The Samsung-Google partnership propelled the Android OS to Apple-beating levels-- but as the mobile industry gathers at MWC 2013, does the search company actually think of the Korean giant as a threat?



According to the Wall Street Journal the success of the Galaxy device portfolio makes Google nervous. An anonymous source claims Android head Andy Rubin believes "Samsung could become a threat if it gains more ground among mobile-device makers that use Android," and the recent Motorola Mobility acquisition was actually "a kind of insurance policy" against mobile device vendors becoming too powerful over Android.

The WSJ does not have a comment from Rubin or an official Google representative.

But shouldn't Google actually celebrate Samsung, the biggest smartphone vendor in the world, whose Android-powered smartphone shipments total 215.8 million units (or 39.6% of the global market according to IDC) in 2012?

In fact, such success is the very reason why Google might be worried. First off, soon enough customers might think of Galaxy-branded devices as different (if not superior) from bog-standard "Androids." Such brand awareness can lead to Samsung either developing an own version of Android (like Amazon puts in Kindle devices) or dropping Android outright in favour of an alternative (such as the Samsung-backed Tizen).

A too-large slice of the Android pie can also lend Samsung power to demand a bigger share of the online advertising revenue the Google search engine generates, or preferential treatment in the shape of receiving better versions of the Android OS before other device makers.

"There is a threat from Samsung to Google that is real," Rutberg and Co. director Rajeev Chandsays tells the WSJ. "Over time, Samsung will be able to leverage its market-share dominance to negotiate better terms from Google."

If this is the case, no wonder Google brought HP in the Android fold (with the Slate 7) and is reportedly working with Motorola on the so-called X Phone, a supposed iPhone/Galaxy S killer.

Go Samsung Sparks Anxiety at Google (WSJ.com)