

Graphics patent suit fires back at M\$

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Austin, Texas-based Forgent, which makes scheduling software, announced Thursday that it filed the suit through its Compression Labs subsidiary. The suit, filed in U.S. District Court in the Eastern District of Texas, comes in response to a suit Microsoft filed last week, asking the courts to find Forgent's patent unenforceable.

"It's unfortunate that, despite Microsoft's recent inquiries about licensing the patent, they chose to file a lawsuit, leaving us no alternative but to assert infringement claims against it," Richard Snyder, chief executive of Forgent, said in a statement.

The patent in question, U.S. patent No. 4,698,672, relates to the technology behind JPEG. The format is one of the most popular methods for compressing and sharing images on the Internet.

Forgent initially tried to sell this patent to Compaq Computer to give it a counterclaim in its lawsuit against MPEG LA. The deal fell through, however, and Forgent more closely examined its claims for still impression. The company determined that the JPEG standard, used to compress images in cameras and on computers, infringed on its patent.

Microsoft declined to comment, other than to point to its lawsuit filed last week.

"(Forgent) is subverting the JPEG standard to extract millions of dollars in unwarranted profits," Microsoft's lawsuit states.

Forgent has initiated lawsuits against 44 companies, alleging those businesses infringed on its "672" patent. During the past three years, Forgent has generated more than \$100 million from licensing its 672 patent.

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