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# Google Works on Launching Retail Stores

*U.S. Outlets Would Likely Sell Internet Giant's Branded Devices, but Plans Remain Unclear; Studying Apple's Playbook*

By AMIR EFRATI

[Google](#) Inc. has been developing plans to launch retail stores in the U.S., said people familiar with the matter, in another sign the company is studying [Apple](#) Inc.'s playbook for building a consumer-electronics brand.



Bloomberg News

An employee in a Google area at a Dixons Retail-operated store in London worked on a Chromebook laptop from Samsung Electronics in 2011.



Google has been developing plans to launch retail stores in the U.S. Plus shares hit a new \$800 high. Spencer Ante reports on Markets Hub. Photo:

The stores would likely sell Google-branded hardware, these people said. But it isn't clear when or where any stores would open, and one of the people said the Internet giant might not move forward with the plan this year.

Apple's stores have been a big factor in the success of the company's iPhones and iPads, and [Microsoft](#) Corp. has also opened its own retail outlets. Inside Google, the idea of opening retail stores has long been debated as the company has become a major player in mobile devices, said people familiar with the discussions.

Google's interest in retail stores was reported earlier by the [9to5 blog network](#).

Such a move may represent a change of heart in the two years since Google co-founder [Larry Page](#) became the company's chief executive. Following Google's short-lived attempt in 2010 to bypass brick-and-mortar stores to sell the Nexus One smartphone via its website, Mr. Page didn't express much interest in opening retail stores whenever the possibility was discussed, said a person with knowledge of the matter.

Getty Images.

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Yet Google's expansion beyond Web services and software into mobile hardware makes a move into retail seem more logical.

Last year Google completed its acquisition of Motorola Mobility, which builds smartphones and tablets. As of last fall, there was debate inside Google about whether Motorola Mobility should become Google's retail arm or whether the Google-owned stores should refrain from promoting Motorola, said a person familiar with the matter.

Even though Google wants Motorola to succeed as a device maker, the company is being careful not to appear to favor Motorola over other device makers—such as [Samsung Electronics](#) Co. and [Sony](#) Corp.—that also use Google's Android operating system to power

mobile devices.

Even without Motorola products, there would be a lot for Google to display in its own retail stores.

Google's Android division has been developing home-entertainment devices, and in recent years it has worked closely with hardware manufacturers to build Android-powered smartphones and tablets under the Nexus brand that Google has sold through its website.

Google has also developed low-priced Chromebook laptops, powered by its Chrome operating system and built by hardware makers such as Samsung. Over the past year, Google has promoted Chromebooks in dedicated areas within some [Best Buy](#) Co. retail stores in the U.S. and [Dixons Retail](#) PLC outlets in the U.K.

The Google X division, run by co-founder [Sergey Brin](#), is building Google Glass, a computing device worn on a person's face that could go on sale to the public sometime next year.

Google could also use retail stores to show off Google TV software that is embedded in some TV sets and set-top boxes, allowing people to browse Web video content from their televisions.

Until recently, the company developed mobile software but didn't manufacture its own devices, instead letting Samsung, Sony and others build and sell Google-powered devices on their own or through wireless carriers.

Microsoft, which historically focused on software but now makes its own devices such as the Xbox gaming console and the Surface tablet, has opened about 30 full-fledged stores in the U.S. and Canada and is developing another 11 stores, according to its website. The company doesn't disclose retail sales figures.

Apple has about 400 retail stores world-wide, and they generate more than \$10 billion in annual

sales.

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