# Video games journalism in crisis as Giant Bomb loses key voices and Polygon faces reshuffle



# When Video Games Journalism Eats Itself, We All Lose Out

Last week marked a tumultuous period for video games journalism, underscored by significant changes within two of the industry's staple platforms. Veteran site Giant Bomb witnessed the departure of key contributors Jeff Grubb and Mike Minotti following the controversial removal of a podcast episode that satirised new brand guidelines imposed by their parent company. The podcast, specifically episode 888 of the Giant Bombcast, has been taken offline, raising eyebrows and questions about creative autonomy in a world increasingly driven by corporate interests. Compounding this turmoil, it was revealed that Polygon, another prominent US-based site and a role model for progressive video game writing, has been sold to the Canadian publisher Valnet. This acquisition has precipitated notable layoffs, particularly affecting union members from the Writers Guild of America East, and calls into question the future viability of established gaming journalism sites.

Long-standing media outlets such as Giant Bomb and Polygon have built their reputations on a foundation of trust and audience engagement. This modelling of journalism has been increasingly undermined by recent corporate manoeuvres that prioritise financial gain over editorial integrity. Vox CEO Jim Bankoff remarked on the sale of Polygon that the move would allow the company to "focus energies and investment resources in other priority areas of growth across our portfolio." However, many industry watchers see this as a disheartening reduction of a vital voice in the domain, rather than an opportunity for growth. Valnet’s assurances of "new editorial heights" appear hollow in the face of substantial staff reductions, which, according to insiders, threaten to compromise the unique perspectives that have historically differentiated these sites.

Critics of these corporate consolidations express profound frustration. Nathan Grayson, writing on Aftermath, asserted, “None of this was, strictly speaking, necessary," given Polygon's significant web traffic and Giant Bomb's loyal following. This sentiment echoes a wider concern within the industry that executives act with a focus on shareholder value rather than the interests of journalism, potentially endangering the very platforms they oversee. The instinct to stifle dissenting opinions, as evidenced by the Giant Bombcast debacle, speaks volumes about the effects of corporate oversight on creative freedom—a sentiment that many feel has become alarmingly common.

Traditionally, gaming journalism has navigated a precarious balance between commercial pressures and editorial mission. In the era of magazines, income was derived largely from advertisements placed by the very companies whose products were critiqued. Often, negative reviews led to the withdrawal of ad placements, a scenario that necessitated a careful recalibration of journalistic integrity. Today, as advertising revenue models evolve and influencer culture proliferates, many media companies seem more interested in acquiring brands than nurturing the talent behind them. This uncertainty is exacerbated by allegations surrounding Valnet, which has been accused of operating its acquired sites as "content mills" focus on search engine optimisation rather than quality journalism.

Amidst these shifts, one cannot overlook the growing trend toward artificial intelligence and automated content production, which threatens the very fabric of creative journalism. While many tech-savvy entrepreneurs look towards utilising AI for generating quick, formulaic articles and walkthroughs, the reality remains that the essence of good games journalism transcends mere data processing. Crafting an insightful review or leading a thought-provoking podcast involves a nuanced understanding of human experience—something machines simply cannot replicate.

Despite the bleak landscape painted by recent events, there is a glimmer of hope. Independent platforms are emerging, unencumbered by corporate constraints and returning to the core principles of creativity and authenticity. Examples such as the UK-based VGC and the US site Aftermath have already garnered audiences eager for genuine engagement. As current trends evolve, the reliance on traditional, well-established brands may wane, making way for a renaissance of indie voices that prioritise integrity over SEO tricks.

Ultimately, the turbulence faced by journalistic stalwarts like Giant Bomb and Polygon underscores the urgent need for a reconsideration of what journalistic integrity entails. As heavier-handed corporate strategies threaten to drain creative outlets of their authenticity, perhaps it is time to pivot focus toward nurturing independent voices that champion thoughtful discourse. In an era where content is increasingly commodified, the hunger for genuine craftsmanship and the rich tapestry of ideas that informed journalism can offer is bound to assert itself. The battle for the soul of games journalism continues, and as the digital landscape shifts, there's a promise that a more authentic and human-centred approach may yet rise from the ashes of corporate disregard.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/games/2025/may/07/when-video-games-journalism-eats-itself-we-all-lose-out), [[2]](https://www.pcgamer.com/gaming-industry/polygon-sale-valnet/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/games/2025/may/07/when-video-games-journalism-eats-itself-we-all-lose-out), [[3]](https://www.axios.com/2025/05/01/vox-media-polygon-sells), [[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polygon_%28website%29)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/games/2025/may/07/when-video-games-journalism-eats-itself-we-all-lose-out), [[2]](https://www.pcgamer.com/gaming-industry/polygon-sale-valnet/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/games/2025/may/07/when-video-games-journalism-eats-itself-we-all-lose-out), [[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giant_Bomb), [[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeff_Gerstmann)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/games/2025/may/07/when-video-games-journalism-eats-itself-we-all-lose-out), [[2]](https://www.pcgamer.com/gaming-industry/polygon-sale-valnet/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[3]](https://www.axios.com/2025/05/01/vox-media-polygon-sells), [[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polygon_%28website%29)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/games/2025/may/07/when-video-games-journalism-eats-itself-we-all-lose-out> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.pcgamer.com/gaming-industry/polygon-sale-valnet/> - Polygon, a gaming website founded by Vox Media in 2012, has been acquired by Canadian publisher Valnet, which also owns Game Rant, FextraLife, and TheGamer. Following the sale, significant layoffs occurred, primarily affecting union members from the Writers Guild of America East, including key staff such as co-founder and editor-in-chief Chris Plante, special projects editor Matt Leone, senior reporter Nicole Carpenter, and curation editor Pete Volk. Plante and others announced their departures on social media, highlighting widespread staff reductions. The layoffs coincide with the impending expiration of Vox Media's union contract. Valnet CEO Hassan Youssef praised the acquisition for boosting editorial capabilities and advertiser appeal. However, Valnet recently faced legal controversy over being labeled a “digital sweatshop” in a report by The Wrap, which it is now suing. The move comes amid widespread instability in gaming journalism; major platforms like The Washington Post's Launcher and Vice's Waypoint have shuttered, while others, including Game Informer and Giant Bomb, have undergone major operational changes or ownership shifts. ([pcgamer.com](https://www.pcgamer.com/gaming-industry/polygon-sale-valnet/?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.axios.com/2025/05/01/vox-media-polygon-sells> - Vox Media announced on May 1, 2025, that it has sold its gaming and entertainment website, Polygon, to Canadian company Valnet. This move is part of Vox Media’s broader strategy to streamline its operations and invest more heavily in its core brands. As a result of the transaction, some Polygon staff will transition to Valnet, others will be laid off, and a few will be reassigned within Vox Media, including to its tech-focused brand, The Verge. The sale reflects the broader difficulties that general news publishers have faced in monetizing and integrating gaming journalism. Vox Media remains one of the few digital media companies from the 2010s that has sustained its independence. ([axios.com](https://www.axios.com/2025/05/01/vox-media-polygon-sells?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giant_Bomb> - Giant Bomb is a video game website that has undergone significant changes in recent years. In June 2022, co-founder Jeff Gerstmann departed from the site, leading to a reorganization focused on a core crew of nine personalities. In October 2022, Fandom, Inc. acquired Giant Bomb from Red Ventures. In January 2023, several employees were laid off, including Oestreicher and O'Brien. In March 2025, Giant Bomb and GameSpot launched the Power Block, a shared streaming block made up of content from both websites. However, in April 2025, Fandom management halted all streaming activities and imposed content restrictions due to 'brand safety' concerns. This led to the removal of episode #888 of the Giant Bombcast, which featured staff openly mocking these changes. Following this, Jeff Grubb confirmed he was no longer employed at Giant Bomb, and Dan Ryckert stated he would no longer be appearing on the site due to disagreements with Fandom's direction for Giant Bomb's future. ([en.wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giant_Bomb?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polygon_%28website%29> - Polygon is a gaming and entertainment website that was sold by Vox Media to Valnet in May 2025. Following the sale, most of the staff were laid off, including editor-in-chief Chris Plante. Aftermath reported that at least 25 people were let go, many of whom were union members represented by the Writers Guild of America East. The union criticized the sale and layoffs, with Chris Grant expressing frustration on Bluesky, stating that Valnet had refused to meet with him or answer questions during the process. In an interview with Valnet's Rony Arzoumanian, it was revealed that the deal to purchase Polygon had been in the works for a few months, and that they retained about ten staff members, expecting to add more to build out the site over the next five to ten years. Arzoumanian also stated that they had no plans to eliminate the archive of Polygon articles or incorporate artificial intelligence into their product. ([en.wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polygon_%28website%29?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeff_Gerstmann> - Jeff Gerstmann is a video game journalist and co-founder of Giant Bomb. He announced his departure from Giant Bomb on June 6, 2022, and launched a new solo podcast, The Jeff Gerstmann Show, funded via Patreon. In the podcast's first episode, Gerstmann explained that his decision to leave was due to feeling overly stressed and creatively stifled by the increasing bureaucracy and time spent on business and management while working under a corporation. He also expressed a desire to focus more on the actual production of content and the discussion of games and the industry. In an October 2022 episode of the podcast, Gerstmann stated that he 'got fired three weeks before [he] was going to quit,' noting that he had become disillusioned as it had become clear that his goals for the website would not be possible under their parent company. ([en.wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeff_Gerstmann?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.kotaku.com.au/2022/06/giant-bomb-staff-discuss-jeff-gerstmann-exit-while-he-starts-new-podcast/> - Following Jeff Gerstmann's departure from Giant Bomb, the staff discussed the site's future. Staff member Jan Ochoa read a prepared statement about the exit, referring to it as 'foundational shifting.' He emphasized that exits from companies are complex and that respecting everyone's privacy is paramount. Ochoa highlighted that Giant Bomb is not about one person or one office but is powered by a team that works hard to 'keep the lights on.' He concluded by stating that the site and its team will 'continue to change and adapt' and shared that the site is not just about video games but also about 'family.' ([kotaku.com.au](https://www.kotaku.com.au/2022/06/giant-bomb-staff-discuss-jeff-gerstmann-exit-while-he-starts-new-podcast/?utm_source=openai))