



Ousted Mozilla CEO Is Changing the Web Again

After Brendan Eich resigned as CEO of the Mozilla Corporation amid controversy when it was revealed that he had given \$1,000 to support a California ban on same-sex marriage, he set out to do again what he had done with Mozilla's Firefox browser: revolutionize the way people access the Internet.

His newest venture is as bold as what he did when he co-founded the Mozilla project, the Mozilla Foundation, and the Mozilla Corporation. He has started a new company that is producing a browser that promises to strike a balance between web-based advertising and privacy. Coming from anyone else, this promise would seem audacious. Coming from Eich, it should be exciting news for anyone concerned about both online privacy and keeping web services free of price.

The current model for web-based advertising involves a conflict between users and providers. Users access free websites that make their profits harvesting the data of those users and selling it for targeted advertising. As Apple CEO Tim Cook wrote in the company's [privacy policy](#), "A few years ago, users of Internet services began to realize that when an online service is free, you're not the customer. You're the product."

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An increasing number of those users have pushed back against the harvesting of their data by installing ad-blocking add-ons — such as the popular *Ad-Block Plus* extension available for both Firefox and Chrome. It prevents ads being displayed on the web pages they view in those browsers, but it is not really a solution for two main reasons. First, not seeing the ad that is being targeted to you does not mean your browsing history, e-mail contents, web searches, etc. are not being harvested, it just means the websites are not profiting from the data they harvest from you. On that note, the second reason ad-blocking software is not a solution to the broken current model of web-based advertising is that if website owners cannot profit from their websites, they have no reason to have those websites. News sites, search engines, social networks, and a plethora of other free web services have to make money on advertising or they can't stay free. The alternative is to move to a subscription-based model where users pay to use those sites. For most users, that is not preferable.

What Eich and his new startup, Brave Software, propose is a new model where the browser keeps track of users' history, searches, etc., but that data never leaves their computers. No data-harvesting. Instead, the browser would reach out and draw ads that would interest the users without sacrificing their privacy. Since the websites would still profit from that advertising, the web could stay free (as to





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price). And since users would maintain their privacy, they would remain free (as to liberty). It's a classic win-win situation. If the Brave browser catches on — and that is not a very big “if” — Eich will again change the way people use the Internet.

Eich is no novice when it comes to the Internet. Besides co-founding Mozilla (the project, the corporation, and the foundation), he created JavaScript — one of the most used programming languages responsible for building the the web.

When he co-founded the Mozilla trilogy he was blazing a trail. In 1998, Microsoft's Internet Explorer was the dominant browser. Netscape offered the Navigator browser, but was having trouble selling it. After all, Internet Explorer was “free.” Netscape's main business was in servers, and the company feared that if Microsoft continued its dominance, it could use that power to leverage control over the HTML and HTTP standards that the web depends on, according to Eric Raymond, who wrote a paper on the success of the open-source software model. His paper, “[The Cathedral and The Bazaar](#),” was read by some in senior management at Netscape and helped them make the decision to release the source code of the Navigator browser and begin offering it for free. Netscape formed the Mozilla trilogy that eventually produced the Firefox browser. Firefox saw early success in competing with Internet Explorer.

Due to the success of Firefox, other open-source browsers entered the market. The most popular of these is Google's Chrome browser. Today, many Microsoft users open Internet Explorer (or the new Edge browser) one time when they get a new computer: to download either Chrome or Firefox.

In 2005, Eich — who had already served as chief architect, lead technologist, and as a member of the Board of Directors — became Mozilla's chief technology officer. He was promoted again on March 24, 2014 — this time to CEO of the corporation. While many were pleased with his elevation to the helm, others reacted by resigning from the Board of Directors. Some tweeted to homosexual activists that in 2008, Eich had donated to California's Proposition 8 ballot initiative to ban same-sex marriage in the state. Those activists then launched a campaign of shame, fear, and intimidation, with at least one website saying it would block access to Firefox unless Eich resigned. Ten days after his promotion, he left the trilogy of successful organizations he had helped start and build.

Though there were never any indications that he ever treated any employees or associates any differently based on their sexual preferences, he was essentially ousted for making a donation that later became politically incorrect. How's that inclusive diversity working out?

Moving forward, he is poised to make Brave Software and the Brave browser a success that will give Mozilla and Firefox a run for their money. Interestingly, though since Firefox is an open-source software and anyone can use the source code for new projects, Eich has chosen to build his new browser on the Chromium software that Google uses to build the Chrome browser. At this time the developer versions for both Windows and Mac are available from Brave's [website](#). As soon as the Linux version is available, this writer plans to check it out.



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