Offener Brief

Dear John Venema,

you have informed us about your new policy towards press copies for product updates (e.g. Prepar3D v3) recently. As the owners and editors of several flightsim related pages/magazines experience discomfort about this policy, we all decided to send you this open letter after debating about the issue.

It would be very much appreciated if you would take some time to read this letter and re-think the current policy.

While we are aware of the fact that there aren't any legal issues with the new policy, we do feel that it does not honour the value of both reviews and news reports published by print- and online-magazines have for Orbx.

Not only did and do we help to spread the word about new Orbx products all over the flightsim world, we also recommended your high detail sceneries in many reviews which are usually very time consuming for the editors. The popularity of Orbx is not simply caused by great products – extensive reports by news sites are, to a large extent, also reasons for the success of your company. More or less, our magazines are free advertising for you.

The majority of our staff does not receive a salary for their job, they feel writing articles is a contribution to our hobby and they like to do it.

What is the motivation behind this? Investing a lot of spare time and also money for the servers, domain costs etc. for basically nothing? Of course, it's to serve our community and positive feedback by our readers is another reason. But receiving a free copy of the product is also a motivation behind it.

With every review taking at least 20 hours of time, the average pay per hour would be just $2 for a $40 scenery. We feel lifetime access to the product is an appropriate way to respect the work flightsim magazines are doing.

In addition, there are also reviewers who actually do this for a living. With the shrinking market for print magazines, it is very clear that the earnings from the sales aren't very high at all.

FS MAGAZIN   simFlight   FsVisions.nl   flusinews.de

It is not only that we feel access to product updates after publishing the review should be normal – and by the way, it is a very common policy between other developers and news sites with Orbx being the only exception in this case.
It is also that we receive request from readers about the sceneries reviewed after publishing the review – they want to know whether the new update improves the overall performance or are interested about the new installer for P3D v3, for instance. In other words: work doesn't end after the review is out.

Dozens of reviewers are frustrated about the new policy so we would like you the rethink the review copy policy concerning product updates. It would not even cause any potential losses for Orbx as the majority of editors will not buy a product they have already written an extensive review about. They own it anyways; probably not the new version, but they have it in their hard drive.

We are open to any kind of solution, one of our ideas was to create accounts in the FlightSimStore where editors have access to your products. While we do not know whether this is possible technically, those type of "reviewer accounts" are very common and it reduces workload for Orbx as uploading the sceneries separately is no more needed.

After somebody sold review licenses, Orbx changed its review policy in order to give access to copies only to very large sites. We had a very constructive discussion about this matter back then and found a solution which we feel pleased both of us. We are sure that an agreement like this is possible again.

Your's sincerely,

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