

Forum:[Hack Forums](#)

Thread: [Nvidia hired online shills to promote Pascal?](#)

Morrakiu - May 12, 2016, 10:03 pm

Did Nvidia Hire Online Actors to Promote Their Products?

By consumerist.com February 6, 2006

About a week ago, The Consumerist stumbled upon claims made by various gaming websites (specifically, [Elite Bastards](#) and [Update: a poster on the forums at] [Beyond3D](#)) that graphics chip manufacturer [Nvidia](#), in cooperation with the [Arbuthnot Entertainment Group](#) (AEG), had seeded various gaming and PC hardware enthusiast sites with pro-Nvidia shills. That is to say, that AEG would hire employees to create 'personas' in various gaming communities, slowly building up the trust of other members by frequent posting unrelated to Nvidia, to later cash in that trust with message board postings talking up the positive qualities of Nvidia's products.

The research done by these gaming websites and communities fingered a few likely suspects, but did not prove outright that AEG's work—quoted on their web site as "Message board monitoring and response" and "Strategic seeding viral assets to ensure they are spread far and wide"—included placing ringers in their communities.

Almost at the same time, we noticed [this post](#) on gaming webcomic Penny Arcade, where an anonymous tipster had written in part,

I interviewed for a guerilla marketing business in San Francisco that targeted web forums.

I was told that if I accepted the job, I was to have at LEAST 50 identities on as many forums as I could muster (they wanted 100 eventually), with a goal of 5 posts an hour.

The posts had to be well thought out, and the idea was that I was to establish multiple identities with a history on the forums, so that when the timing was right a well written but subtly placed marketing post could be finessed in.

And regular visitors would recognize the post as coming from a long time poster.

Soon after, we sent an email to David Higham of Nvidia, asking in part, "I've noticed that you've worked with AEG before. What sort of services were AEG hired to perform for Nvidia? Did those services include "strategic seeding viral [of] viral assets," and if so, does that mean that Nvidia worked with AEG to hire community agents who discussed Nvidia's products without disclaiming they were an employee, contracted or otherwise, of Nvidia or AEG?"

Mr. Higham passed us on without response to Derek Perez, Nvidia's Public Relations Director, who is quoted on the [AEG Testimonials Page](#) saying, "AEG

s online community outreach programs have been extraordinarily successful in improving public perception of our company and its products."

Mr. Perez, who had been forwarded The Consumerist's original email asked us, "What is this in reference to?"

We replied again, "This is in reference to discussions occurring on in certain online communities about possible "Manchurian Fans" being seeded into their forums and comments pages, assuming a long-term personality, and then placing pro-Nvidia statements after a trusted reputation has been established. The issue being, of course, that the 'Fans' are being paid to inject positive buzz about Nvidia's products into the community at large while not disclaiming their affiliation with Nvidia."

“Has Nvidia hired any companies, including AEG, to do this sort of undisclosed ‘viral’ marketing?”

“May be best to talk on the phone,” was Mr. Perez’s reply.

That was February 1st. We have yet to receive a phone call from Mr. Perez, despite trying to schedule one multiple times. We informed Mr. Perez on the 3rd that we would be running our stories with or without his comments. We feel at this point that the issue is being avoided by Nvidia.

So we ask Mr. Perez and Nvidia again, did Nvidia hire AEG or other companies to seed online communities with undisclosed marketers posing as fans? And if so, is this work still ongoing?

Update: Be sure to catch [Mr. Perez’s blow-off response](#), as well as our... well, they’re pretty much the same questions, since we didn’t really get an answer.

Source :

<https://consumerist.com/2006/02/06/did-nvidia-hire-online-actors-to-promote-their-products/>