

Google Blocks Workspace Apps for Sanctioned Russian Firms – Kommersant

August 11, 2023



Thomas Hawk / Flickr (CC BY-NC 2.0)

Google has started blocking its popular workplace apps for Russian companies under U.S. sanctions, the Kommersant business daily [reported](#) Friday, citing anonymous sources at two major IT companies.

Around 30% of Russian companies' corporate information is stored on Google Workspace services, which include Gmail, Docs, Sheets, Drive and other cloud-based tools, according to one of the sources' estimates.

Kommersant's report did not specify how many of the [1,400](#) Russian entities under U.S. sanctions have lost access to Google Workspace as a result of the ban.

Alphabet Inc.'s Google told Russian IT firms in a newsletter that it imposed the restrictions due to "spam," one source told Kommersant without naming who sent the unsolicited

messages.

Related article: [Russia Struggles to Replicate Google Play in Tech Analogue Drive](#)

An anonymous source close to Google said there were no “deliberate” changes in access to Workspace apps in Russia, while Google Workspace’s Russian distributor Softline has not yet witnessed a “surge” in restrictions, according to Kommersant.

Google Workspace mainly enjoys popularity among small and medium-sized businesses in Russia, according to Yevgeny Fenyushin, product manager of the Russian online productivity suite My Office.

“Companies in these segments continue to use foreign services despite geopolitical changes” in Russia’s relations with the West after invading Ukraine, Fenyushin told Kommersant.

“Users are used to working on them.”

Experts who spoke with Kommersant highlighted the risk that Russian businesses — and not just state entities — face in losing access to corporate information.

“Many organizations are delaying the switch to alternative workspaces, such as [Russia’s domestic tech giant] Yandex, hoping that Google will warn them about the ban in advance,” said one of Kommersant’s sources.

As part of its push to create a "sovereign internet," Moscow has sought to replicate the kind of online services that Google provides, though experts have [expressed](#) skepticism that domestic alternatives are viable in the long term.

Related article: [Russia Blocks Meta’s Twitter Competitor App – Lawmaker](#)

In response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Google in the spring of 2022 [banned](#) sanctioned Russian companies from its Google Play app store and suspended advertising and payment-based services in Russia.

The U.S. giant’s Russian arm [filed for bankruptcy](#) around the same time, citing multi-billion-ruble fines for failure to remove content banned in Russia.

Even before invading Ukraine, Russia had amplified pressure on U.S.-based tech giants for what it calls interference in its domestic politics and a range of other infractions.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/08/11/google-blocks-workspace-apps-for-sanctioned-russian-firms-kommersant-a82123>