

# Community and I-Novae Studios

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This document is a letter from parts of the Community that arose around Flavien Brebion's project "Infinity" and thereafter the game "Infinity: Battlescape" (IB), to I-Novae Studios (INS) who are currently developing "Infinity: Battlescape", specifically the team responsible for community relations.

The purpose of the letter is to voice our perceptions and discontent. We wish to propose suggestions for solutions to the I-Novae Studios team concerning its attitude, as we see it, towards community management as of April 2020.

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This letter is part of a unified effort from us, the community members that have signed and that support this letter, to do our part in making Infinity: Battlescape a success and to preserve and grow the community around the project.

## Unanswered fears leading us to act

From our perception we see big problems with how the development of IB and the management of its community is going, and fear that the game will fail because of it.

We are discontent with how INS seemingly fails to properly manage and use the potential of a small and dwindling community, as well as fails to suitably help resolve our fears concerning the development of the game.

**The whole reason we are here is because we, all of us, love Infinity: Battlescape and its community and want it to be successful.**

All our actions up to this point and including this one have been motivated by this, no matter if these actions or how we said things may have resonated on your side. We pour our energy into this because we care.

## Deteriorating relations and failing communication

Since the end of the Kickstarter 4 years ago, the way INS has treated its community seems to have deteriorated quite a bit.

Most of us have spent years as fans and supporters of this project and invested many hours and dedication in taking part, providing feedback, contributing, and creating secondary content. We also have known each other and the INS team for all this time. This is part of our lives.

We are irritated that despite this most of the people at INS seem to talk to us in a corporate fashion, often not sharing their direct opinion, emotions, or clear intentions.

Community input concerning fundamental issues seems to be often answered in a fashion that dodges the points raised or is ignored. Issues or concerns are often not resolved. The stance of INS seems to be often obfuscated, seemingly in order to avoid conflict and to present a public image of INS, devised by INS.

INS members do not show their own fears to us and thus voluntarily make it virtually impossible for themselves to properly communicate to us that our own fears are accounted for.

Even though inaction or wrong decisions from INS part have happened in the past and been visibly negative for the game or the community, these happenings or related community input has not really or officially been recognised.

We see through the facade and consider the sustained confrontation with that facade over many years an affront towards us. Beside driving us away, it also pushes us to be more vicious in bringing forth our concerns, and consequently frustrated by INS repeatedly choosing to act as described above despite all our efforts.

The community needs communication that is appropriate to the situation: truthful, non corporate answers and statements to real concerns about the possible failure of the game, the future and handling of the community. It is a small community and a small company.

This includes admitting mistakes beside bugs, technical issues, and small oversights. Nobody is perfect. Acting like everything that happened in all these years has no negative effect on INS image and thus doesn't need to be apologized for feels insulting to our effort and investment.

Treating us like customers alone is not appropriate. We have a long memory, can read between the lines and see and assess what actually happened and what is delivered.

## Reversing the trend

Prior to the Kickstarter, it was obvious that we and INS were working together. However now, even as we try hard to help the game through suggestions, promotions, or self-made content and tools, INS rarely interacts with these investments at all.

We are concerned with the apparent lack of utilizing the potential of the dwindling community to benefit the project, as well as lack of preparation for when the game will leave early access, despite it being absolutely vital for this kind of indie effort.

The community desperately needs resources to be acquired and allocated for managing the community, the Discord Server, planning and executing programs to engage and grow the community, and preparing for the last shot at popularity IB has.

Dan Hutching's commendable effort beside all his other responsibilities is sadly apparently not sufficient resources to facilitate what would be necessary to reverse the trend of a slowly dying, more and more disinterested, and barely engaged following.

*Hopefully you can see where we are coming from, what we are discontent about and our motives concerning the topics expressed above.*

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**We want to present the following suggestions to alleviate some of these problems:**

### **Proper management and cooperative initiatives**

The task of interacting directly with the community could be given to an experienced community manager. This person would mediate between INS and the community, communicating INS stance clearly, and relaying immediately solvable issues or realistic and well prepared initiatives to INS.

Community moderators could still ensure moderation of the Discord Server around the clock while the community manager formulates guidelines for them and checks in regularly to clear up misconceptions and mistakes, answering what has not been answered by the moderators by humanly communicating the position of INS. There are many sources backing how proper community moderation is important and what to look out for, [see this article by Kenneth T. Tran and Jack Wegrich for instance](#)<sup>1</sup>.

The other equally important task is to promote engagement from the community by conveying appreciation to contributions and initiatives as well as investing time to formulate and execute own or community suggested engaging initiatives. Investing in this now will pay out when it's needed, this is also [Meg Betterridges opinion in this article](#)<sup>2</sup>. Appreciation is one of the most important tools to grow participation [shown here by Gabe Graziana](#)<sup>3</sup>.

Besides appropriate resources, appropriate power needs to be given to this person in order for these tasks to be able to be executed efficiently.

### **Self moderation and detached community initiatives**

Currently, the main means of interaction and most active part of the community is the previously unofficial "Infinity Battlescape" Discord Server.

The handoff was in big parts agreed to because the community expected INS to further utilize the Discord Server. Unfortunately this has not happened. As INS does not nor seems to plan to further utilize or acquire and allocate resources to the Discord Server it would be an option for INS to hand back ownership to its original initiator "Topperfalkon".

Handing back the Discord Server would allow the community to manage, police itself, and remove any direct responsibility from INS in handling its community as well as allow community initiatives to be conducted utilizing the existing community to grow itself and benefit the project in general without the need for INS resources. As such we could implement [things like these suggestions made by Justin French here](#)<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>[www.gamasutra.com/blogs/KennethTran/20170914/305622/Video\\_Game\\_Community\\_Managers\\_Jobs\\_in\\_Startups\\_Indies\\_AAA\\_and\\_eSports.php](http://www.gamasutra.com/blogs/KennethTran/20170914/305622/Video_Game_Community_Managers_Jobs_in_Startups_Indies_AAA_and_eSports.php)

<sup>2</sup>[www.gamasutra.com/blogs/MegBetterridge/20190919/350855/Why\\_You\\_Should\\_Invest\\_More\\_in\\_Community\\_Management.php](http://www.gamasutra.com/blogs/MegBetterridge/20190919/350855/Why_You_Should_Invest_More_in_Community_Management.php)

<sup>3</sup>[www.gamasutra.com/view/news/313142/Video\\_The\\_community\\_management\\_behind\\_Assassins\\_Creed\\_Brotherhood.php](http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/313142/Video_The_community_management_behind_Assassins_Creed_Brotherhood.php)

<sup>4</sup>[www.gamasutra.com/blogs/JustinFrench/20190415/340540/Turning\\_Your\\_Community\\_Into\\_An\\_Extension\\_Of\\_Your\\_Team.php](http://www.gamasutra.com/blogs/JustinFrench/20190415/340540/Turning_Your_Community_Into_An_Extension_Of_Your_Team.php)

This solution is less efficient than cooperation with INS, as initiatives would lack a direct link to in-game systems and to the games creators. It also does not tackle the issues of communication but would lend itself to INS lowering its amount of direct interaction which would mitigate friction.

## Transparent decisions

A big part of our frustration stems from the fact that INS decisions appear to be entirely opaque. Most of the time information about what INS plans are and how they have decided a certain topic can only be acquired by prodding INS team members directly to obtain a vague and incomplete idea of what is going on.

We suggest that INS details what decisions have internally been made at the next opportunity, for instance in the patchnotes. The existing and future roadmaps should also sufficiently detail which topics have been already locked down and which are open for suggestion.

Communication is always happening, taking control of it will lead to better results, [as described by Hanna Fogelberg here](#)<sup>5</sup>.

This would mean that community members would be disincentivised from discussing topics that have already been decided, could focus on things that are still relevant and be less frustrated from viciously arguing for a certain approach when INS has already made up their mind about it.

These statements need to be clear and underline that decisions have in fact been made by INS. Reasons for why and on what basis the decisions are made are less important.

A community moderator would have sufficient experience and authority to communicate this effectively and to the communities contend given sufficient official statements as suggested above. Such an approach is paramount to retain the constructive feedback the community can offer, [see this article by Julien Wera for instance](#)<sup>6</sup>.

## Community council

A fixed amount of INS resources (worktime) could be directly managed by the community and by that extent a community council. This way the initiatives and interests of the community could directly manifest in actions taken by INS and as such the community could indirectly work together with INS towards growing itself and benefiting the project in general. Especially when there are a lot of unknowns, a community council can help adjust plans for the better, [hear it from SOEs Linda Carlson](#)<sup>7</sup>.

Details about all these options could be discussed.

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<sup>5</sup>[www.gamasutra.com/view/news/352348/A\\_guide\\_for\\_devs\\_to\\_battle\\_and\\_convert\\_their\\_online\\_haters.php](http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/352348/A_guide_for_devs_to_battle_and_convert_their_online_haters.php)

<sup>6</sup>[www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/132004/online\\_community\\_management\\_.php](http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/132004/online_community_management_.php)

<sup>7</sup>[www.gamasutra.com/view/news/198563/Sony\\_Onlines\\_three\\_rules\\_of\\_engagement\\_for\\_community\\_management.php](http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/198563/Sony_Onlines_three_rules_of_engagement_for_community_management.php)

We see the slow dwindling end of this community approaching and urge I-Novae Studios to do something about it!

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We hereby support this letter:

**aCRAZEDgunman**  
Community member  
since 2019



**Aleon**  
Community member  
since 2006

*Aleon*

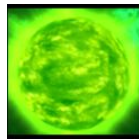
**Argopeilacos**  
Community member  
since 2010

*Argopeilacos*

**Arkenbrien**  
Community member  
since 2010



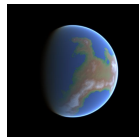
**Captain\_Trevise**  
Community member  
since 2006



**Crayfish**  
Community member  
since 2005

*Crayfish*

**critic**  
Community member  
since 2006



**IvanGrozniy**  
Community member  
since 2019

*IvanGrozniy*

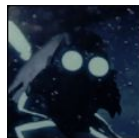
**Lomsor**  
Community member  
since 2010

*Lomsor*

**martindevans**  
Community member  
since 2008



**Matk50**  
Community member  
since 2009



**Omegador**  
Community member  
since 2009



**Pendrokar**  
Community member  
since 2009

**Pendrokar**

**Pictbrige**  
Community member  
since 2016

*Pictbrige*

**Playbenni**  
Community member  
since 2012



**Sabl1e**  
Community member  
since 2009



**Tjafaas**  
Community member  
since 2012



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