

Google Avoids Breakup As Judge Bars Exclusive Default Search Deals via @sejournal, @MattGSouthern

A federal judge outlined remedies in the U.S. search antitrust case that bar Google from using exclusive default search deals but stop short of forcing a breakup.

Reuters reports that Google won't have to divest Chrome or Android, but it may have to share some search data with competitors under court-approved terms.

Google says it will appeal.

What The Judge Ordered

Judge Amit P. Mehta barred Google from entering or maintaining exclusive agreements that tie the distribution of Search, Chrome, Google Assistant, or the Gemini app to other apps, licenses, or revenue-share arrangements.

The ruling allows Google to continue paying for placement but prohibits exclusivity that could block rivals.

The order also envisions Google making certain search and search-ad syndication services available to competitors at standard rates, alongside limited data sharing for "qualified competitors."

Mehta ordered Google to share **some** search data with competitors under specific protections to help them improve

their relevance and revenue. Google argued this could expose its trade secrets and plans to appeal the decision.

The judge directed the parties to meet and submit a revised final judgment by **September 10**. Once entered, the remedies would take effect **60 days later**, run for **six years**, and be overseen by a technical committee. Final language could change based on the parties' filing.

How We Got Here

In August 2024, Mehta found Google illegally maintained a monopoly in general search and related text ads.

Judge Amit P. Mehta wrote in his August 2024 opinion:

"Google is a monopolist, and it has acted as one to maintain its monopoly."

This decision established the need for remedies. Today's order focuses on distribution and data access, rather than breaking up the company.

What's Going To Change

Ending exclusivity changes how contracts for default placements can be made across devices and browsers. Phone makers and carriers may need to update their agreements to follow the new rules.

However, the ruling doesn't require any specific user experience change, like a choice screen. The results will depend on how new contracts are created and approved by the court.

Next Steps

Expect a gradual rollout if the final judgment follows today's outline.

Here are the next steps to watch for:

- The **revised judgment** that the parties will submit by **September 10**.
- Changes to contracts between Google and distribution partners to meet the non-exclusivity requirement.
- Any **pilot programs** or rules that specify who qualifies as a "qualified competitor" and what data they can access.

Separately, Google faces a remedies trial in the ad-tech case in late September. This trial could lead to changes that affect advertising and measurement.

Looking Ahead

If the parties submit a revised judgment by September 10, changes could start about 60 days after the court's final order. This might shift if Google gets temporary relief during an appeal.

In the short term, expect contract changes rather than product updates.

The final judgment will determine who can access data and which types are included. If the program is limited, it may not significantly affect competition. If broader, competitors might enhance their relevance and profit over the six-year period.

Also watch the ad tech remedies trial this month. Its results, along with the search remedies, will shape how Google handles search and ads in the coming years.

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