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Apple, Microsoft End Patent Fight With BlackBerry Foe NTP

By Susan Decker and Jon Erlichman - Jul 23, 2012

[Apple Inc. \(AAPL\)](#) and [Microsoft Corp. \(MSFT\)](#) were among companies that reached a settlement of patent-infringement claims by NTP Inc., the licensor that extracted a \$612.5 million settlement from [Research in Motion Ltd. \(RIM\)](#) six years ago.

Financial terms weren't disclosed in federal court filings in Richmond, Virginia, seeking dismissal of suits filed by NTP beginning in 2007. The agreements cover most of the wireless phone industry, including phone service companies like [AT&T Inc. \(Y\)](#) and [Verizon Wireless](#), handset manufacturers such as [LG Electronics Inc. \(066570\)](#) and e-mail service providers like [Yahoo! Inc.. \(YHOO\)](#)

The dispute was over wireless e-mail technology developed by NTP founder Thomas Campana. NTP battled with RIM for more than four years before reaching a settlement, and then sued other companies in the phone industry. The cases were delayed as the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office reviewed the patents.

"Each of the parties in this arrangement are in some way making use of NTP's, of Tom Campana's, original wireless e-mail invention, although they're at different levels of the industry," NTP lawyer [Ron Epstein](#) said in an interview with Bloomberg Television. "Some are providing wireless services, others e-mail, others the handset, but they all are getting the same license."

Dismissal requests also were filed in cases against [Hewlett-Packard Co. \(HPQ\)](#)'s Palm unit, [Sprint Nextel Corp. \(S\)](#) and [HTC Corp. \(2498\)](#)

Trial Victory

Campana was an electrical engineer who set up NTP with his patent lawyer, Don Stout, to hold patents on inventions he developed separate from work he did on contract. He died of cancer in June 2004, the day after his trial victory in the case against RIM was argued before an appeals court.

The patents cover a way e-mail is transmitted automatically to electronic devices.

"There's a lot of use of this term patent troll to trivialize the discussion around what is the source of

innovation,” said Epstein, who also is chief executive officer of patent brokerage Epicenter IP Group LLC in Redwood City, California. “Ultimately, there was a recognition that Tom Campana had in fact, back in the early 90s, developed a system that did wireless e-mail.”

Kristin Huguet, a spokeswoman for Cupertino, California- based Apple, [Brenda Raney](#), with Verizon Wireless, and Laura Young, a Microsoft spokeswoman, said the companies had no comment.

HTC, in an e-mailed statement, said it was “pleased to see this issue resolved reasonably and without further litigation.”

Officials with the other companies didn’t immediately return messages seeking comment.

The cases have been on hold pending NTP’s appeal of the patent-office findings that rejected elements of Campana’s patents. An appeals court last year [ordered](#) the agency to reconsider findings that invalidated elements of seven NTP patents.

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