

Google drops Gmail name in U.K.

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Gmail, the free e-mail service provided by search giant Google, changed its name to Google Mail for British users Wednesday after a trademark dispute.

London-based Independent International Investment Research says it started using the Gmail name for a Web-based mail application two years before Google launched its service.

Existing users of Gmail will be able to keep their addresses, but new users will be given an address that ends with "@googlemail.com."

However, Google said it could not guarantee that existing addresses would not have to be changed in future.

A separate trademark dispute forced the search engine to drop the Gmail name in Germany in May.

Talks between Google and both companies broke down earlier this year after the parties failed to agree on financial settlements.

IIR, which counts Citigroup, Deutsche Bank and Bank of America among its clients, says Google broke off negotiations unilaterally, and it is therefore examining its legal options.

But Google says IIR demanded an exorbitant sum for the trademark. Both sides have refused to disclose the amount involved, though it is understood a settlement of millions of dollars had been discussed.

"We are still working with the courts and trademark office to protect our ability to use the Gmail name, but in the meantime, we want you to have an email address you can rely on," Google told its users.

While it would do everything possible to protect existing Gmail addresses, it could not guarantee they would remain unaltered as the trademark issue was still unresolved, the company said. "Unfortunately, we cannot predict what the other party or the courts might do here," it added.

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