

By Rik Myslewski, TheRegister.co.uk

Microsoft has admitted that its new Chinese microblogging service used webcode pilfered from a similar service popular elsewhere in Asia.

On Monday, as [reported](#) by The Reg, Asian microblogging site [Plurk](#) accused Microsoft China of pilfering its code for a new social-networking feature known as Juku on the [Chinese MSN site](#)

Monday night, Microsoft [announced](#) that it had removed the offending feature as it investigated the charges, and now, Microsoft has [admitted](#) that the code was indeed lifted from Plurk.

That said, Microsoft puts the blame on an unnamed partner:

On Monday, December 14, questions arose over a beta application called Juku developed by a Chinese vendor for our MSN China joint venture. We immediately worked with our MSN China joint venture to investigate the situation.

The vendor has now acknowledged that a portion of the code they provided was indeed copied. This was in clear violation of the vendor's contract with the MSN China joint venture, and equally inconsistent with Microsoft's policies respecting intellectual property.

Microsoft's statement also notes that it would suspend its new social-networking feature "indefinitely."

But Plurk isn't entirely mollified. "Microsoft has used this 'independent vendor' strategy to try and absolve itself of responsibility for deliberate actions undertaken by them as recently as last month," a company spokesman tells The Reg. That would be the ImageMaker incident, when Microsoft was forced to remove a Windows 7 media and administration tool from the Microsoft Store site after a violation of the GPL. Microsoft did indeed blame a third party, and it later open sourced the tool.

Speaking with The Reg, Plurk questions whether today's statement from Microsoft is just more spin. "It just appears to be a stop-gap measure, damage-control measure, and we have a very hard time believing, given the size and scope of the undertaking, that there was no active involvement or development taking place directly within Microsoft itself on this service," the company said.

"While they have temporarily shut the site down, it appears some of the lifted code still appears to be on the club.msn.cn site", citing this chunk of code as "just one example."

Clearly, some wrinkles still need to be ironed out in the resolution of the Plurk/Microsoft

Microsoft cops to webcode theft

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dust-up. As Microsoft said in its statement: "We are obviously very disappointed, but we assume responsibility for this situation. We apologize to Plurk and we will be reaching out to them directly to explain what happened and the steps we have taken to resolve the situation."