



Redcore CEO admits ‘100pc China-developed browser’ is built on Google’s Chrome, says writing code from scratch would ‘take many years’

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Tech

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Redcore, which recently raised 250 million yuan (US\$36 million) in funding, said on its website that its browser had ‘broken the American monopoly’

A Beijing-based start-up that claimed to have developed an original China web browser has admitted it had based its software on Google’s Chrome, following online accusations that it had ripped off the American internet company’s program.

Redcore, which recently raised 250 million yuan (US\$36 million) in funds, said on its website that its browser had “broken the American monopoly”. That claim was challenged after an online posting purporting to show the installer containing Chrome files went viral.

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On Thursday afternoon, Chen Benfeng, founder and chief executive of Redcore, said in an interview at the company’s offices in a technology cluster in northwest Beijing, that it was wrong to have made such a claim.

“We don’t deny building on Chrome’s browser engine,” said Chen, who wore a Nike T-shirt with the “Just Do It” slogan. “The web browser is a very old technology, writing the code from scratch will take many years. It’s like Android was built on the foundation of Linux, but nobody doubts Android or Google’s innovation. Google and Apple also did not write the first line of code, doing so would be reinventing the wheel.”



The public climbdown by Redcore is sure to add to the growing debate about China's overblown technological strength, and draws comparisons to false claims of breakthroughs in the past, including the case of Hanxin, in which a professor sanded down Motorola chips to pass off as his own innovation.

This week, the editor of a Chinese state newspaper said the country's lack of a scientific spirit was often the underlying reason for problems from weaknesses in research to widespread counterfeiting and fraud.

Liu Yadong, chief editor of *Science and Technology Daily*, who cited China's lack of scientific spirit despite a century of trying, had sparked national soul-searching two months ago after criticising the media of hyping up China's strength in technological innovation.

The reflection had coincided with Beijing's apparent dialling down of rhetoric on its ambitions for global leadership in advanced technologies amid a trade war with the United States.


In 2003, Chen Jin, then a professor at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, hogged the headlines with his breakthrough in microchip design, unveiling a digital signal processing chip he dubbed the Hanxin, or Chinese chip, which rhymes with "Chinese soul".

It did not take long for [Hanxin to be exposed as a fraud](#) [2], when a whistle-blower revealed that Chen had merely sanded down Motorola chips he imported from his former employer to pass off as his own innovation.

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Redcore's Chen, however, said his company's situation was not comparable with the Hanxin case.

"We help our corporate customers use cloud [computing] in a secure way, adapt smoothly from PC to mobile and store data in an encrypted environment," he said. "All these are real demand and


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Chen Benfeng, chief executive of
Redcore

help improve productivity.”

Chen is a member of China's recruitment programme of global experts known as the “Thousand Talents Plan”.

Redcore specialises in corporate end technology services such as web browser for office environment, anti-hacking protection, auto adaptation for mobile end and encrypted data storage.

It has attracted investors including Morningside Capital, IDG Capital and Fortune Venture Capital.

Shanghai-listed iFlytek, China's national champion in voice recognition technology, clarified that it was an affiliate of the company that took part in Redcore's angel round of funding in 2013, an iFlytek spokesman said in a WeChat message in response to an inquiry from the *South China Morning Post*.



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Chen Benfeng

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Current users of the Redcore web browser include a number of government bodies and state owned enterprises such as the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council and China National Chemical Corp, according to a customer list displayed at the entrance of Redcore's Beijing headquarters.

A day before the social media revelation, Redcore announced that it had raised 250 million yuan in funding from investors including “large listed companies and government customers”.

On Thursday afternoon, the download site for Redcore's browser was unreachable. Chen said the site was down because of the volume of download requests, not because it was deliberately taken down by the company.

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“We know that this is a life-or-death situation for the company. If we don't clarify properly, there may be no tomorrow,” Chen said. “We will never promote [ourselves like that] again.

“No more ideological or US monopoly stuff. We will be more down-to-earth and focused solely on technology.”

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