

Solution

Who is the plaintiff and who is the defendant?

Pear – plaintiff (their software was copied, they are bringing the complaint)

MicroSpam – defendant (challenged about the copying)

Scenario I.

No infringement

If they did not know of existence, they have never seen it

So similarities can only be as a result of chance

There cannot have been any copying or making an adaptation

Pear and MicroSpam have copyright in their respective programs

Scenario II.

No infringement

They have never seen it

So similarities in the code can only be as a result of chance

There cannot have been any copying or making an adaptation

If they know of it, then they know the idea

But the idea is not protected by copyright (which protects expression)

Pear and MicroSpam have copyright in their respective programs

Scenario III.

No infringement

No implication here that the look and feel are the same

If MicroSpam created the program independently there cannot have been any copying or making an adaptation

If the programs are similar this is the result of coincidence, or because they are constrained by the function

Pear and MicroSpam have copyright in their respective programs

Scenario IV.

Possible infringement

Note that it refers to *structure* here

Structure can be protected by copyright as well as the program code

MicroSpam has copied the structure indirectly, even without looking at the program code, by extensively using Pear's program to understand the way it works

Indirect copying

Also possible in this case that other non-literal parts of the program have been copied (menus, icons, window layouts). These can also be protected by copyright.

Shift of the burden of proof if it can be shown that MicroSpam extensively used the program

That means that BOP moves from plaintiff (Pear must show that copying took place) to defendant (MicroSpam must show that they did not copy the plaintiff's work).

Hard for defendant to show this.

Pear and MicroSpam have copyright in their respective program code (the code was not copied) but the structure is an infringement of Pear's program by MicroSpam

Scenario V.

Definite infringement

We should ask whether the decompilation right in CCPR applies

It does not, because this is a competing product

Just the act of decompiling the program is an infringement of copyright (making a translation)

Note that Pear probably still has copyright in the re-coded parts of the program because this is a translation of their code, not a program that has been created independently.

Scenario VI.

Definite infringement

Literal copying

Any other legal issues?

Probably breach of confidence (may also be a contract prohibiting the employee to work on a competing product)

Pear retains copyright in the portion of new program that was literally copied

Scenario VII.

Possible infringement

Copyright infringement does not need to be literal

He could recall enough of the expression in Pear's software to effectively copy it

MicroSpam would have copyright in the code that was written, but copyright in the structure (and possibly even some of the code) belongs to Pear