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# Google Agrees to Censor Results in China



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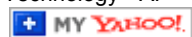
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By MICHAEL LIEDTKE, AP Business Writer

Tue Jan 24, 7:34 PM ET

SAN FRANCISCO - Online search engine leader Google Inc. has agreed to censor its results in China, adhering to the country's free-speech restrictions in return for better access in the Internet's fastest growing market.

The Mountain View, Calif.-based company planned to roll out a new version of its search engine bearing China's Web suffix ".cn," on Wednesday. A Chinese-language version of Google's search engine has previously been available through the company's dot-com address in the United States.

By creating a unique address for China, Google hopes to make its search engine more widely available and easier to use in the world's most populous country.

Because of government barriers set up to suppress information, Google's China users previously have been blocked from using the search engine or encountered lengthy delays in response time.

The service troubles have frustrated many Chinese users, hobbling Google's efforts to expand its market share in a country that expected to emerge as an Internet gold mine over the next decade.

China already has more than 100 million Web surfers and the audience is expected to swell substantially — an alluring prospect for Google as it tries to boost its already rapidly rising profits.

Baidu.com Inc., a Beijing-based company in which Google owns a 2.6 percent stake, currently runs China's most popular search engine. But a recent Keynote Systems survey of China's Internet preferences concluded that Baidu remains vulnerable to challenges from Google and Yahoo Inc. (Nasdaq:[YHOO](#) - [news](#))

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To obtain the Chinese license, Google agreed to omit Web content that the country's government finds objectionable. Google will base its censorship decisions on guidance provided by Chinese government officials.

Although China has loosened some of its controls in recent years, some topics, such as Taiwan's independence and 1989's Tiananmen Square massacre, remain forbidden subjects.

Google officials characterized the censorship concessions in China as an excruciating decision for a company that adopted "don't be evil" as a motto. But management believes it's a worthwhile sacrifice.

"We firmly believe, with our culture of innovation, Google can make meaningful and positive contributions to the already impressive pace of development in China," said Andrew McLaughlin, Google's senior policy counsel.

Google's decision rankled Reporters Without Borders, a media watchdog group that has sharply criticized Internet companies including Yahoo and Microsoft Corp.'s MSN.com for submitting to China's censorship regime.

"This is a real shame," said Julien Pain, head of Reporters Without Borders' Internet desk. "When a search engine collaborates with the government like this, it makes it much easier for the Chinese government to control what is being said on the Internet."

When Google censors results in China, it intends to post notifications alerting users that some content has been removed — to comply with local laws. The company provides similar alerts in Germany and France when, to comply with national laws, it censors results to remove references to Nazi paraphernalia.

Google is cooperating with China's government at the same time it is battling the U.S. government over a subpoena seeking a breakdown of one week's worth of search requests — a list that would cover millions of terms.

Reflecting its uneasy alliance with the Chinese government, Google isn't releasing all its services.

Neither Google's e-mail nor blogging services will be offered in China because the company doesn't want to risk being ordered by the government to turn over anyone's personal information. The e-mail service, called Gmail, creates a huge database of users' messages and makes them instantly searchable. The blogging services contain a wide range of personal background.

Yahoo came under fire last year after it provided the government with the e-mail account information of a Chinese journalist who was later convicted for violating state secrecy laws.

Initially, Google's Chinese service will be limited to searching Web pages and images. The company also will provide local search results and a special edition of its news service that will be confined to government-sanctioned media.

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