

Microsoft, Casio Reach Patent Licensing Deal

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Microsoft and Casio Computing have reached an agreement over the latter's use of Linux. Microsoft has ramped up its licensing strategy in recent months.

Microsoft has reached a licensing agreement with Casio Computer over the latter's use of Linux in certain devices. Under the terms, Casio will pay Microsoft undisclosed fees.

According to Microsoft, the two companies have a long-term relationship, and Casio uses Microsoft software in products such as industrial handheld terminals. "We're pleased to reach an agreement and to see continued recognition of the value of our patent portfolio, particularly as it relates to operating systems," Horacio Gutierrez, corporate vice president and deputy general counsel of Microsoft's Intellectual Property Group, wrote in a Sept. 20 statement.

Microsoft has been on a licensing-agreement streak of late, although much of that seems a competitive strategy meant to blunt—or at least profit from—the rise in devices using Google Android as an operating system.

Most recently, Microsoft entered into Android licensing agreements with Acer and Viewsonic. In addition, the latter also agreed to pay royalties on devices running Google Chrome. Microsoft argues that Android violates its patents, and has exhibited a willingness to sue those companies that refuse to enter into royalty deals. Other companies that have agreed to pay Microsoft include HTC and Amazon.com.

Microsoft citing both Google Chrome and Android as part of its Viewsonic agreement is an interesting twist, but it remains to be seen whether that's a harbinger of a more widespread attack against Google's software and assets.

Some manufacturers, including Motorola Mobility and Barnes & Noble, have chosen to fight the issue in court rather than submit to paying Microsoft. Google recently agreed to acquire Motorola Mobility for some \$12.5 billion.

Microsoft's opponents have argued in court filings that this license-or-litigate strategy ultimately harms competition.

"Microsoft is misusing these patents as part of a scheme to try to eliminate or marginalize the competition to its own Windows Phone 7 mobile device operating system posted by the open-source Android operating system and other open-source operating systems," read Barnes & Noble's counterclaim to Microsoft's lawsuit, filed April 25 with the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington at Seattle. "Microsoft's conduct directly harms both competition for and consumers of eReaders, smartphones, tablet computers and other mobile electronic devices, and renders Microsoft's patents unenforceable."