



TAKE THIS JOB: COMMUNITY MANAGER

Our monthly look at the jobs you want—
with tips from the guys who have them

THIS MONTH:
AARON KAUFMAN
COMMUNITY MANAGER
FOR EA LOS ANGELES

TOOLS OF HIS TRADE

Gamespeak 101

If you're gonna walk the walk, you'd better talk the talk. "Pwnd, flamed, noob, ROTFL," Kaufman rattles off. "My English teachers didn't teach me these words in school."

graFX

Part of the job is having an eye for design. "Adobe Premiere, Photoshop, and Final Cut Pro are [the] primary tools for creating trailers and enhancing and updating our websites," he says. "I also create videos for the fans and take screenshots."

Fantacular

"I wouldn't be in this role without the many dedicated and passionate *Lord of the Rings* and *Command and Conquer* fansites," he says. "They [create] the community's vibe and can also make me jump out of my chair. It's a priority for me to know all fansites involved with my development studio's games inside and out."

Swag (aka Schwag)

Graphic cards, games, T-shirts, posters, mugs, autographed props—you name it, and Kaufman gives it away. 🎁

NEXT UP:
GAME-MUSIC
COMPOSER

Photograph by Kate Romero

KAUFMAN'S DETAILS

Experience: Six years in the industry
Notable games: *The Lord of the Rings: The Battle for Middle-earth I & II* (PC), *Command and Conquer* franchise, EA's first *LOTR* game for Xbox 360.

Community manager job data

Salary range: \$50,000 to \$70,000
Recommended education: A major in communications or marketing, as well as something of an art background and knowledge of multiple design and Web programs. Or, alternatively: "Jump in and throw yourself to a pack of wolves, see if you can come out alive, and learn to have a thick skull!" Kaufman says.
Location of most jobs: West Coast
Current level of demand: High

What's a community manager?

This person acts as the voice of a development studio. He or she must understand its audience better than anyone

and offer support for fans. That includes talking daily on message boards, posting the latest news and updates, providing screenshots and videos, and orchestrating events. "It's all about creating and maintaining the connection between the fans and the developer," Kaufman says. He also organizes summits, inviting top community leaders from around the world to visit the studio for behind-the-scenes looks at current projects.

Kaufman's typical day

Team leaders stop by Kaufman's cube in the mornings for community updates, and he sits in with the development teams on several meetings every day. "Face-to-face interaction is key in my role," he says. He's constantly interacting with community message boards and fansites, assessing the vibe, maintaining the website, compiling feedback for development teams, and keeping the

community informed of his team's plan of action for the week. "I deliver reports assessing all the community feedback and the love—and the occasional brilliant ideas from our avid fans," he says.

How'd he get the gig?

Kaufman worked as a game consultant for a market-research company for several years before arriving at EA Los Angeles. "I had a friend that worked at an EA studio," he says, "and I was referred for a position in the marketing department at the then-new EALA studio." He joined on and was responsible for creating videos and screenshots, among other things. "But the most pivotal moment was when I organized a successful community summit at the studio, and the rest is history," he says. "The studio soon saw that there was a need for a full-time community manager. I jumped at the chance, and here I am."
—Evan Shamoon

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