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Ars on Google at 10 years old

By *srlinuxx*
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Just 10 years ago, most tech analysts believed that the future was Microsoft?s. Not only that, but on many editorial pages, Microsoft already owned the present. In the years surrounding Microsoft?s battled with the US Department of Justice over its business practices, many believed that only the government could prevent Microsoft from eventually steamrolling all of technology. Past technology giants were just weak copies of their former selves, many would say. IBM, it would seem, was doomed as as a tech powerhouse once OS/2 was done asunder by Redmond; Apple, it was commonly argued, was on its deathbed (an argument that has been made yearly since Apple first released the Macintosh, of course). The 90's were a time when most people believed that whoever controlled the desktop operating system controlled the heart and soul of technological development and thereby, its promise.

Google has, with only a little help from the Department of Justice, proven that competitors can come out of nowhere and change the game. At a time when AltaVista was seemingly the best search on the planet, here came a search engine that appeared to know that you were searching for as if it could read your mind. Its pinpoint accuracy--largely lost since, in my opinion?was only outdone by its lack of ads. Google seemed, dare I say it, altruistic.

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Google OSS

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