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OgameNL - team / Lorovus / Ogame Global

Gameforge
Karlsruhe, Germany
lorovus@ogame.hu

Dear Team,

For a while now I've been sitting on a bunch of complaints.

Some I have opened tickets about, others have spoken out publicly, and some I have kept to myself.

Recent actions taken against me have pushed me over the brink of what I'm willing to accept. Which I have already made clear in public.

One Admin implored me to make a ticket, instead of using public channels to vent my complaints, so I hereby will take another shot at the "official" channels. This letter will at first be posted as a ticket, and to Lorovus by email.

I will try to write this letter in a format that limits the amount of private information used. If you find something that you would like to see redacted, I forward you to the final closing statements of my letter.

In this letter I will talk about several issues and refer to those tickets; Some issues are spread around multiple tickets, and I implore the team to do their own research. I will however summarize said tickets in this letter. In this letter I will not be naming any of the volunteering team members directly. I will however be directly naming Coma's; since they are employed by gameforge and should be accountable for their actions and words. It also doesn't make any sense to "redact" their names since it will be pretty obvious who I will be talking about.

Allright, introductions are over; let's "get this show on the road."

Backstory Complaint 1 - Graveyard account

On July 6th 2023 I opened the ticket (19238137). This was pretty soon after the merge rules were changed, in which the account got stuck in the .cz community. In this ticket I made a request to have my account transferred to .nl, which is the main community I play on. The first reply in this ticket was already off, they did not read my original ticket. Bummer, well it happens. I went back and forth with a GO a few times, and finally got forwarded to an admin. Who told me that I had no eligible universes for said account; and I should wait for one of my other accounts to transfer to the graveyard so that there would be a place for the account I wanted to have transferred.

Another admin took over, and told me a different story and basically said I was screwed. We go back and forth again, and eventually we circle back to the “i would need to have a place for the account first”

My entire issue was not that I wanted to play on the account, I just wanted it to have the “.nl nationality” that in the event I wanted to play it, it would be in my community, and not some foreign place that I took a trip to one day cause it seemed fun. All the problems in this case, are created by gameforge; they created the original graveyard, with said rules; they made the new rules. This entire case is a problem created by decisions made by Gameforge, but somehow I am the one receiving punishment for it. This concluded on July 14th where 2nd admin was going to look at the options available.

I never received a reply to this.

On September 4th 2023 I opened the ticket (19290100). This was a continuation of the story above. (I was forced to make a new ticket, since the original ticket was no longer active and I couldn't add anything to it)

I received the reply that my previous given exception to be transferred was revoked, without any reasoning given. We went back and forth a couple of times, before eventually I got a reply from Lorovus. This reply explained the reasoning behind the decision to deny my request for transfer. Reasoning given was one sided, again; it's an issue that's created by gameforge - and they had the option to shut it down years ago, before it would've become such a big issue.

I gave my reasoning, and in the end I got an exception and was allowed to have my account merged. Yay, victory. Or so I thought. I reiterated that; I had already gotten permission back in July - but that there was no eligible universe to have it transferred to, and that that was the issue we were stranded on. On this I got a reply that made no sense regarding the issue I wrote, and I just couldn't anymore. We are now on September 29th, 2023.

On April 4th 2024 I opened the ticket (19510266). This is again, regarding said account (still) stuck in .cz. An old returning player was coming back to play, and I thought of my old account, stuck in .cz; thinking it might be a good starting point for someone's return. In this ticket I first end up having to explain that I got permission previously, (which I somehow have to prove myself, even though I spoke about the previous tickets in my opening of the ticket.) I basically get the "tough luck" response a couple of times, until eventually I get forwarded to Lorovus again. I have a back and forth with Lorovus for the coming few months, in the end making it go full circle a couple of times, each time coming back to the exception being given/thought about part, but no target universe to get the account to. In the meantime, it's now June 12th 2024. Here I again have to explain, that my original intent for the ticket has long passed; it's now been over 2 months since I started this ticket, and said person I wanted to hand it over to, has now built up something himself. We are back to the "I just want it to be a .nl account" this is where the backstory ends for my first complaint.

Complaint 1

It's absolutely ridiculous how I have to explain myself several times over. For one issue. How I can get "an exception" several times, but be denied it the next; not to mention, the amount of time these tickets have taken. Especially the last one.

I repeat: The issue originates from decisions and systems made by Gameforge. They are cause and effect. They are responsible for a solution.

Backstory Complaint 2 - The Destroyer Plushy

Earlier this year Gameforge announced their partnership with makeship, regarding an Ogame plushie

Having been active on Ogame, for Ogame, and with Ogame since the mid 2000s, and being in a position to waste some money; I ordered the Plushie. While in retrospect, making a plushie from a ship is not that easy of a job, I acknowledge that. And I can see how this was possibly something not thought about. Once the first design ideas became clear, it should have however been shot down - and rebranded into something entirely different. The design now, is absolutely hideous. And there has been zero communication about this; heck GF is trying as hard as possible to sit this one out by not announcing anything about the plushie since the original post. There has been a silent

board post on that it was funded, but it's obviously been made clear to not provide any pictures of the final design on any of Ogames channels just to avoid embarrassment. I wrote a complaint regarding this, both to makeship and to gameforge. Gameforge instantly forwarded me to the game team; without any message. This made me open a new ticket, saying that putting my complaint to VOLUNTEER game staff is ridiculous. I got a reply again, and guess what, they couldn't help me and I got transferred to the game team again. Allright, ill sit this out - It took a while but I got forwarded to Lorovus; Finally, someone that's willing to, at least not shirk responsibility by at least giving a reply. He told me that gameforge only gave a concept; and had no part in further design. Do mind, by this point I still had zero response from Makeship. I did not accept this answer; gameforge themselves named it a partnership, and in partnership there will at least be someone at gameforge that has seen the design before it was made public, heck I would be pretty sure someone greenlighted the design at gameforge before makeship made it public. I did eventually get a reply from makeship, where they offered me to cancel. In which I feel that at least they take responsibility for a bad design - as they originally have a no refund/cancellation policy due to the nature of their product. I also got another reply from them, since I asked who was responsible for the design - in which they replied that gameforge provided a creator, and they worked together to come to a design - this is quite a different story then that I got from Gameforge, you could assume that "creator" is the one that provided a concept; but gameforge is trying really hard to minimize their involvement, while makeship is taking responsibility. This ends the backstory on complaint 2.

Complaint 2

How hard is it to take some responsibility - it's absolutely ridiculous how the first reply to a ticket regarding this comes from a game operator. No offense to him, he tried to answer my question which was way beyond his responsibilities as volunteer staff; paid employees by gameforge did not want to reply, and they threw it to a volunteer. I can't help but feel that gameforge and its employees are stuck in some kind of liability hell where they do anything to avoid liability. Hence the forwarding to the game team - they are volunteers and in the end, whatever they replied with can be "fixed", and delays, or in most cases removes any liability towards said employees.

Backstory Complaint 3 - Censorship and Discord

On 24th of May 2024 Prongs posted a public apology regarding recent updates that brought with them many issues, and broke many addons.

In my eyes, the only reason this apology was given is due to the high backlash from the community, and creators of said addons. Which, in a way is fair - it does leave a bad taste since many complaints regarding updates and bad performance afterwards are left unanswered.

I wrote a piece about this on the ogame-chat on discord, and in a thread where there was a public vote on reverting the recent patch, I wrote and asked people to dislike said forum post.

I received a 7 day discord mute for something on the same day. After contacting a bunch of volunteers on the discord, I finally found out why - Apparently, I was being disrespectful "Treat one how you like to be treated yourself" or something along those lines, I'm paraphrasing here. The mute was set by Prongs. I contacted prongs through discord, on why exactly I was muted, and that the way the mute system works on discord is not very respectful. (You get 0 notice of it, no reason, nothing - just a "you are muted for X:XX:XX".)

I ended up not getting any information on what I said that muted me. Which caused me to make a ticket (653514) on 27th May 2024 regarding this issue. (since I was once again reminded to "complain in proper channels".

In this ticket I again wrote my piece, including my assumptions of what I might have said that caused my discord mute. I also again reiterated that; the reasoning behind the mute might be fair, but the way the mute is done, is also disrespectful. Here I got a reply from prongs after 7 days; In this reply my questions remained unanswered - I still did not know what caused my discord mute. And regarding the way mutes are done I just got a "we are free to enforce rules however we want" again - I'm paraphrasing, not exact usage of words.

In my reply to this, I gave 8 points. (below points are paraphrase, if they are direct quotes it will be mentioned)

- 1) I still did not know why I was muted
- 2) the subject of respect wasn't defended or answered

3 requires a bit more info, In the reply Prongs gave me before Prongs claimed that I called for someone to be fired, and that is something they don't accept. I'll directly quote "3" from the ticket

3) "I don't recall calling for someone to be fired; I only recall stating today regarding the plushy, that whoever greenlighted that should be fired. which is a whole other matter altogether which we, maybe eventually get to once those tickets get on your plate (i'll try to remind you when it happens, it'll probably take months)"

(yes, I am pretty much out of patience at this point, thanks for asking)

This is also the moment I realize I skipped point 4 and 5 in my ticket; tough morning it was I guess.

6) Yes, moderation is up to whatever standard GF/Ogame set. This however does not mean that I can not complain about set standards, nor is it acceptable that you are not upholding standards that you, yourself set.

7) If asking people to dislike a forum post is considered toxicity, then there is a different issue altogether - that's censorship. How is it toxic to ask people to give their opinion on a forum post?

8) I go off on a tangent about how I was making assumptions - tl;dr is that I can't be faulted for making assumptions if information given, and available, is limited. Assumptions are always made, and the only reason mine are said to be wrong is because they were negative towards their goal with the forum post. I also said that at this point in time - I have no more "trust" towards gameforge and his/her decisions.

This reply was made on 4th of June 2024.

2 days later (June 6th), I noticed the ticket was closed without reply. I reopened it, asking for clarification and answers.

5 days later (June 11th), I noticed the ticket was closed without reply, again. I again reopened it, asking for clarification and answers.

We've yet to receive a response on this.

Complaint 3

In a way, you can say my complaint is worded in the backstory. I guess it can be summed up to the following:

Lack of communication,

Doing everything in their power to prevent having to give clarity

Double standards regarding respect.

It just looks to me that any excuse that can be used to limit criticism, is being used.

Update regarding complaint 3. While writing this I received a reply from Prongs, which again did not answer my question regarding what I did wrong. But also added the propaganda to the mix. Which is funny, cause I can actually see that being applicable to me; but only in the past few days - days that were way after when this question was asked. So this again is just reasoning that apparently being gathered to not answer my question. Nice.

Backstory Complaint 4 - Permanent ban “Breach of T&C”

13th of June 2024 I received 2 permanent bans for “Breach of T&C. While you could say that “Terms and conditions” and “Terms of use” are interchangeable, they are however used in different situations - and Gameforge does not have a “Terms and conditions” for Ogame. It uses “Terms of use”. In anycase, it's weird how you get banned with reasoning that does not exist.

In any case, let's get past that small alteration and continue the story.

On the 13th of June 2024 I opened the ticket (19572547). This was a short message, I only asked for clarification on what I was banned for. As zero information was provided.

I get told (and I quote):

“Jouw account heeft een ban gekregen voor Breach of T&C.

Specifiek gaat het hier om punt 6.4a. Je kunt onze T&C nalezen op onderstaande link.

https://agbserver.gameforge.com/files/pdf/en_GB/general_terms_of_use.pdf“

Which would translate to:

“Your account has been banned for Breach of T&C.

Specifically speaking, point 6.4a. You can read our T&C on the following link: insert link already shared above”

Jolly, again T&C being mentioned, but terms of use are what's being shared. Fine, I'll ignore that discrepancy, once again.

Section 6.4a is the following, and I directly quote the send document:

“6.4. The user is obliged to refrain from any form of manipulative intervention

in the Gameforge Services. In particular, without limitation, the user is not permitted

a) to perform actions or use tools that may impair the intended function or the program or game flow; this includes in particular the use of cheats, mods, hacks, bots (and similar programs and functions that automate actions to be performed manually) and data mining tools,”

Oh that's wonderful, we've passed hurdle one.

My reply to this was that I only ever used officially acknowledged tools by the Ogame/gameforge Team. Which in my case would be Oglight and Antigame. (these are not active at the same time) I also said that, on the information provided it's completely one sided, and impossible for me to provide a defense.

The reply I got to this was the following question:

(paraphrasing)

“Please talk us through an average day on Ogame”

Which included a handful of questions: “What time do you get up, what time do you go to bed - What kind of missions do you send, and with what frequency, How do you combine playing and work/school - What addons do you use - Do you play alone on this account”

In my reply to this, I first asked for an answer to my earlier question (paraphrasing: “Show/tell me what I did wrong”)

And talked about an, in my mind, average day on Ogame. I am, however, not omnipotent - even if people might think otherwise. So most wording used is non definitive.

The reply to this was that the following; and it's a translated direct quote:

“As we've said, your account is banned for automating, Which we can see in the logs.

The proof we have for this, we will not share with players and after setting punishment, the burden of proof is on the player

Your story also does not match (completely) with what we see in our logs. Again: It's not allowed to automate (parts) of your account as said in our T&C 6.4a”

There was some filler info after this, but this touches upon the important part of the story.

This reply doesn't tell me anything, it only makes me assume that he used my explanation of how a day goes, to somehow prove something he saw in the logs. I am also pretty sure he changed the reasoning for the ban on one of the accounts banned after this explanation. I however, did not make a screenshot of this so while I trust my judgment I can't verify or prove this. This feels malicious - if my conjecture is in fact true, it means that the bans were set on assumption and not direct proof. Which is against the policy the team is directed to follow. In any case, let's continue.

I replied to this ticket, asking how exactly I would go about proving my innocence, when after 3 replies asking what I did wrong, I'm still not made clear of what I actually did do wrong. I can't defend my case if no facts are being given. All I'm given is a vague statement: Automating. In this reply I also asked what was wrong in my story and reiterated that my story is not a direct log of an average day.

In this reply I also stated that I had doubts about the statements and "proof" that's said to be logged regarding my case.

A few minutes later, I received a reply. Stating that; I should not be making assumptions, cause those are not productive. That's just a joke. You can't expect me to not make assumptions when you are trying to be as vague as possible. After that there's a long useless explanation about how he's expected to provide reasoning without any basis. (that's a rough translation, obviously)

I reply with that, he can't expect me to not make assumptions if i'm not provided information. I clarify that I have not been provided actual reasoning, only a reason. And that, if he can't even tell me why my story doesn't fit, how am I supposed to accept said reason (note: reason, not reasoning)

I also clarify that for a perm ban, I expect reasoning, cause for such apparently big offense to warrant a permanent suspension; there has to be concrete and heavy evidence that without the shadow of a doubt proves my wrongdoings.

In reply to this, I got the short reply of "we see automation in the logs"

In my reply to this I mentioned that repeating myself is unnecessary; and that I would like a reply to the question I asked several messages before.

Those questions were the following:

- 1) What proof could I provide that shows my innocence?
- 2) Why is the ban permanent on the basis that it is my first alleged offense?

I also state that I'm not particularly pleased that I have to fall in constant repetition and repeat questions, And that if this is the way he will continue, I'd

like to be forwarded to someone that will give answers to my questions.

In reply to this; he responded with another vague, unnecessary explanation of what his earlier questions were for. This explanation however is redundant and only leaves more room for me to make assumptions. The thing he doesn't want me to do.

He also replied that my ban is permanent, due to the "big offense" it is. He also made effort to clarify the following (translated direct quote): "It is more then clear and proven to us that your accounts are automated, and for this reason you shall not be having your accounts returned"

I find this a weird blanket statement - nothing has been proven, only a verdict has been given. In any case;

In response to this; My first question was to whom I could forward the bill for the dry cleaner due to pissing myself from laughter. I can't reiterate enough how bad of a response the earlier ticket was. I asked specific questions, and they got ignored, once again - while I clearly stated that if he was not going to answer them, he should forward the ticket to someone who can. If said person does not exist, it should've been forwarded to Lorovus to deal with. In any case, let's continue on my response:

I clarified that, his response was hilarious; and that it proves 1 of my points

The following is a direct quote (translated)

1) *"I don't know what behavior you saw on my account - how am I to respond to this?"*

I clarified that we are now 12 messages into this ticket, and I've yet to be told what I did wrong, even after asking for it several times; I also wrote it made me do 2 assumptions:

- 1) You don't want to respond to my questions with depth, and are only stalling for time.
- 2) You don't have direct evidence.

I said that, with his reply I once again got a more or less same reply as before, even though I've directly said I don't want to turn this into a constant repetition of myself. And that, with his reply he still failed to answer my first question.

It is now June 17th 2024.

Complaint 4

I'm going to try and keep this short, as I already did a lot of complaining in my backstory on this.

1)Communication is unprofessional. It appears to be completely on the basis of stalling for time.

2)Questions remain unanswered; I've never asked for direct logs or anything; an answer of "you did this or that" would have sufficed (and no, "you automated" is not a full answer to this question. It would be "you automated expedition" or "you automated raiding"

Don't forget, I know how the tool works - and while there might have been changes in the past 2 years; i know how much changed in the 14 years before that as well and so it can't have been much. And I also know that automation bans are 95% of the times made out of conjecture and assumptions.

Complaint 5

Complaint 5 has no backstory- or well, the backstory is my entire history with Ogame, which is too much to put into writing and my 4 complaints above..

We've been here since the early/mid 2000s, we've had several team positions; we know how the game works since more or less when it was started and we have decent knowledge on how the team functions in general.

- 1) The appeal process is broken, and is solely there to delay, with intent of people abstaining from even trying.
- 2) Some volunteers have issues; and are on a high horse, they are overconfident on their qualifications and think their opinion based reasoning is fact.
- 3) Coma's need to be more on drugs - I can't put into words how frustrating it is to have to wait 7+ days on a ticket reply - a reply that does not even answer your question. And then, you have to wait 7+ days again. And maybe you get a response.
- 4) If more than 1 question is asked in a ticket, then chances are you get half a response to one of them - what is this, I'm not even joking or blowing it up - It happens consistently, I'm not even sure if it's by design or if it's by accident.

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- 5) In the last few years we've seen our fair share of decisions and updates made by gameforge. All of them directly affect the players, obviously. And while improvement is not to be frowned upon; some decisions are undone later. (looking at graveyard and combat expo here) Some of these decisions had major economical effect on the game (talking in game economics, not €€) and with everyone being destined to be, eventually merged into universes where people did abuse said systems, heavily destroys balance (even more so than merges already do on their own) Gameforge does not take responsibility for these mistakes, all the issues that stem forth from this are laid down on the users. Account stuck in foreign country? Well "we changed our policy". Your highly €€ invested rank 1 account is now forced to merge to a universe in which you will end up being barely top 10, and the entire way you build up your account is now "wrong" since there's at least 10 people that can ruin your day for nothing now? "Your original universe was dead, so it had to be merged" And I am sure there are more examples to make.
 - 6) A general lack of acceptance regarding responsibility
 - 7) A general lack of respect towards its users, and customers.
 - 8) The way gameforge is responding to questions and complaints leads to assumptions that the only way to be heard is through legal - which is again used to scare people off, cause that's a line people are not willing to cross for a game.
 - 9) In my issues I've often vented on discord, or to other people affected - and the only response the team often gives is "use proper channels". In backstories and complaints above I've given examples on why the "proper channels" are not liked. They are a one sided line of communication and treated as sacred. You are for example not allowed to share screenshots of tickets (publicly). This makes no sense, as long as the information in there is only my private information, and does not include the private information of volunteers or whoever; this limitation only provides the means for gameforge to keep complaints "in the dark shadows" of the ticket tool. It's a way of censorship. While I won't claim that any and all complaints are censored, But any and all excuse they can find will be used to shut said person up.

Closing statements

I've written this "letter" as a result of the treatment I've been given in the past few years. Both as a player, and as admin. I've never been silent about my complaints, enough is enough.

Knowing how my last few interactions have been with Gameforge, its employees and to some extent I'm completely aware that this letter will probably not receive an in depth reply. Hence why I tried to refrain from directly copying and pasting entire tickets as we know that would be a direct "delete" if i were to share this publicly. Hence, I implore you to respond in a timely manner with specifics from this letter you would like to see redacted, for the event I do publicize the contents of this letter.

In the event you find parts in this letter you want to have redacted, please contact me by mail:<REDACTED> Requests for redactions in this ticket will be ignored.

All in all, I hope we don't have to go so far. But as I've shared multiple times before, I have little trust in Gameforge, and even less trust in their "proper channels".

I hope this letter gives a proper representation of how a user stands in matters, the main goal of this letter is to bring improvement. Tickets and cases being used in this letter are used as examples, and this letter is not a means to an end to bring said tickets to a resolution.

Sincerely,

<REDACTED>

<REDACTED>