Google’s search antitrust trial is wrapping up—here’s what we learned



The great Google spinoff

While Google certainly doesn’t want to lose Chrome, there may be a more fundamental threat to its business in the DOJ’s remedies. The DOJ argued that Google’s illegal monopoly has given it an insurmountable technology lead, but a collection of data remedies could address that. Under the DOJ proposal, Google would have to license some of its core search technology, including the search index and ranking algorithm.

Google CEO Sundar Pichai gave testimony at the trial and cited these data remedies as no better than a spinoff of Google search. Google’s previous statements have referred to this derisively as “white labeling” Google search. Pichai claimed these remedies could force Google to reevaluate the amount it

spends on research going forward, slowing progress in search for it and all the theoretical licensees.

Currently, there is no official API for syndicating Google's search results. There are scrapers that aim to offer that service, but that's a gray area, to say the least. Google has even rejected lucrative deals to share its index. Turley noted in his testimony that OpenAI approached Google to license the index for ChatGPT, but Google decided the deal could harm its search dominance, which was more important than a short-term payday.

AI advances

Initially, the DOJ wanted to force Google to stop investing in AI firms, fearing its influence could reduce competition as it gained control or acquired these startups. The government has backed away from this remedy, but AI is still core to the search trial. That seemed to surprise Judge Mehta.

During Pichai's testimony, Mehta remarked that the status of AI had shifted considerably since the liability phase of the trial in 2023. "The consistent testimony from the witnesses was that the integration of AI and search or the impact of AI on search was years away," Mehta said. Things are very different now, Mehta noted, with multiple competitors to Google in AI search. This may actually help Google's case.

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