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10-3f Android

In 2005 Google acquired the startup firm Android Inc., which worked on mobile phone software technology. In 2008 the Android operating system was released by the Open Handset Alliance, a team of organizations led by Google whose mission is to promote development of open standards for mobile devices. The Android operating system is an open source platform, meaning the source code is available for outside users to view and use. However, Google has copyrighted the Android name and logo, as well as some proprietary features of Google's version of the software. Companies that wish to claim they make "Android" devices must enter into a licensing agreement with Google. The Android operating system is most often used in mobile devices and tablets but can also be found on other devices, including full computers, game consoles, and digital cameras.

Android has become the most popular mobile operating system in the world, making up over 87 percent of the market. Apple's iOS, while undeniably a strong competitor with a loyal customer base, trails far behind with 12 percent of the smartphone market. One reason for Android's larger market share is that, unlike Apple and its iPhone and iPad, Google is not the only company that makes Android phones and tablets; Samsung, HTC, Motorola, T-Mobile, Sony, and many other manufacturers develop Android devices. However, there are disadvantages to this approach as well. For example, Amazon built its mobile offerings, the Fire Phone and Kindle Fire tablets, off the Android open source code, and now competes directly with Google in the mobile sphere. Google is also a direct player in the mobile device market with its Nexus line of phones and tablets, placing it in the uncomfortable position of competing with its business partners. Still, Android has been a great success for Google, vastly increasing the company's reach into electronics. One top Google executive called the initial Android Inc. acquisition the company's "best deal ever."



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