Game publisher blames media for studio closure

The grim cadence of video game layoffs continues apace, but this latest news comes with a strange twist. Prytania Media has shut down studio Possibility Space effective immediately. In an email to employees reproduced on social media by *Polygon* reporter Nicole Carpenter, Jeff Strain, Prytania's co-founder, seemingly attributed the closure to an as-yet unpublished article from *Kotaku* reporter Ethan Gach.

Strain wrote that he received questions from Gach regarding an upcoming article and that some of those questions pertained to a not-yet-public project codenamed "Vonnegut." According to Strain, after receiving questions on Vonnegut, he had an emergency meeting with its publishers wherein it was decided that the publisher would cease investment, resulting in the project's cancellation.

"As a result of the cancellation of the publishing relationship and after careful consideration," Strain wrote, "I am closing Possibility Space."

In a statement posted on the now defunct Crop Circle Games website (archived here), Crop Circle's co-founder and Jeff Strain's wife, Annie Delisi Strain, also addressed Gach's reporting. "I stepped down as CEO this winter on a medical leave," she wrote, "and while I don't know the content of Mr. Gach's article, I have no assurances that my personal health struggles as a rare female game industry CEO will not be covered in his article."

Strain also commented on Crop Circle's closure, attributing the studio's shutdown to an inability to secure funding for

its projects. “There was not a single organization of any kind willing to invest in continued game development,” she wrote.

Prytania Media was founded by the husband and wife duo in 2021. Before Prytania, Jeff founded *Guild Wars* developer ArenaNet in 2000 before going on to found *State of Decay* developer Undead Labs in 2009. In its short existence, Pyrtania accumulated four subsidiaries: the company founded Crop Circle Games and Possibility Space in 2021 and added India-based studios Fang & Claw and Dawon Entertainment in 2023.

Undead Labs was acquired by Microsoft in 2018. According to a 2022 report from Gach, after its acquisition, the studio faced a problematic transition period in which Microsoft’s hands-off approach “allowed dysfunction to fester, leaving some of the studio’s more vulnerable employees to fend for themselves.”

In an email to *The Verge*, Mark Neschis, head of corporate communications of *Kotaku* parent company G/O Media, declined to comment on Gach’s reporting or if they received a formal response from Prytania. *The Verge* has also reached out to Prytania Media for comment. Ethan Gach’s reporting on Prytania Media, Crop Circle Games, and Possibility Games has not yet been published.

https://www.theverge.com/2024/4/12/24128629/prytania-media-possibility-space-shut-down-kotaku-report