

Protests in Second Life

Residents

of Second Life have many different views of what provides the true value of Second Life. For many, it is the community ideas and interesting people that draws others to Second Life. Companies wishing to do business, hire new people, or just advertise their company brands in Second Life recognize this value.

They want

to reach people and companies who are willing to do research and even if they have a high enough education, are trying to learn and try new things. Yet many feel that recent actions by Linden Lab have further eroded the community and have done considerable damage to the Second Life brand.

Others

feel that what is most compelling about the Second Life brand is the platform. Second Life is the environment where you can most easily and reliably create three-dimensional objects that they can sell and share with other people just like you. For these people, the stability of the environment is extremely important, especially as residents plan events where they can gather with others to demonstrate new objects, new places, or simply discuss important issues.

This

ties back to the ideas of the Second Life community. Yet recent instability of the platform, together with changes in basic level hardware required for the Second Life viewer have frustrated residents.

Meanwhile, it appears

to many as if Linden Lab views their most important asset as the assorted trademarks that they own. They have instituted new policies that go far beyond what normal companies do to protect their trademark;

they have threatened to ban residents of Second Life from using their systems if they improperly use any Second Life trademarks. This would be similar to Coca Cola Corporation managing to prevent anyone who uses the word 'Coke' when referring any other soft drink from drinking their Coca Cola brand soft drink. It has left a sour taste in the mouth of many residents.

At the same time, recent changes to Second Life have required residents to upgrade their viewers. This has presented problems for many, especially those in education who have to support many machines, which barely meet minimum requirements to even run SL. In response to these concerns, Linden Lab held a few inworld informational sessions with Pastrami Linden. Pastrami discussed how to optimize the latest viewers for older hardware. Linden Lab maintains that the latest viewers are even faster than the old ones.

The main grid, itself, has not been all that stable during this period, and residents have sought different ways of dealing with their frustration about the outages. Many have simply taken pleasant walks.

Mannix

Mensing and Celina Lathrop have sought to organize residents to form a group inworld that held a peaceful march in the Linden Village to express their dissatisfaction. They are working on forming a players association that, among other things, would work with Linden Lab to establish proper quality of service metrics and guidelines.

Not

everyone believes this will be effective. Some complain that Linden Lab has rarely listened to residents. They note the poor response to issues brought up on JIRA. They also complain that most residents aren't all that interested and won't join a players' association, or that the many residents have big egos and will only join player associations where they are the major players.

Yet

last week's peaceful march filled four Linden sims to the max. Mensing and Lathrop's group is recruiting new members, working on their mission statement, surveying members, and they have begun preliminary discussions with Linden Lab. The question that sums it up for many of the marchers is, "Why do tier payments never fail?"

At last week's

LL sponsored "Day of Rememberenc" and this week-end's opening of the new 1-World Help Island, residents could be seen peacefully protesting against LL, while others wore group tags that read "Music not Politics", apparenly in opposition to the protestors' appearances at these LL events.

Many

prominent Second Life bloggers did their own form of organizing and went on strike from April 15th through the 18th. This attracted the attention of real life journalists as well as folks at Linden Lab. After a lively discussion on the Metanomics channel, Linden Lab released a statement attempting to clarify their latest position on trademarks.

Is

Linden Lab starting to pay closer attention to its residents? Are they starting to understand the importance of brand and community? Let us hope so. The push and pull of senior management at Linden Lab trying to balance the value proposition of a grid of formulas used by accountants to create budgets and a grid of sims used by creatives to build communit has surely not been an easy one. Which side eventually wins may determine LL's future as a key player in the virtual world market.