# Google pays former DeepMind engineers to remain inactive amid AI talent war



In the ongoing competition for artificial intelligence (AI) talent, Google is reportedly engaging in unprecedented strategies to retain its top engineers, particularly from its AI subsidiary, DeepMind. According to a report by Business Insider, the tech giant is paying some of its leading AI professionals in the UK to remain inactive for periods extending up to a year after they leave the company, utilising a controversial tactic known as “extended garden leave.”

This practice comes with the stipulation that the engineers do not seek employment with rival firms during the duration of their non-compete agreements. The report recounts testimonies from four former DeepMind employees, who detailed that while they ceased their roles at Google, they continued to receive their salaries under this arrangement. Typically, non-compete agreements in the tech industry protect proprietary information and knowledge; however, the length of these contracts at DeepMind appears to extend beyond the norm. Normally, such agreements last approximately six months, but at least two engineers highlighted their arrangements being enforced for a full 12 months, particularly those involved with the Gemini AI initiative—a significant project for Google.

This strategy by Google reflects the escalating competition among technology firms as they strive for supremacy in the AI sector. Competitors, including Meta and OpenAI, are rapidly innovating, increasing the stakes for attracting skilled personnel. To maintain its competitive edge, Google has also introduced Gemini 2.5 Pro, which is described as its most advanced AI model to date.

While Google asserts that its contracts align with market standards, the approach has disrupted the conversation surrounding employment practices within the tech industry. Critics of this policy argue that such lengthy non-compete agreements could inhibit innovation by sidelining skilled professionals during a period when demand for AI expertise is surging. Former DeepMind employees have expressed concerns that this method is excessively restrictive, thus limiting their opportunities and the industry’s overall growth.

As the landscape of AI continues to evolve, the battle for talent within the industry intensifies. Companies are now competing not only on technological advancements but also on securing the best personnel, indicating a significant shift in how organisations view their workforce during this critical period of innovation. In Google's case, it has resulted in a strategy of financially supporting top talent even when they are not actively contributing to the company's ongoing projects.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.hrkatha.com/global-hr-news/why-is-google-paying-its-ai-staff-a-years-salary/> - This article explains how Google's DeepMind is using 'extended garden leave' to pay AI engineers for a year not to work for competitors, a strategy aimed at retaining top talent in the competitive AI landscape.
* <https://www.financialexpress.com/trending/googles-ai-engineers-paid-to-do-absolutely-nothing-for-a-whole-year-heres-what-happened/3804593/lite/> - This article details the 'extended garden leave' tactic used by Google, where AI engineers are paid for up to a year after leaving, to prevent them from joining competitors, highlighting the restrictive nature of non-compete agreements.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - Although not explicitly linked to supporting the specific claims, this is the source of the original article discussing Google's strategies for retaining AI talent through non-compete clauses.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-65926630> - Unfortunately, I couldn't find this exact URL supporting the claim, but typically BBC News would cover tech industry developments like these. However, such a URL would discuss the ongoing competition in the AI sector.
* <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-08-30/google-deepmind-sai-gemini-ai-ambitions?leadSource=uverify%20wall> - This URL might not directly support the claim but would typically cover Google's AI initiatives, such as Gemini, indicating the company's efforts in advancing AI technology.