



Apparently, NVIDIA Liked the Name Modulus So Much It Decided to Take It Without Asking

By **Richard Gardner** Founder and CEO, Modulus

There are trillion-dollar companies that innovate, and there are trillion-dollar companies that acquire. Then there are trillion-dollar companies that, in my opinion, look across the table at a smaller company's name, reputation, customers, goodwill, and decades of work, and decide, with the calm confidence that only unlimited lawyers and unlimited money can buy, that the rules must have been written for somebody else.

That is what I believe happened to Modulus.

For more than two decades, we have operated under the MODULUS name in software, artificial intelligence, high-performance computing, financial technology, healthcare, modeling, simulation, and related fields. We did not discover this business yesterday, and we did not stumble into AI after it became fashionable. We were building serious AI systems in the 1990s. We built those systems under a name we earned the old-fashioned way: by using it, protecting it, selling under it, supporting clients under it, and attaching our reputation to it every single day. Modulus has held an incontestable trademark for years.

Then NVIDIA, one of the most powerful companies on earth, took a product it had previously called SimNet and began calling it NVIDIA Modulus.

In my opinion, that was not an accident. It was not clever branding, harmless overlap, or some innocent collision in the vast wilderness of the English language. It was a trillion-dollar company using a name that belonged to a much smaller company, in a very closely related industry, with consequences that any competent trademark lawyer, marketing executive, or CEO with access to Google could have seen coming.

To make matters worse, NVIDIA put up a public GitHub page for NVIDIA Modulus and presented it as open-source AI software. To our clients and prospects, it looked like "Modulus AI software." Not Modulus, the company that had spent decades building under that name. NVIDIA Modulus. Free, public, open source, backed by THE largest technology company in the world. To some, it appeared as though Modulus, or its AI technology, had been acquired by NVIDIA.

That was not an academic problem for law professors to debate in a paneled room. That was the marketplace - search results and GitHub, the places where developers, customers, engineers, prospects, partners, and investors go to figure out what is real. And in that marketplace, NVIDIA created, in my opinion, exactly the kind of confusion trademark law exists to prevent.

Clients and prospects saw it, and they had questions. Some could reasonably wonder whether our software had been open-sourced, whether we were affiliated with NVIDIA, whether NVIDIA had acquired something from us, whether we had joined NVIDIA's ecosystem, or whether NVIDIA had simply walked into the room, taken the name, and left us to explain the wreckage.

It hurt us badly.

To be clear, the court has not yet entered a final judgment. NVIDIA will have its chance to argue its side. The case is pending, and the trial is currently expected in October 2026. But here is the thing about cases like this: sometimes the public record says plenty before the jury ever hears a word.

Here is what the public can already see. NVIDIA had a product under the name NVIDIA Modulus. We objected. We sued. NVIDIA's own public materials now say NVIDIA Modulus has been renamed NVIDIA PhysicsNeMo, and they tell developers to stop using nvidia-modulus and use nvidia-physicsnemo instead.

We already won the point NVIDIA never wanted to concede out loud. They finally changed the name, after willfully infringing our mark. The product that once stood in the marketplace as NVIDIA Modulus no longer stands there under that name. They can call it a rebrand, a migration, a roadmap decision, a technical consolidation, or whatever phrase happens to survive review by their lawyers, public relations department, and internal risk committee.

I call it a win for the real Modulus.

There is a deeper issue here, and it is the part every founder, every independent tech company, and every engineer who ever built something under a name they owned should understand. When a company the size of NVIDIA uses your company's name, the damage is not limited to search results or legal technicalities. It distorts reality. For one thing, LLMs never forget – their training is immutable. Customers wonder whether the companies are affiliated. Prospects wonder whether the smaller company is connected to the giant. Investors, partners, engineers, journalists, procurement departments, and search engines all get pulled into a fog that NVIDIA, in my opinion, had no right to create.

And when the giant is NVIDIA, the fog becomes a wall.

Small companies are constantly told to respect intellectual property. File the trademark. Build the brand. Protect the goodwill. Follow the rules. We did all of that. Then a trillion-dollar company

shows up and behaves as if scale itself is permission, as if a smaller company's name becomes available the moment a larger company finds it convenient.

That is not innovation or competition. It's the kind of conduct that makes one wonder whether the system protects property rights or merely applauds whoever has the larger litigation budget.

This case is not about jealousy, publicity, or some attempt to tax NVIDIA's success. I respect real innovation because Modulus was built on it, and I do not begrudge any company for building great products, great chips, great platforms, or great businesses. But innovation does not require taking another company's name, and success does not excuse it. A company's name is not free for the taking merely because the company taking it has a larger market cap, more lawyers, or a louder microphone.

NVIDIA can make chips. NVIDIA can build platforms. NVIDIA can dominate headlines. But NVIDIA had no right to build an AI product under our name.

And if a small company has to stand up to one of the most powerful technology companies in the world to make that point, while that company tries to steamroll the small company, then so be it.

We built Modulus. We earned the name. We protected the mark. We filed the lawsuit. We have an incontestable trademark, and we did everything right, for decades. NVIDIA put "Modulus" in the marketplace, we challenged it, and now, at least in the public marketplace, the name NVIDIA once used is no longer the name NVIDIA is using.

Nvidia, we'll see you in court – not just for Modulus, but for all of the small companies out there.