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# Architect Accuses Google of Stealing Sustainable Building Designs

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SAN FRANCISCO — A Texas law firm has accused Google Inc. of stealing the technology behind a project it billed as a "radical solution" that would reduce global carbon footprints and increase housing availability.

Flux Factory Inc. was born in 2012 out of Google's secretive research laboratory, Google X, which also gave birth to Google's self-driving cars. Flux raised \$8 million this year to fund the creation of sustainable buildings, according to a company release.

But lawyers with Dallas firm Buether Joe & Carpenter say Flux is founded on intellectual property stolen from New York architect Eli Attia. In a [complaint](#) filed Friday in Santa Clara County Superior Court, the lawyers accuse Google of luring Attia into deal talks before commandeering his technology and pushing him out of the project. The complaint accuses Google, Flux and executives including Larry Page and Sergey Brin of misappropriation of trade secrets, breach of contract, slander of title, unfair competition and fraud.

"Despite Google's own motto of 'don't be evil,' the defendants remorselessly discarded Mr. Attia, misappropriated his proprietary information and know-how, and proceeded to develop and exploit Mr. Attia's ideas and know-how for their own benefit," Attia's lawyers wrote. "Defendants have deprived humanity of the efficient, sustainable technology it urgently needs."

Neither Google nor Flux returned emails seeking comment.

In 2009, Attia was looking for a partner to help develop technology he'd created for constructing sustainable buildings. Google X contacted Attia in July 2010 to propose a collaboration, according to the complaint. The two parties agreed Google X would develop Attia's technology for a period of several months in an experiment called Project Genie, and then decide whether to move forward or scrap the project. They executed a nondisclosure agreement in August 2010, according to the complaint. Google had estimated the finished product could yield \$120 billion a year, according to Attia's lawyers.

But in 2011, Attia's lawyers say Google executives reneged on their promise and instead hatched a plan to squeeze Attia out.

"In fact," Attia's lawyers wrote, "when Mr. Attia unexpectedly walked into a conference room where such a meeting was being held, the participants immediately stopped all conversation, each staring at the others like a fox caught in the henhouse."

Defendants told Attia they had killed the project in December 2011, according to the complaint, and then went on to form Flux Factory in 2012 based on technology developed by the Genie project.

The Buether Joe & Carpenter attorneys filed the complaint on behalf of Max Sound Corp., an audio technology company that bought the authority to enforce Attia's intellectual property rights in May.

It's the second IP case Max Sound has brought against Google this year. In an earlier patent infringement suit in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, Max Sound accused Google of ripping off London-based VSL Communications, which also granted IP enforcement rights to Max Sound.

That case made headlines for the novel nature of the claims—plaintiffs lawyers with Grant & Eisenhofer claimed Google accidentally provided VSL with [Post-it notes](#) that detailed plans to steal the smaller company's intellectual property. Plaintiffs have since removed mention of the Post-its from their claims, presumably over concerns about work product and attorney-client privilege.

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