

China Renews Google's License

Written by ph0bYx
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By John C Abell, Wired.com

Google announced Friday that China had renewed its license to offer search in the world's largest market, smoothing over for perhaps another year a contentious relationship that was exacerbated in January when the search giant threatened to stop government-required censorship but eased as it first re-directed search offshore and then last week pulled back on even that maneuver.

The announcement was very brief — [one sentence tacked on to the June 28 blog post](#) by Chief legal officer David Drummond in which the company had said they would even stop re-directing traffic from google.cn to google.com.hk.

“We are very pleased that the government has renewed our ICP [Internet Content Provider] license and we look forward to continuing to provide web search and local products to our users in China,” the update simply said.

Google's decision 11 days ago to completely abandon mainland-China-based search would appear to have been a key concession to stay in the country, where in addition to search it has a number of business interests. Initially Google re-directed traffic to Hong Kong servers but two weeks ago abruptly ended that tactic, putting up a page at google.cn which is really just an image that the user has to click to reach google.com.hk.

“Over the next few days we'll end the redirect entirely, taking all our Chinese users to our new landing page—and today we re-submitted our ICP license renewal application based on this approach,” Drummond wrote at the time

That subtle change — an extra step which effectively divorces any semblance of unfiltered search from the mainland — appears to have done the trick.

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“In China, it is very common that you need to give the government face if you want to do business here,” Edward Yu of Analysys International [told Reuters](#) . “The double click rule (so as not to automatically reroute searches) shows that Google can compromise and give them face.”

The game of cat and mouse began when Google unexpectedly warned in January it might quit the country over censorship concerns and after suffering a hacker attack it said came from within China.

Only two days ago China said there would be [no particular deadline for the review](#) and that Google's submission for renewal had been “relatively late.” ICP licenses are reviewed annually in China.