

= Microsoft vs. MikeRoweSoft =

Microsoft vs. MikeRoweSoft was a legal dispute between Microsoft and a Canadian Belmont High School student named Mike Rowe over the domain name " MikeRoweSoft.com ". The case received international press attention following Microsoft 's perceived heavy @-@ handed approach to a 12th grade student 's part @-@ time web design business and the subsequent support that Rowe received from the online community . A settlement was eventually reached , with Rowe granting ownership of the domain to Microsoft in exchange for an Xbox and additional compensation .

= = Background = =

The domain name MikeRoweSoft.com was initially registered by Canadian student Mike Rowe in August 2003 . Rowe set up the site as a part @-@ time web design business , choosing the domain because of the phonetic pun by adding the word " soft " to the end of his name . Microsoft saw the name as trademark infringement because of its phonetic resemblance to their trademarked corporate name and demanded that he give up the domain . After receiving a letter on January 14 , 2004 from Microsoft 's Canadian legal representatives Smart & Biggar , Rowe replied asking to be compensated for giving up the domain .

Microsoft offered to pay Rowe 's out @-@ of @-@ pocket expenses of \$ 10 , the original cost of registering the domain name . Rowe countered asking instead for \$ 10 @,@ 000 , later claiming that he did this because he was " mad at " Microsoft for their initial \$ 10 offer . Microsoft declined the offer and sent a cease and desist order spanning 25 pages . Microsoft accused Rowe of setting up the site in order to try to force them into a large financial settlement , a practice known as cybersquatting .

= = Press coverage and settlement = =

Rowe went to the press , creating publicity for the case and garnering support for his cause , including donations of over \$ 6 @,@ 000 and an offer of free advice from a lawyer . At one point Rowe was forced to take down his site after it was overwhelmed by around 250 @,@ 000 page views over a period of twelve hours , only managing to get the site back up after changing to a service provider with a higher capacity . The case , portrayed as a David versus Goliath struggle by the media , characterized Microsoft in a negative light . The resulting bad publicity was later described as a " public relations mess . " The public showing of support that Rowe received was credited with " softening Microsoft 's stance , " leading to an eventual settlement .

In late January 2004 , it was revealed that the two parties had come to an out of court settlement , with Microsoft taking control of the domain . In return Microsoft agreed to pay all of the expenses that Rowe had incurred including setting up a new site at and redirecting traffic to MikeRoweforums.com. Additionally , Microsoft provided Rowe with a subscription to the Microsoft Developer Network , an all expenses paid trip for him and his family to the Microsoft Research Tech Fest at their headquarters in Redmond , Washington , training for Microsoft certification and an Xbox with a selection of games . Following an online poll , Rowe donated most of his legal defense fund to a children 's hospital and used the remaining money for his future university education .

= = Further developments = =

After settling the dispute with Microsoft , Rowe attempted to auction off the documentation he had received on the on @-@ line auction site eBay , describing it as " a piece of Internet history . " The materials included one copy of the original 25 page cease and desist letter as well as an inch @-@ thick WIPO book containing copies of trademarks , web pages and e @-@ mails between him and Microsoft . The auction received more than half a million page views and bidding rose to more than \$ 200 @,@ 000 . The high bids turned out to be fraudulent and the auction was restricted to pre

@-@ approved bidders . After restarting from the reserve price of \$ 500 , the documents eventually sold for \$ 1 @, @ 037 .

Microsoft later admitted that they may have been too aggressive in their defense of the " Microsoft " trademark . Following the case it was suggested by Struan Robertson ? editor of Out @-@ Law.com ? that Microsoft had little choice but to pursue the issue once it had come to light or they would have risked weakening their trademark . This view was also espoused by ZDNet , who noted that had Microsoft knowingly ignored Rowe 's site , the company would have risked losing the right to fight future trademark infringements . Robertson opined that ? had legal proceedings ensued ? Rowe would have made a strong argument for keeping his domain , as he was using his real name and was not claiming to be affiliated with Microsoft .