

Microsoft's Patent Threats Evoke Retorts

Partly in response to Microsoft's recent patent threats to Linux and other open-source software, the FSF (Free Software Foundation) announced on May 16 the creation of a new activist campaigns team to organize public support into action on software freedom issues.

In announcing the decision to create the campaigns team, FSF Executive Director Peter Brown spoke of Microsoft's recent attempts to use software patents as the basis of an attack against free software.

"Microsoft continues to threaten the freedom of all computer users with vague claims of software-patent infringement," Brown said. "Although more people than ever before in the U.S. have the technical capabilities to develop software, the blight of patents prevents them from making useful advancements. As such, we need to ask, 'What is the best way to eliminate the specter of software patents so that free software development can flourish, and how do we get organized to make it happen?'"

The FSF is far from the only free software supporter that's speaking out against Microsoft's recent patent comments.

Jerry Rosenthal, CEO of the Open Invention Network, an intellectual property company that was formed to promote Linux by using patents to create a collaborative environment, said, "This is not the first time that unsubstantiated claims of patent infringement have been leveled at Linux. Moreover, just as in the past, these claims are made without disclosing any evidence. It's time to stop the accusations and show the evidence. What's happening with these accusers is the equivalent of declaring four aces while being unwilling to show even a pair of deuces."

Linus Torvalds, Linux's founder, told Joe Barr of Linux.com, that until Microsoft is willing to show some of their cards, its claims are meaningless FUD.

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