

Apple director Levinson leaves Google's board

October 12 2009



File - In this July 31, 2006 file photo Britain's, then, Prime Minister Tony Blair, right, walks with Arthur Levinson, CEO of Genentech, a biotechnology company, during a visit to their headquarters in San Francisco. Google Inc. said Monday, Oct. 12, 2009, board member Arthur Levinson, who is also a director of computer maker Apple Inc. is stepping down, removing a potential conflict of interest as the two companies look to compete more directly.(AP Photo/Kimberly White, pool, file)

(AP) -- Google Inc. said Monday that Arthur Levinson has resigned from the Internet search leader's board, averting a potential showdown with government regulators over his overlapping job as a director for computer and gadget maker Apple Inc.

The Federal Trade Commission had been investigating whether

Levinson's double duty on the boards of both Google and Apple would lessen competition between the companies as they increasingly collide in the same markets.

The same issue had dogged Google Chairman Eric Schmidt until he stepped down from Apple's board two months ago.

Levinson's resignation from Google's board takes effect immediately, ending his 5 1/2-year stint as a director. He will remain on Apple's board, where he has been a director for nine years.

Levinson, who is also chairman of biotechnology pioneer Genentech Inc., owns a bigger stake in Cupertino, Calif.-based Apple than he does in Mountain View-based Google, according to regulatory filings.

Google didn't specify the reason for Levinson's departure, but it has previously acknowledged the FTC's inquiry into his roles at Google and Apple.

In a statement, FTC Chairman Jon Leibowitz indicated his agency was prepared to sue Google and Apple if they hadn't purged their boards of the potential conflicts of interests.

"Google, Apple, and Mr. Levinson should be commended for recognizing that overlapping board members between competing companies raise serious antitrust issues and for their willingness to resolve our concerns without the need for litigation," Leibowitz said.

Schmidt, who is also Google's chief executive, left Apple's board shortly after his company unveiled plans for a computer operating system that would compete with Apple's Mac computers. Google also makes software that runs on cell phones, putting it in competition with Apple's iPhone.

Google didn't say whether it will fill Levinson's vacant seat. The resignation leaves Google with nine directors, including Schmidt and its co-founders, Larry Page and Sergey Brin.

Google shares rose \$7.37, 1.4 percent, to \$523.62 in afternoon trading while Apple's stock gained 4 cents to \$190.51.

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