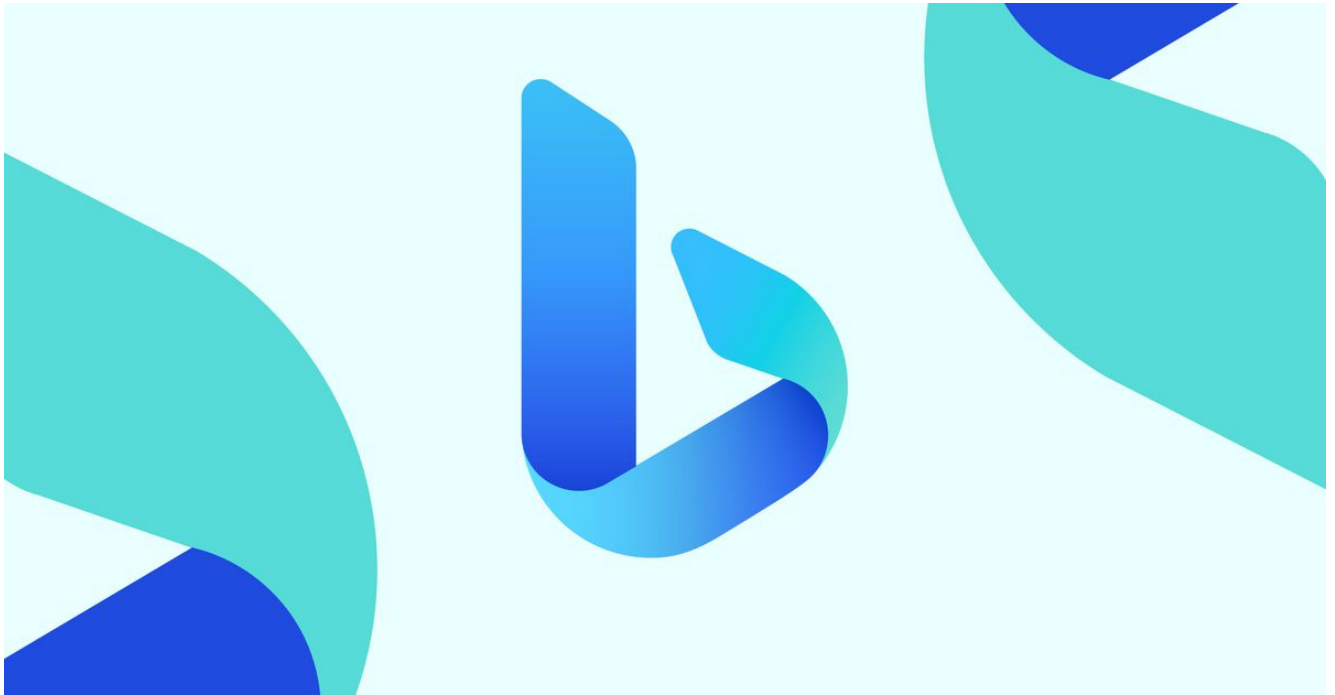


Details of Apple's talks to replace Google with Bing and even DuckDuckGo revealed in unsealed court testimony



While Google's search engine has for years been the default on Apple's devices, newly unsealed court testimonies reveal that Apple held talks with both Microsoft and DuckDuckGo to use their search engines across Apple devices, and in Microsoft's case even potentially buying Bing, *The Washington Post* and *Bloomberg* report. The potential of a Microsoft deal also served as a useful bargaining chip for Apple when negotiating its lucrative search deal with Google.

News that Apple considered purchasing Bing emerged in a report from *Bloomberg* last week, but the newly unsealed testimony of Apple senior vice president John Giannandrea sheds more light on the discussions. Apple met with Microsoft in 2018, and later in 2020 to discuss a potential Bing acquisition or joint venture, *Bloomberg* reports. The company even studied the quality of Bing's search results compared with Google, but

found Bing generally performed worse except for desktop searches in English.

Apple has used Bing as the default search service for some of its products in the past (between 2013 and 2017, Microsoft's search engine provided answers for searches made through Siri and Spotlight), but it ultimately decided to stick with Google in a deal estimated to be worth around \$19 billion to Apple annually.

Although Apple appeared to be considering a deal with Microsoft, one internal Apple email surfaced as part of the trial suggests the company was – at least partially – using Bing as a negotiating tactic to extract more money from Google. “We build them [Microsoft] up, create incremental negotiating leverage to keep the take rate from Google, and further our optionality to replace Google down the line,” Apple vice president Adrian Perica wrote, *The Washington Post* reports. For its part, Microsoft was aware that it was being used for leverage. “It is no secret that Apple is making more money on Bing existing than Bing does,” Microsoft's chief of advertising and web services Mikhail Parakhin testified as part of the court hearing.

Apple also had around 20 meetings and phone calls with DuckDuckGo to discuss making the search engine the default for Safari's private browsing mode, according to newly unsealed testimony from DuckDuckGo CEO Gabriel Weinberg. DuckDuckGo markets itself as a more privacy focussed alternative to the major search engines. Although Weinberg says he “thought [Apple] would launch it,” Apple's Giannandrea says he wasn't aware that the company had considered a switch, and even called DuckDuckGo's privacy claims into question, *Bloomberg* notes.

According to Giannandrea, DuckDuckGo's reliance on Bing for search information risks sharing user information with Microsoft. “I would probably insist on doing a lot more due

diligence with DuckDuckGo” if Apple were to seriously consider switching, Giannandrea said.

<https://www.theverge.com/2023/10/5/23904392/apple-default-search-engine-bing-acquisition-duckduckgo-safari-private-browsing>