

Dutch domain owner faces legal action from Google

Google claims Marcel Van der Werf's registered domain names infringe on company's trademark

By Edwin Feldmann

WebWereld-Netherlands |

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Google England plans to take legal action against a Dutch man who uses the word "google" in the domain names he has registered. Marcel Van der Werf has registered a number of domains that include the word "google," such as Googledatingsite.nl, Googleonlineshop.com, Googlecommunity.nl, and Googlestore.nl. Google contends that Van der Werf is infringing on its trademark.

Van der Werf is surprised by Google's reaction. "A brand is linked to a product, but not to the alphabet. The name used in the address bar is a way to reach a computer. It is merely an indication and not a brand," Van der Werf says.

Van der Werf's conflict is with Google's English office because some of the Web sites he owns were hosted in England. "The hosting provider had, urged by Google, disconnected the database from Googledatingsite.nl, after which I moved it to Russia," Van der Werf says. He feels he is the victim of an "intimidating action."

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"We have a million members that paid a hundred euros to gain access, and now we have lost them, because we don't have a backup of the database," he says.

Most of Van der Werf's "google sites" are still online. Only Googleonlineshop.com and Googlestore.nl, an online store at eBay, have been taken offline.

A Google spokeswoman confirms the dispute. "Mr. Van der Werf has registered a number of domain names which infringe Google's trademark and other intellectual property rights. We are in the process of starting legal proceedings against him."

She also responded to Van der Werf's allegations: "The accusations being made against Google by Mr. Van der Werf are factually inaccurate and legally baseless."

More in general, the spokeswoman stated that "Google believes that controlling its intellectual property is essential to prevent confusion among our users and others using them in ways that are inconsistent with Google's rights and culture."

(Translated by Evan Schaafsma.)

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