

Sam Altman fires back at Elon Musk: ‘I don’t think he’s a happy person. I feel for him’

The battle for the future of AI just got extremely expensive and deeply personal.

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman spoke out against rival Elon Musk a day after rejecting a potentially seismic deal that could shape the future of artificial intelligence. He told the Elon Musk-led group of investors that the ChatGPT maker is not for sale — despite a massive offer to buy his company.

“Elon tries all sorts of things for a long time. This is the latest — you know, this week’s episode,” Altman told Bloomberg TV in an interview at the Paris AI Action Summit Tuesday. “I think he’s probably just trying to slow us down.”

Musk announced Monday he is leading a group of investors who have offered to buy OpenAI for \$97.4 billion. The OpenAI board will have to consider the massive offer, but it’s unclear whether it will seriously entertain it if it believes Musk will divert from the company’s mission.

Nevertheless, the offer could make OpenAI’s reorganization plans more difficult – and significantly more expensive.

Musk, an OpenAI cofounder who eventually left the company, has long **feuded** with Altman and has filed a number of legal complaints against OpenAI and Altman, claiming that the AI company and its leadership have misrepresented OpenAI as a **philanthropy**.

OpenAI is operated by a nonprofit organization that controls an entity called OpenAI LP, a for-profit company that exists within the larger company's structure. That for-profit company took OpenAI from effectively worthless to a valuation of around \$100 billion in just a few years — and Altman is largely credited as the mastermind of that plan and the key to the company's success.

Musk claims that OpenAI has broken with its founding charter by seeking to make a profit with its AI tools.

Now Musk is a competitor, as he started his own AI company called x.AI.

“I wish he would just compete by building a better product, but I think there's been a lot of tactics,” Altman said in the interview. “Many, many lawsuits, all sorts of other crazy stuff, now this. And we'll try to just put our head down and keep working.”

Asked whether Musk is approaching his strategy to combat OpenAI from a position of insecurity, Altman agreed and belittled his competitor.

“Probably his whole life is from a position of insecurity. I **feel for** the guy,” Altman said. “I don’t think he’s, like, a happy person. I do feel for him.”

Spokespeople for Musk and X did not respond to a request for comment.

Altman said he isn’t concerned that Musk has a new elevated position in President Donald Trump’s White House but acknowledged perhaps he should be.

“Maybe I should, but not particularly,” Altman said. “I try to just wake up and think about like, how we’re going to make our technology better.”

The Musk-Altman feud so far

Musk first sued OpenAI in June 2024, but he [dropped that initial lawsuit](#) after the company [published a blog post](#) that included several of Musk’s emails from OpenAI’s early days. The emails appeared to show Musk acknowledging the need for the company to make large sums of money to fund the computing resources needed to power its AI ambitions, which

stood in contrast to the claims in his lawsuit that OpenAI was wrongly pursuing profit.

Musk filed a new lawsuit in August 2024 and accused OpenAI of racing to develop powerful “artificial general intelligence” technology to “maximize profits.” Musk also accused the company of engaging in racketeering.

OpenAI, meanwhile, accused Musk of essentially being jealous that he was no longer involved in the startup, after he left OpenAI in 2018 following an unsuccessful bid to convince his fellow co-founders to let Tesla acquire it.

Altman rejected Musk’s contention that OpenAI is abandoning its nonprofit roots, even though the company is working to spin out its for-profit entity to give it more leeway.

“We’re not moving to a for-profit model,” Altman said. “I mean we’re not sure we’re gonna do it all. But no matter what, the nonprofit will continue to be extremely important; it will drive the mission and will continue to exist. The board is looking at lots of options about how to best structure for this next phase but the nonprofit is not going anywhere.”

But the nearly \$100 billion offer from Musk and his associates could throw a wrench into the gears of OpenAI’s plans. To

spin out the for-profit unit, the nonprofit will probably maintain a stake and need to set a value on the deal.

If Musk's deal is legitimate (and it very well may be, as Musk is the richest person in the world), then OpenAI most likely would have a responsibility to demonstrate that its deal better values the company. In other words: Musk just set the floor on that deal at \$97.4 billion.

Yet it's not quite that simple. Because OpenAI is a nonprofit, it has no fiduciary responsibility to maximize returns. And it could argue that Musk would violate the company's safety-first mission.

Whatever the case, the world's most prominent AI company has a much trickier road ahead now than it had before.

Reference: <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/02/11/tech/sam-altman-elon-musk-openai/index.html>

Key vocabularies

Seismic (重大的)

- **Explanation:** Something that causes a great impact or significant change, often used metaphorically to describe major shifts in industries or events.
- **Sentence:** The rejection of Musk's offer was a **seismic** decision that could shape the future of artificial intelligence.

Feud (爭執)

- **Explanation:** A long and bitter argument or conflict between people, organizations, or groups.
- **Sentence:** The **feud** between Sam Altman and Elon Musk has lasted for years, affecting the AI industry.

Philanthropy (慈善)

- **Explanation:** The act of donating money, time, or resources to help others, usually in a charitable or non-profit way.
- **Sentence:** Musk once supported OpenAI as an act of **philanthropy**, but later accused it of prioritizing profit over its original mission.

Feel for (同情)

- **Explanation:** To have sympathy or empathy for someone's situation.
- **Sentence:** Altman said he **feels for** Musk, suggesting that he believes Musk is struggling emotionally.

Spin out (分拆、獨立出來)

- **Explanation:** To have sympathy or empathy for someone's situation.
- **Sentence:** Altman said he **feels for** Musk, suggesting that he believes Musk is struggling emotionally.

Reading Comprehension

1. Why did Sam Altman reject Elon Musk's offer to buy OpenAI?

2. What is the main reason for the feud between Sam Altman and Elon Musk?

3. How does OpenAI's structure affect its ability to sell the company?

4. What does Altman mean when he says he "feels for" Musk?

5. What challenges does OpenAI face after Musk's \$97.4 billion offer?