United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit

SYNCHRONOSS TECHNOLOGIES, INC.,
Plaintiff-Appellant

v.

DROPBOX, INC.,
Defendant-Cross-Appellant

FUNAMBOL, INC.,
Defendant

2019-2196, 2019-2199

Appeals from the United States District Court for the Northern District of California in No. 4:16-cv-00119-HSG, Judge Haywood S. Gilliam, Jr.

Decided: February 12, 2021

MARK LEE HOGGE, Dentons US LLP, Washington, DC, argued for plaintiff-appellant. Also represented by RAJESH CHARLES NORONHA, KIRK ROBERT RUTHENBERG; KEVIN R. GREENLEAF, Lovettsville, VA.

ADAM HARBER, Williams & Connolly LLP, Washington, DC, argued for defendant-cross-appellant. Also represented by DEBMALLO SHAYON GHOSH, DAVID M. KRINSKY, CHRISTOPHER MANDERNACH, THOMAS H.L. SELBY.

Before PROST, *Chief Judge*, REYNA and TARANTO, *Circuit Judges*.

REYNA, *Circuit Judge*.

Synchronoss Technologies, Inc. appeals the district court's decisions that all asserted claims, drawn to technology for synchronizing data across multiple devices, are either invalid under 35 U.S.C. § 112, paragraph 2, or not infringed. Defendant Dropbox, Inc. cross-appeals asserting that all claims at issue are patent ineligible subject matter under § 101. For the reasons discussed below, we affirm the district court's conclusions of invalidity under § 112 and non-infringement and do not reach the question of patent eligibility.

BACKGROUND

A. The Asserted Patents

In its infringement suit, Synchronoss Technologies, Inc. ("Synchronoss") alleged that Dropbox, Inc. ("Dropbox") infringes U.S. Patent Nos. 6,671,757 ("'757 patent"), 6,757,696 ("'696 patent"), and 7,587,446 ("'446 patent") (collectively, "asserted patents").[1] The '757 patent describes a system for synchronizing data across multiple systems or devices connected via the Internet. The system generally involves one device or system that utilizes a first sync engine, a second device or system that utilizes a second sync engine, and a data store. *See* '757 patent abstract (J.A. 6811). The first sync engine detects "difference information," sends that information to the data store, and the

---

[1]   During the litigation, Synchronoss asserted claims 1, 8, 9, 14, 16, 21, 24, 26, and 28 of the '757 patent, claims 1, 2, 6–15, 18 and 19 of the '446 patent, and claims 1, 3, 5, 6, and 9–14 of the '696 patent. *See* Appellant's Br. 13.

data store in turn sends it to the second sync engine. *See id.* Using this system, "two devices need not be coupled to each other to perform a sync." *Id.* at col. 3 ll. 30–31. The '757 patent also explains that synchronization using the disclosed system "can occur at independent times using an intervening network based storage server to store changes to data for all the different devices in the system . . . ." *Id.* at col. 3 ll. 25–28. Claim 1 is illustrative and recites:

> 1. A system for synchronizing data between a first system and a second system, comprising:
>
> a first sync engine on the first system interfacing with data on the first system to provide difference information in a difference transaction;
>
> a data store coupled to the network and in communication with the first and second systems; and
>
> a second sync engine on the second system coupled to receive the difference information in the difference transaction from the data store via the network, and interfacing with data on the second system to update said data on the second system with said difference information;
>
> wherein each said sync engine comprises a data interface, a copy of a previous state of said data, and a difference transaction generator.

Id. at col. 46 l. 58–col. 47 l. 7. Remaining independent claims 16 and 24 are structured similarly to claim 1 but, among other differences, recite first and second "devices" rather than first and second "systems." *See id.* at col. 48 ll. 1–24, 51–64.

The '696 patent discloses a synchronization agent management server connected to a plurality of synchronization agents via the Internet. *See* '696 patent abstract (J.A. 6861). The patent summarizes the claimed inventions as being drawn to a controller for a synchronization

system that maintains matching records and data for a user across multiple networked devices. *See id.* at col. 3 ll. 20–23. It further explains that the disclosed inventions relate to a system for "transferring data between two devices[,] which require information to be shared between them." *Id.* at col. 4 ll. 25–27. The synchronization agent management server "compris[es] a user login authenticator, a user data flow controller, and a unique user identification controller." *Id.* at abstract. Claim 1 is illustrative and recites:

> 1. A controller for a synchronization system, comprising:
>
> a user identifier module;
>
> an authentication module identifying a user coupled to the synchronization system;
>
> a synchronization manager communicating with at least one interactive agent to control data migration between a first network coupled device and a second network device;
>
> a transaction identifier module assigning a universally unique identifier to each user of transaction objects in said data store; and
>
> a current table of universally unique identifier values and versioning information, generated by versioning modules on said devices associating a transaction identifier with each transaction object, providing a root structure for understanding the data package files.

J.A. 6901. Remaining asserted independent claims 9 and 16 cover similar subject matter, except that claim 9 recites a "user authentication module" instead of an "authentication module." *Id.* at col. 45 ll. 49–56; J.A. 6899. Also, claim 16 recites a "user login authenticator" rather than claim 1's

"authentication module," and it additionally recites a "user data flow controller." *Id.* at col. 46 ll. 13–20; J.A. 6899.

The '446 patent describes a "method for transferring media data to a network coupled apparatus." '446 patent abstract (J.A. 6902). The patent summarizes the disclosed inventions as methods that involve (i) maintaining a "music store" in a user's dedicated personal information space and (ii) transferring some of the data from that personal information space to the user's Internet-coupled device upon request. *See id.* at col. 3 ll. 45–51. Claim 1 is illustrative and recites:

> 1. A method of transferring media data to a network coupled apparatus, comprising:
>
> (a) maintaining a personal information space identified with a user including media data comprising a directory of digital media files, the personal information space being coupled to a server and a network;
>
> (b) generating a first version of the media data in the personal information space;
>
> (c) generating a digital media file, in response to an input from the user, comprising a second version of the media data in a same format as the first version in the personal information space, the second version including an update not included in the first version;
>
> (d) obtaining difference information comprising differences between the first version of the media data and the second version of the media data; and
>
> (e) transferring a digital media file over the network containing the difference information from the personal information space to the network coupled apparatus in response to a sync request made

DOCKET ALARM

Explore Litigation Insights

Docket Alarm provides insights to develop a more informed litigation strategy and the peace of mind of knowing you're on top of things.

Real-Time Litigation Alerts

Keep your litigation team up-to-date with **real-time alerts** and advanced team management tools built for the enterprise, all while greatly reducing PACER spend.

Our comprehensive service means we can handle Federal, State, and Administrative courts across the country.

Advanced Docket Research

With over 230 million records, Docket Alarm's cloud-native docket research platform finds what other services can't. Coverage includes Federal, State, plus PTAB, TTAB, ITC and NLRB decisions, all in one place.

Identify arguments that have been successful in the past with full text, pinpoint searching. Link to case law cited within any court document via Fastcase.

Analytics At Your Fingertips

Learn what happened the last time a particular judge, opposing counsel or company faced cases similar to yours.

Advanced out-of-the-box PTAB and TTAB analytics are always at your fingertips.

API

Docket Alarm offers a powerful API (application programming interface) to developers that want to integrate case filings into their apps.

LAW FIRMS
Build custom dashboards for your attorneys and clients with live data direct from the court.

Automate many repetitive legal tasks like conflict checks, document management, and marketing.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS
Litigation and bankruptcy checks for companies and debtors.

E-DISCOVERY AND LEGAL VENDORS
Sync your system to PACER to automate legal marketing.

fastcase®
Smarter legal research.