CSM meeting minutes – December 2010 summit

CSM and the EVE websites

Present: CCP Alice, CCP Xhagen

CCP Alice opened the meeting with an overview of the CCP WebCell's vision for their product. They view EVE's web presence as having three pillars: outward-facing features like the EVE websites (features of use both to current players and non-players), Account management and support (features specifically for current players), and EVE-Gate (features related to specific characters).

Within EVE-Gate, sub-areas have been defined: Gameplay features (things you can do both in the client, and via the web, such as EVE Mail), Community web features (such as forums, CSM, blogs, and events), and finally special items like EVElopedia.

Currently, CCP Alice's teams are focused on delivering the new EVE forums as part of the final installment of Incursion in January.

The CSM is concerned that because the initial roll-out of EVE-Gate was so limited, and it was not immediately iterated on, there is a significant messaging issue, and that players may not appreciate the value of additions to a feature they consider being of marginal value.

In response to CSM questions about the new forums, the following points were made:

1) The initial roll-out will not include corporation or alliance forums, but this is planned for the future. However, the roadmap is still being worked out, so the order in which new EVE-Gate features such as special forums will be implemented is still up in the air.

2) The new forums will not randomly log you out anymore, although there was significant support in the CSM for restoring this beloved legacy feature.

3) New forum features include the ability to "like" posts, and the number of likes a player has given and received will be publicly displayed. The CSM immediately pointed out that this could be gamed.

4) The new search feature was described as "very, very, very strong search". Advanced search features will take typical forum search features and add extra features on top of them.

Searches will produce a tag cloud to aid in finding related items, and any search can be turned into an RSS feed.

It was suggested by the CSM that it might be useful for the Search feature to be aware of the semantic relationships between words that have special meaning in EVE; for example, that a Chimera is a Carrier, so that a search for "carrier loadout" would match posts that contained the phrase "chimera loadout".

With respect to finding CSM posts via search, it was pointed out that in order for this to work, posts would need to be tagged as CSM posts at the moment of posting, and this tag should not disappear from those posts when a CSM member's term expired. It was also suggested that CSMs should be able to enable or disable CSM tagging on particular posts, so that the CSM tag would only appear on CSM-related posts.

5) The old forums will remain on the eveonline.com site as a read-only archive.

Discussion turned to the CSM EVE-Nebula proposal and preparations for the upcoming CSM elections. CSM election processes and pages will be moving to EVE-Gate. The possibility of moving Dierdra Vaal's vote-match tool into EVE-Gate, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the tool itself, was discussed at some length. However, it was felt that there was insufficient time to port more than the current basic CSM functions to EVE-Gate before the next election.

Other election-related suggestions included candidate-editable position statements (currently they must be updated by CCP staff). While current character profiles could be used for this, profiles already have other uses that might conflict with this.

CCP hopes to provide tools to improve the management of CSM proposal discussions in Assembly Hall, provide better issue tracking, and reduce the amount of duplication of effort. The CSM provided some immediate feedback on desired features, but emphasized that as a major stakeholder in the process, the CSM should be kept very much in the loop as plans develop.

Finally, the CSM watched a short demo of the new forums, and made some comments and observations that were deemed useful.

In closing, the CSM emphasized that the focus should first be on making the forums awesome for everyone, and then worrying about making it easier for CSM to do their job – hopefully by tweaking and repurposing features useful to everyone.

Permanent CCP-administered Charity?

Present: CCP Fallout, CCP Dr.EyjoG, CCP Wrangler, CCP Navigator

CCP Fallout requested this meeting with the CSM to discuss the possibility of a permanent charitable contribution process as part of EVE.

CCP and EVE players have been involved in charitable giving for about 5 years. The recent drive to help victims of the flooding in Pakistan resulted in the contribution of $14,900 to the Red Crescent (a total of

805 PLEX plus other contributions). The Red Cross has been the beneficiary of 3 drives totaling $74,200 (2813 PLEX). At the Austin Game Developers Conference, $1,000 was raised, and the Child's Play drive at FanFest raised $16,500.

In total, $98,800 has been contributed by players over the last 5 years, a remarkable total when you consider the cut-throat nature of EVE. EVE players are known as meanies, but they are "nice meanies".

In 2010, 2 "PLEX for Good" drives (the aforementioned Earthquake and Flood relief drives) were held. Since the introduction of PLEX, charitable giving has increased – PLEX makes it easier to painlessly donate, with reduced transaction costs. Total PLEX contributions are about $63,000 so far (about 3,600 PLEX).

CCP has polled players regarding concerns about this program. One major concern is whether charitable giving causes a significant rise in the ISK value of PLEX. However, CCP statistics on PLEX costs do not appear to show a significant correlation between charity drives and PLEX price increases, and PLEX bought to donate are not a large part of the total volume of PLEX transactions. However, CSM noted that the perception that PLEX can be used for purposes like Charity and FanFest tickets (and thus, there will be greater demand for PLEX) could drive prices upwards due to speculation.

The CSM noted that the "weather" (short-term effects) should not be confused with the "climate" (long-term effects). However, at this time, there is insufficient evidence to warrant serious concern, though if charitable giving significantly expands, this may be a topic that needs to be revisited.

CCP emphasized that all donations are made in the name of the EVE Online Community, not CCP. CCP strongly believes in the power and generosity of the EVE community, and views their role as simply making it as easy as possible for them to help others.

CCP does not benefit in any way from charitable giving by players. 100% of the value of PLEX donated is passed through to the charity. CCP absorbed all VAT levies, credit card transaction costs, fraud screening expenses, currency conversion charges, and the cost of the time spent by the staff (GM Grimmi) that administered the program.

CCP does not receive a tax credit for the donations, since the donation is made in the name of the community. CSM questioned why CCP did not make the donation in their name, receive a tax deduction, and then donate the savings to charity, but apparently the cost of explaining to the Icelandic Tax Vikings why donations of virtual money should warrant a deduction would, at this point in time, cost more than the value of the deductions. In addition, specific aspects of Icelandic tax law would limit the savings that could be obtained. If, however, it does become a win-win for everyone, CCP will consider doing this.

CCP noted that the current method of donating a PLEX is very cumbersome, and the offer of one CSM to write a bot for GM Grimmi that would automate the current process was not seriously considered. CCP is considering adding a feature to the current Account Management system that lets players donate PLEX

(including PLEX bought on the market and reverse-redeemed) to any of a number of charities; CCP would be willing to send checks to the charities on a quarterly basis, which would also make possible a permanent charity drive.

One concern CCP has is that their current system only permits an account to hold 60 PLEX at any one time in the re-deeming system (i.e. there is no limit on PLEX in-game). The CSM did not consider this to be a serious issue, but CCP noted that in one instance, a single player (who requested anonymity) donated over 240 PLEX in a single contribution.

Attempts by the CSM to extract the identity of this obvious soft touch were not successful, but it was revealed that another player had contributed 170 PLEX.

A discussion commenced about how many charities CCP should support.

While there is apparently no technical limit, CSM had concerns about "tyranny of choice" issues, and also practical concerns over the administrative expense to CCP of making many small donations vs. a smaller number of larger donations. One area of particular concern was that the constant availability of the ability to give might negatively affect response to major disasters. CCP is also quite concerned about "donation fatigue", and does not plan to constantly solicit donations (except in the case of disasters, which would trigger a particular drive).

In summary, the CSM strongly believes that doing occasional major charity drives (as is currently the case) is a good idea, and endorses the plan to make improvements to Account Management so that it is easier for players to donate to charity. The CSM is somewhat divided over whether having being able to donate outside of charity-drive periods will achieve the desired purpose (increased contributions), but the correct answer to this question is unclear.

The meeting ended with some discussions of the relative priority of the development of this feature vs. other website improvements CCP plans, and also some practical suggestions on how to clarify some of the issues raised during the meeting.

CSM processes, tools and evolution

Present: CCP Xhagen, CCP Diagoras, CCP Dr.EyjoG

The CSM began by asking whether CCP was happy with the progress so far in regards to the summit and then in general about the CSM in terms of evolution of the function. The answer to that question is yes. Most aspects of the CSM, whether it is internal functionality, interfaces with CCP or communication outwards have improved significantly since CSM1 was elected, so there is progress on all fronts. The CSM agreed that the functionality of the CSM is moving in the right direction, and the CSM is pleased with the progress.

The CSM also stated that the evolution within CCP has been positive, as they believe they are much more appreciated – that CCP is more receptive of their ideas now than in the past. This feeling further

encourages the CSM to put effort into their work, as it is being rewarded. The CSM also mentioned that the method used now, more of collaboration (rather than the CSM trying to dictate what CCP should do, fix and resolve), is much more effective and produces actual results. CCP naturally resisted the dictation from the CSM in the past as they were not in sync about what was being done and when – the CSM couldn't achieve this sync in the past simply because there was no infrastructure within CCP to meet them. Now there is, and there is an agreement that there is progress. And due to this change the CSM is becoming much more of a feedback mechanism than they used to be – which is what the CSM should have been in the beginning.

With this change, the CSM should start to think about long term objectives – goals that live on beyond the one-year term. That is however contingent on the CSM getting more information about what CCP is doing, which allows the CSM the chance of creating synergy with teams developing EVE and other stakeholders to maximize the chance of things getting done.

CSM discussed the matter of changing the format of their online meetings – from being the venue for the 'heavy lifting' to be more of a summary meeting where decisions are made. There was not a consensus on this matter within the CSM, as the online meetings provided the chance for EVE players to provide feedback to the CSM and create accountability for the CSM. In short the streamlining of the online meeting could cause information to be obscured from the players; the current method is not streamlined and perhaps a bit cumbersome, but is as transparent as can be. No conclusion was reached within the CSM about this matter, but it was agreed that it was worthy of more discussion, and perhaps some of this discussion should take place on the forums, specifically the Assembly Hall.

On that note, CSM members were encouraged to spend more time in the Assembly Hall, and go into more detailed discussions with players and each other than in the past, in order to attempt to streamline the meetings in the sense to be better prepared rather than moving a portion of the discussion away from the medium.

The CSM expressed concern about continuity within the CSM about processes, methods, information and other things that are generally inherited by members going between CSMs. CCP revealed that the exact same concerns had been voiced within CCP, and thus the CSM would get the project of creating a continuity document for the next CSM in order to make the transition as smooth as possible. Furthermore CCP explained that since the current CSM had so firmly established itself, it had no intention of treating the future CSMs any differently in terms of topics brought to them, assignments handed out, etc. So future CSMs would be given a fairly strong message about what CCP wanted them to deliver. Also former CSM members are a resource that should not be dismissed, so future CSMs would be encouraged to seek advice and opinions from them. Additionally the amount of material available to future CSMs is quite extensive, so while future CSMs would not be forced to do what they are elected to do, there will be every opportunity for them to successfully carry on the torch so to speak.

In closing, the CSM asked CCP whether they were happy with the CSM in terms of metrics – if CCP was keeping track of metrics regarding the CSM? The answer is that CCP is not keeping metrics of individual participation in the CSM, but on the whole the CSM's progress can be monitored on various levels, such

as the forum sentiment about the CSM, how much the CSM affects the backlogs and more. There will not be a count of how many issues each CSM member has raised – as that is a completely useless measuring stick, both because it causes the obvious problems and because the functionality of the CSM is changing, so raising issues is not as fundamental as it used to be. Not having special metrics to monitor the CSM has not been an issue so far which indicates that the CSM is performing according to expectations. Metrics about the CSM are however something that should be built up for everyone's sake; CCP's, CSM's and the players. So there is a project that needs to be defined and executed by CCP in cooperation with the CSM.

CSM Issues

Present: CCP Grayscale, CCP Explorer, CCP Skylark, CCP Zulu

Game Design ran an experimental session with the CSM, to explore the consequences of engaging with the CSM in non-standard ways.

An early draft version of one team's backlog was brought out, with various features and their "complexity score" (i.e. approximate effort needed to implement) listed, totaling around 200 complexity points of work. The 9 members of the CSM present were each given ten tokens (each being worth a single complexity point), and told to collectively decide which features they wanted to "buy". Towards the end, they were told that "TQ was broken" – in order to introduce an element of surprise that can very well happen in real development environment – and they'd "lost a programmer from the team", removing 30 points' worth of possible work.

This exercise gave CCP useful insights into the opinions and working methods of the CSM, and hopefully helped to align CCP's and the CSM's understandings of prioritization issues more closely. Additionally the CSM helped with the initial prioritization of that team's backlog. CCP is considering further sessions in this vein at future summits.

CSM Activities at FanFest 2011

Present: CCP Xhagen, CCP Dr.EyjoG, CCP Tyr

The meeting opened with the presentation to the CSM of "special limited edition" Incursion posters, which Dr. Eyjólfur claimed would "be worth millions". The CSM asked him to provide metrics to support this claim.

CCP asked for CSM input concerning taking FanFest to the next level. The first proposal that one day would be dedicated to community-to-community interaction (for example, player lectures, alliance and CSM presentations, etc.). However, the general opinion of the CSM was that these sorts of presentations should be mixed with other tracks (in particular, developer presentations) as has been done in the past.

While CSM is sympathetic to CCP's goal of encouraging more C2C interactions at FanFest, this should not be done at the expense of giving the players what they want, and dedicating a day to less popular – albeit worthy – topics would be regarded as a waste of resources.

With respect to the CSM roundtable, one concern is that almost always the topics drift into NDA territory; there is nothing that CSM can tell the players that they don't already know. So even more emphasis should be given to presentations by and interactions with the devs – the players want to talk to the rock-stars (devs), not the roadies (CSM). Of course, there should be a panel for those players who are interested in becoming great roadies.

However, it would be nice if the CSM session was not scheduled at the same time as another session that will clearly be extremely popular.

With respect to offering corporations and alliances venue space for meetings, CSM believes that most of these types of interactions are informal in nature and that the meeting rooms can be put to better use.

It was once again emphasized that players come to FanFest in large part to talk to devs about the game - to do something that they cannot do using existing communications methods like forums.

CCP inquired why, given the opportunity, players would not want to trade war stories and so on. CSM replied that while this can be fun, that tends to happen informally anyway, and also that anyone who flies to Iceland to attend FanFest already knows the big stories anyway. Meeting the people behind the avatars is great, but that works best at the bar, not in a panel.

CSM suggested to CCP that one thing to consider might be scheduling small (limited attendance) meetings focused on a particular topic (such as 0.0, or the UI) with several devs as the panelists and a CSM as moderator and/or participant. The idea here is to provide the face-to-face interaction, but also provide devs with unfiltered feedback from interested players. CSMs could provide some insight (based on their interactions with the devs) and help encourage good interaction – in particular, encouraging devs to provide more complete answers, but also perhaps, as time permits, helping with preparation of notes.

CCP agreed to focus more on roundtables as opposed to lectures, and is considering increasing CSM presence in them, both to improve feedback but also to boost the visibility of the CSM. The CSM cautions that making the CSM into rock-stars may result in the wrong type of people running for CSM.

The CSM encouraged CCP to schedule as many gameplay related roundtables as possible, but noted that while recording sessions might be useful for notes purposes, it might also limit the expression of unpopular views.

Also, there were concerns raised about soundproofing problems between meeting rooms, and a suggestion was made that devs be reminded to always repeat the question before answering it.

Discussion then turned to the interaction of FanFest and the CSM elections. The present schedule has voting overlapping with the event, and while the CSM is generally in favor of the idea of blatant vote-

buying at FanFest, it is concerned that this might prove disruptive. It is suggested that the election period close before FanFest with the results being announced after FanFest; CCP Xhagen will investigate the feasibility of this change.

The subject of roundtable size was discussed in detail. There were concerns that the larger the size of the group, the harder the job of the moderator becomes. It is suggested that CSM help CCP grade roundtable topics in terms of expected popularity, so they can be assigned to appropriately sized rooms. It might also be possible to have multiple sessions on the same topic at the same time, so that each session is a reasonable size – or perhaps have simultaneous sessions with different subtopics but with an overall theme.

CCP would like CSM to help prepare a list of interesting topics for roundtables. It was noted that the CSM prioritization lists give a good starting point for these lists.

CSM further suggests that CCP consider running variants of the brainstorming and prioritization games that were run with CSM during the summit. These might provide interesting feedback and also give the players a better understanding of how things work. The CSM would be happy to moderate "Prioritization Poker" sessions. CCP and CSM agreed this would be a "sexy idea".

The idea of booth babes (pretty girls dressed up in EVE costumes, handing out stuff) was discouraged by the CSM.

The CSM does not mind being added to the live agent missions games, as long as one of the missions is "buy a CSM member a beer." Some CSMs would not mind being mission agents.

A concern was raised about last FanFest's "official" pub-crawl, which many players found disappointing. CCP is already planning revisions to the event to address the complaints.

The PVP tournament is likely to move into Thursday, continue on Friday, and with the finals on Saturday – with only the finals on stage. There will probably not be a Royal Rumble. The fights should be short, fun and action-packed. Another change is that only the Team Captain will be signing up, and will be responsible for fielding the team. This means that a captain can assemble his team at Fanfest, or make changes if a team member cannot attend or participate.

The CSM thinks it would be nice if Slay (the Incarna strategy game) could be played live at FanFest; CCP will investigate this.

With respect to presentations of non-EVE CCP products (such as Dust), the CSM has no problem with this, but feels they should have their own sessions as opposed to being mixed in with major EVE presentations.

The CSM was asked for their opinion of the change to the Party at the Top of the World in 2009, where the general Icelandic public was allowed to attend. The CSM thought it was an improvement (although there tended not to be much mixing between the locals and the EVE players), but bitterly complained about the outrageous price (at the party) of the booze in general, and the Smirnoff Ice in particular.

While alcohol prices in Iceland are high, at the party they were exospheric, which was a burden on players who had already spent a large amount of money just to come to the event. CCP replied that they will look into it, but that this kind of thing is handled by the venue management, and they may not have the ability to make a change here.

The suggestion by CCP that CSM members not be able to drink alcohol while "on duty" at FanFest was not well received.

CCP was reminded of the suggestion that, if a Poker Tournament is organized, that bounties be placed on the heads of devs and CSM members in order to make things more interesting.

After 27 hours of meetings, the CSM summit ended. Dr. Eyjólfur made some concluding remarks, in particular noting that the June Summit, and the fallout from it, had a great effect on CCP and "in effect, turned the ship around". The CSM responded by commenting that the overall tone of this summit was much better, and that while difficult topics were discussed, the discussions proceeded much more smoothly. When Águst, the summit's moderator, agreed, it was suggested that he therefore owed CCP a rebate.