

Google in Israel: It's official

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Search engine giant Google formally announced the opening of an Israel branch at a news conference Monday.

According to local Google official Meir Brand, the company is committed to "focus on Israeli Web surfers, advertisers and Web site operators, and (help them to) interface with suitable services," the Hebrew news Web site Ynet reported.

Beyond that, however, little information about the company's plans was made available. "Google doesn't talk about its future plans. We mean to invest in our surfers, and a lot of surprises can be expected in the coming year. But over here we don't talk about products before they're launched. First launch, then talk," Israeli business newspaper TheMarker quoted Brand as saying.

TheMarker speculated that because the company has invested extensively in the new Israel office, including worker training and securing local contracts, "(Google's) doing a lot more here than creating a search engine in Hebrew."

Indeed, earlier reports seemed to point in this direction. The Israeli daily Haaretz reported at the end of January that co-founder Sergey Brin told the newspaper Google "(was) in the process of establishing a (research and development) center in Israel."

At the news conference, however, Google official Brand stuck to generalities.

"Israelis are chronic searchers. The search is the main use they make of Internet, while for Americans, the main use of Internet is e-mail. The Israeli surfer adopts technologies faster," TheMarker quoted Brand as saying.

He said this meant enormous potential for advertisers, and especially for small businesses, according to reports.

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