
Subject: EA in trouble

Posted by [terminator 101](#) on Thu, 27 Apr 2006 01:51:34 GMT

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Quote:In late 2004, Electronic Arts was tainted by the public revelation of a class-action lawsuit that asked for unpaid overtime to "a good number" of EA employees. The suit contended that several EA employees were not paid properly for long work hours--EA claimed they were exempt.

Jaime Kirschenbaum vs. Electronic Arts was filed earlier that year on behalf of many of the company's graphic artists. Kirschenbaum was, at the time, a member of The Sims 2 team. The suit was settled last year for \$15.6 million.

The matter really came to the forefront of the media when a blog post by someone who claimed to be the spouse of an EA employee ripped into EA for unfairly treating its workers. The blogger compared working at EA to being incarcerated, making note of time "off for good behavior" and describing a typical workweek as stretching from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m, Monday through Saturday.

Though the blog post had no legal firepower behind it, its description of an EA widow hit the heartstrings of fellow "EA spouses" and employees. The words were simply a personal account of what one person was going through, but they rallied a movement among employees against EA, which the blogger described as a "money factory."

A few months later, a second lawsuit against EA came to light representing EA's engineers and programmers, also seeking unpaid overtime wages. The lawsuit was brought on by Leander Hasty, an engineer from EALA who claimed that he and fellow workers "do not perform work that is original or creative and have no management responsibilities and are seldom allowed to use their own judgment." In short, Hasty claimed he and others were simply part of an assembly line.

Today, EA is settling Hasty's suit to the tune of \$14.9 million, which will be divided among "former and current [EA] computer programmers." In addition, EA is reclassifying nearly 200 positions as eligible for overtime pay--however, they will no longer be given stock options.

The proximity in timing of the suit's filing and the blog post are more than simple coincidence. In the wake of the settlement of the EA engineers' class-action lawsuit, the San Jose Mercury News today revealed the identity of the "EA spouse" that helped EA employees bring their matter to the courts. Mercury reporter Nicole Wong posted an interview with Erin Hoffman, who, until today, had remained anonymous. Hoffman is the formerly disgruntled and current spouse of Hasty, the first plaintiff in the EA engineers' class-action lawsuit.

Hasty resigned shortly after his contract with EA expired, and he and Hoffman moved to Troy, New York, where they both work at independent developer 1st Playable Productions. Hoffman has since started the Web site GameWatch.org, a forum where game-industry workers can openly discuss their employers' operations.

Though Hoffman and Hasty had their differences with EA's policies, one company edict wasn't ignored--EA's old motto of "Challenge Everything."
<http://www.gamespot.com/news/6148369.html>
