Executive who led Google's China Expansion Leaving

(AP) -- The executive who led Google Inc.'s expansion in China after being hired away from Microsoft Corp. following a high-profile court battle is leaving to start his own business, the U.S. search engine announced Friday.

Kai-Fu Lee will step down as president of Google Greater China in mid-September, the company said. It said he would set up a new venture in Beijing but gave no other details.

Lee was hired by Google in 2004 and oversaw development of services meant to help the search giant expand its share of China's search market, which is dominated by local rival Baidu Inc.

Google has added market share but trails Baidu, which has 61.6 percent of search traffic, while Google has 29.1 percent, according to Analysys International, a technology research firm.

Google said Boon-Lock Yeo, director of its Shanghai engineering office, would take over Lee's engineering responsibilities. John Liu, who leads its Greater China sales team, is to assume his business and operational responsibilities.

Lee worked for Microsoft from 2000 to 2004 and helped develop its MSN Internet search technology, including desktop search software rivaling Google's. He left to lead Google's China operation after being offered a $10 million compensation package.

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Microsoft sued Lee and Google, contending his job would violate a noncompete agreement that prohibited him from doing similar work for a rival for one year. Microsoft also accused Lee of using insider information to get his job at Google.

Google countered with its own lawsuit against Microsoft and the companies later reached a settlement, the details of which were not released.

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