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DOJ wants to force Chrome sale to dissolve Google’s monopoly

Article

The news: The **Department of Justice** (DOJ) plans to propose today that a federal judge force **Google** to sell its **Chrome** web browser, which could go for as much as $20 billion, per Bloomberg.

- The DOJ will recommend that Google be required to give web publishers more options to leave their content out of Google's AI offerings.
- **Google could also be pushed to license out Google Search's results and data.**

In August, federal judge **Amit Mehta** ruled that Google illegally monopolizes the search market. The DOJ's recommendations could factor into an April hearing to decide how Google must change its operations and behavior.

Google's argument: **Lee-Anne Mulholland,** Google's VP of regulatory affairs, said the DOJ is pushing a "radical agenda," likely in reference to heightened scrutiny of Big Tech companies. She added that a Chrome sale would hurt consumers, developers, and US tech leadership.

Google previously stated that another owner might not have the ability or incentive to maintain its open-source operating system and might even choose to turn the web browser into a paid service.

Ads concerns: **A forced sale of Chrome would significantly alter Google's ad business**, as the web browser collects user data that feeds directly into Google's advertising ecosystem.

- Without Chrome, Google would have less first-party data to rely on to bolster its ad business. However, data from other Google-owned platforms like **YouTube** could help plug the gap.
- Google could be forced to stop requiring web publishers to let their content be used in its **AI Overviews** summaries or be left out of search results. The company is banking on AI Overviews providing it with new, high-value ad space—but if search traffic declines or is ceded to a competitor, the new product's value could be hamstrung.

Who could buy it? Anyone who has deep enough pockets to purchase Chrome is likely already facing antitrust scrutiny—**Meta**, **Microsoft**, **Apple**, and **Amazon** are all in hot water with regulators.

Selling to an AI company from the US could be a more acceptable option for regulators than a megadeal with another Big Tech player.

Analyst take: "(An AI purchase) could conceivably be approved by the government as a way to prioritize AI innovation and US posturing around AI on the global stage," EMARKETER senior analyst **Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf** said.

Our take: If Chrome is sold and its new leadership decides to change the default search engine, Google Search could lose a significant portion of global web traffic—Chrome currently owns 66.7% of the browser market, per StatCounter.

Considering its strong branding and familiar name, Google Search could still be internet users' default search engine, even if it's not housed in Chrome.

Advertisers could also remain loyal to Google. Despite growing complaints about quality, aversion to change could cause them to continue using **AdX** and advertising on Google platforms due to its significant market share and years as one of the dominant auctions for ad space on the web.