domino's to make sure the customer has a good experience. As Dennis Maloney, Domino's chief digital engineer, explained:



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It's going to be a real learning experience [for us]. No one really knows that's going to happen when the customers walk out to the car. They're faced with a car. There's no human interaction. What happens if they approach the car from the wrong direction? Will people mind coming out of their house? We want to understand all of that.

The question eternally raised is, how many drivers will Domino's fire as AVs start doing deliveries? None, according to Kelly Garcia, Domino's senior VP for e-commerce development:

We could use autonomous cars to fill in where we have a shortage of drivers, or add capacity during surges in business. We will have drivers for a long time.

At present Domino's, which delivers over a billion pizzas a year worldwide, already has 100,000 drivers and is looking to hire 10,000 more. Domino's is so aggressive that it's leaving its competitors behind, according to Zacks.com, the stock recommendation site:

This digital leadership is helping the company expand its brand in the domestic market as well as overseas. This is one of the reasons why Domino's shares have outperformed the industry over the past year.

Zacks rates Domino's stock a "buy." And someone in a student dorm at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor is going to have a new experience on Monday night. In fact, since Domino's is also experimenting with drone delivery, that conversation following the order for a pizza might go like this: "Do you mind if we deliver it driverless, or by drone?"

Image: Screenshot of [YouTube video by Wochit Tech](#)

An Ivy League graduate and former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at [LightFromTheRight.com](#), primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at badelmann@thenewamerican.com.



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