

On October 20th the Justice Department and 11 states joined in filing an antitrust lawsuit charging Google with using its monopoly powers to illegally block its competitors. The charges target Google's powerful Search unit and proposes a remedy of "structural relief as needed to cure any anticompetitive harm." That's a big league threat to break up Google potentially deconstructing its dominance.

This Advisory offers no insight into the ultimate outcome, likely decades away, but does offer a number of reasonable inferences about the impact to the eCommerce industry and both paid and organic search programs in the near term.

## Overview

The charges allege that Google entered exclusive agreements that had the effect of blocking potential search competitors. The impact to the eCommerce industry is more likely to come from the threatened remedy rather than how Google's share of search plays out.

Google's has an expansive journey not just in terms of its size, but in the breadth of its properties from browsers, to email to self-driving cars. The Government has fired a first shot that effectively asserts that Google has grown too big and holds too much power for the benefit of all. It's reasonable to conclude that the charges alone will cause some change in behavior within Google's Search organization.

Google is likely to trim its expansion strategies and focus on strengthening the independence of each business unit. Add to this threat the growth in global privacy concerns has challenged how the company profits from its access to so much of the customer's information. The expectation is the organization begins slow evolution toward more siloed solutions in a slightly less integrated world.

Let's take a Google Search example to demonstrate.

## Conclusions

eZdia expects Google Search to increasingly invest in strategies that improve its core search algorithms' ability to automatically grade content quality. At the same time Google is likely to dampen the focus on cross-platform non-Search user data and likely focuses its innovation within its core user search behaviors. Essentially rely less on human input to evaluate search results.

Look for Google to increasingly invest in strategies for identifying the quality and completeness of the content as it optimizes for content that humans want to consume.

Google wants to sell ads. Retailers want it to be profitable. Google helps retailers measure online sales and reports the return on ad spend (ROAS) to help them spend more. Historically, however, this wouldn't count in-store sales, but Google solved that through Google Maps integrations that have permission to track geolocations. A customer now searches and then drives to the store. The advertiser can count that as a sale and potentially spend more on advertising. While the retailers love the data, and it probably drives more success for everyone, it's an example of how Google can profit through integration.

## Recommendations

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**Paid Search** is not likely to get any less expensive in the near term. The pandemic is driving digital budgets up creating a situation where demand will outpace supply. That means a higher cost-per-click in the months ahead thus the focus has to shift toward improving the average order size and conversion rate strategies.

**Technical SEO** is the process of showing Google that your site care's about Google. It expects you to deliver your content fast, logically and consistently. Nothing changes here. This is a ticket to play with Google.

**Organic Search** as a strategy becomes more important. As Google reacts to its legal challenges the technology pendulum likely swings "back to the basics" emphasizing the content quality, originality and depth of relevant content for any given search. Treat content as a marketing asset that can generate a return on content spend.

While no one can predict the ultimate outcome of this legal challenge, it seems likely that Google Search will enter an era of "back to basics" that's less expansive and less integrated and more focused on quality of the search experience.

## About the Author

Greg Harris has been building eCommerce and digital strategies for over 30 years. He began as a direct marketer and carried those techniques forward having built half a dozen eCommerce sites and consulted to hundreds more.

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## About eZdia

eZdia helps eCommerce companies optimize their search optimization strategies by creating content that drives traffic, engages customers and generates incremental sales. eZdia's services include content research, content validation and content creation services designed to acquire, engage and convert visitors into customers. eZdia's clients include Amazon, Walmart, Lowe's, Zappos and many other large eCommerce sites.