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Musk Slams Zuckerberg, Sends Cease and Desist Over Meta's "Copycat" App

The gloves are coming off — in more ways than one.

Only a day after launching its Threads app, tech giant Meta (the conglomerate that owns Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and other platforms) was slapped with a [cease-and-desist letter](#) from Twitter owner Elon Musk, who claims Threads is a copy of Twitter that was made by former Twitter employees using the company's trade secrets.

Musk's attorney, Alex Spiro, penned the letter on July 5 and sent it to Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, accusing the company of engaging in "systematic, willful, and unlawful misappropriation of Twitter's trade secrets and other intellectual property."

"Over the past year, Meta has hired dozens of former Twitter employees," Spiro writes. "Meta knows that these employees formerly worked at Twitter; that these employees had and continue to have Twitter's trade secrets and other highly confidential information; that these employees owe ongoing obligations to Twitter; and that many of these employees improperly retained Twitter documents and electronic devices."

"With that knowledge," Musk's lawyer continued, "Meta deliberately assigned these employees to develop, in a matter of months, Meta's copycat 'Threads' app with the specific intent that they use Twitter's trade secrets and other intellectual property to accelerate the development of Meta's competing app, in violation of both state and federal law as well as those employees' ongoing obligations to Twitter."

Musk himself commented [on Twitter](#) that "Competition is fine, cheating is not."

Meta spokesperson Andy Stone took to Threads on Thursday to [fire back](#) at Twitter, writing: "No one on the Threads engineering team is a former Twitter employee — that's just not a thing."

A [press release](#) from Meta announcing the launch of Threads described the company's vision for the app:

Mark Zuckerberg just announced the initial version of Threads, an app built by the Instagram team for sharing with text. Whether you're a creator or a casual poster, Threads offers a new, separate space for real-time updates and public conversations. We are working toward making Threads compatible with the open, interoperable social networks that we believe can shape the future of the internet.

Instagram is where billions of people around the world connect over photos and videos. Our



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vision with Threads is to take what Instagram does best and expand that to text, creating a positive and creative space to express your ideas. Just like on Instagram, with Threads you can follow and connect with friends and creators who share your interests - including the people you follow on Instagram and beyond. And you can use our existing suite of safety and user controls.

Zuckerberg personally [wrote](#) of his latest creation, “Our vision is to take the best parts of Instagram and create a new experience for text, ideas and discussing what’s on your mind. I think the world needs this kind of friendly community, and I’m grateful to all of you who are part of Threads from day one.”

Within hours of its debut, Threads already had 30 million new users. The platform is similar to Twitter in that it allows users to like or repost messages, but, as the company notes, it can be integrated with Instagram.

The current legal and business fight between Musk and Zuckerberg is ironic given that the two tech executives have been talking over the last month about engaging in a hand-to-hand cage match.

During a Twitter Spaces broadcast with reporter Ashlee Vance of *Bloomberg*, Musk said he believes the fight will actually take place, though he did not give specifics about place and time.

As *The Verge* transcribed:

Vance: I would be remiss if I did not ask you about this cage match and how your training is going for that.

Musk: Well, I haven’t started training yet, so... if it does happen, I will train.

Vance: [Zuck] takes this stuff pretty seriously. This could go, this could go badly.

Musk: Yeah that’s possible.

Vance: Alright, we’ll go to space, unless you have other thoughts on the cage match.

Musk: I mean I think it might actually happen.

Talk of a fight between Musk and Zuckerberg began last month when Meta chief product officer Chris Cox took a jab at Twitter by saying that Threads would be “sanely run.” A user on Twitter warned Musk that Zuckerberg has jiu-jitsu training, to which the Twitter owner replied that he was “up for a cage match if he is lol.” That same day, Zuckerberg published an Instagram post in which he seemed to accept the challenge.

Cage match or no cage match, the dispute between Twitter and Meta suggests that improved free speech conditions of Twitter since Elon Musk’s purchase of the platform (some users still report suspensions and censorship, but overall there is reportedly less than under Jack Dorsey and his successor) make the establishment uncomfortable, which is why they feel the need to create a Twitter alternative — Threads — that has the pro-leftist censorship features that are built into Facebook and Instagram.

Will Threads cement a place as one of the major platforms like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube? Or will it ultimately be left in the dust as a Twitter imitation?



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