

Rhetorical elements in press releases concerning layoffs issued by video game companies: A close reading study.

Emma Lehtinen

Master's Thesis

Degree Programme in Language Learning and Teaching, Department of English

School of Languages and Translation Studies

Faculty of Humanities

University of Turku

April 2025

The originality of this thesis has been checked in accordance with the University of Turku quality assurance system using the Turnitin Originality Check service.

Master's Thesis

Degree Programme in Language Learning and Teaching, Department of English

Emma Lehtinen

Rhetorical elements in press releases concerning layoffs issued by video game companies: A close reading study.

Number of pages: 73 pages, 18 appendices

This thesis examines how video game companies use rhetorical strategies in press releases about layoffs and how the press releases approach the topic. Using a close reading method based on Brummett's techniques, the study focuses on how Aristotelian appeals ethos, pathos, and logos are used to communicate layoffs. The research uses six press releases from companies that include Electronic Arts, CD Projekt Red, BioWare, Riot Games, Sony Interactive Entertainment, and Epic Games. The press releases were published between 2023 and 2024 on the company's website.

The analysis reveals that all three rhetorical modes are present in the press releases. Companies employ pathos through vivid, emotionally charged language and metaphors to convey sympathy, foster unity, and mitigate the negative impact of the layoffs. Logos is used to justify decisions through logical arguments and strategic explanations, although it is less supported by concrete data. Ethos appears mainly through the demonstration of leadership credibility and shared values, yet it is the least pronounced mode.

The study categorizes the press releases into three groups depending on their approach to discuss layoffs and how they are presented to the audience. First, press releases that discuss the company's reputation before addressing layoffs. Second, releases that argue that layoffs are a part of an organizational change and necessary for the company's future strategy. Lastly, press releases that approach layoffs directly and present concrete actions the company is implementing to achieve financial stability. The thesis also discusses specific features of these press releases within the gaming industry, such as the emphasis on brand loyalty, innovation, quality and community engagement.

Key words: Modes of persuasion, ethos, pathos, logos, corporate communication

Table of contents

1	Introduction	5
2	Background	7
2.1	Rhetoric language	7
2.1.1	Ethos	7
2.1.2	Pathos	8
2.1.3	Logos	8
2.1.4	Persuasive writing	9
2.2	Press releases as a genre and studies on press releases	10
2.2.1	Previous studies on press releases	10
2.2.2	Press releases about workforce reductions	12
2.3	Layoff framework	14
3	Material and Methods	16
3.1	Information about the companies and layoffs	17
3.1.1	Electronic Arts	18
3.1.2	CD PROJEKT RED	18
3.1.3	BioWare	19
3.1.4	Riot Games	19
3.1.5	Sony Interactive Entertainment	19
3.1.6	Epic Games	20
3.2	Close reading method	20
3.2.1	Used persuasion methods	23
4	Analysis	24
4.1	Electronic Arts	24
4.2	CD Projekt Red	29
4.3	BioWare	35
4.4	Riot Games	43
4.5	Sony Interactive Entertainment	53
4.6	Epic Games	58
5	Discussion	66
5.1	General Findings and conclusions to the research questions	66
5.2	Communicative approaches to discuss layoffs used by the companies	66

5.2.1	Ethos	68
5.2.2	Pathos	69
5.2.3	Logos	70
5.3	Limitations of the study and future research	71
6	Conclusion	72
	References	73
	Appendices	77
	Appendix 1 Electronic Arts Layoff Announcement 2024	77
	Appendix 2 CD Projekt Red Layoff Announcement	79
	Appendix 3 BioWare Layoff Announcement	81
	Appendix 4 Riot Games Layoff Announcement	83
	Appendix 5 Sony Interactive Entertainment Layoff Announcement	86
	Appendix 6 Epic Games Layoff Announcement	88
	Appendix 7 Finnish Summary	91

Tables

Table 1. Based on McLaren and Gurău's Press Release Structure and Elements	10
Table 2. Based on Catenaccio's moves and suggested structure of press releases	12
Table 3. Based on Taimi's structure of press releases about workforce reductions	13
Table 4. Word Count and Structure of the Announcements	17
Table 5. Numerical data about the layoffs, company structure and location	18
Table 6. Rhetoric modes and techniques used for the close reading	22
Table 7. The approach to communicating the layoffs to the audience	68

1 Introduction

A business's main operating goal is to achieve profitability with profits exceeding the costs of operating a business. A main operating expense of business is personnel and associated costs. Once a business notices that the costs are exceeding the profits or they fall back from expected profits, a business must cut back on expenses. A place where a business can cut on business expenses is lessening personnel costs. The legal frameworks governing layoffs present vast differences across different countries, which include various requirements and procedures that companies must adhere to during mass layoffs. Such regulations may include notification periods, severance pay, and adherence to non-discrimination statutes (U.S. Department of Labour n.d.). The gaming industry has suffered massive layoffs within the last few years and is under heavy turmoil due to the rapid development of generative artificial intelligence and the rising costs of video game development. It is estimated that around 25100 jobs were lost within the gaming industry between 2023 and 2024 (Obsidian n.d.).

Some companies offer a public press release when announcing layoffs, depending on the size of the layoff and what the law requires from the companies. These press releases detail reasons for the future layoffs, the amount of personnel laid off, other measures to cut costs and what comes after the layoffs and the upcoming goals of the business. The aim of the press releases is multifaceted as it attempts to explain reasoning behind the layoffs to the employees, the public and possible stakeholders and investors, depending on whether the company's shares are available to public trade or are private. This is due to the informative nature of the press release (Catenaccio 2008, 2). Press releases are used to at the same to promote the services or products the company is offering. (Catenaccio 2008, 20).

Press releases are carefully created with certain goals in mind. Rhetoric elements are written and spoken elements of language that are used by the person using the language to have an effect or persuade the reader or listener (Virtanen and Halmari 2005, 1). Rhetoric elements include certain word choices, phrases and figurative language when attempting to evoke a certain emotion from the reader. The studied press releases are written with multiple audiences in mind, which are the impacted employee and general public. The three main modes of rhetoric are ethos, pathos and logos, the Aristotelian modes of persuasion. Ethos appeals to the credibility of the speaker, pathos to the audience's emotions and logos appeals with logical reasoning and argumentation (Virtanen and Halmari 2005, 5-6).

In the field of genre study press releases and layoff notices and memos have been studied to, such as Kings (2010) brief introduction on rhetoric of layoffs and associated article by Warnick (2010) on close textual analysis of the layoff memos. In this study the focus is on the use of rhetoric elements and language in press releases from video game companies announcing layoffs. The second focus of the study was to see if there are common approaches to layoff announcements. The research questions in the thesis are as follows:

1. How do ethos pathos and logos present in the press releases about layoffs and how are they utilized?
2. How do press releases approach the subject of layoffs, and how are the layoffs communicated in them?

My hypothesis is that ethos, pathos and logos are used to influence the audience to understand the companies' reasons for the layoffs. The companies will mostly likely utilize logos to rationalize the layoffs, whilst pathos is used to soften the impact. Ethos will likely be used to convince why the audience that they can trust the companies during and despite the layoffs. The approach to announcing layoffs might be different

In the thesis I have gathered six press releases where video game companies discuss layoffs. The press releases are from companies across multiple countries, but a majority are from or are based in the United States of America. The data is publicly available either published by themselves or by media. The data is collected between from 2023 to mid-2024.

The thesis consists of six sections. Section 2 goes over background information about rhetoric and persuasion, genre of press releases and studies done on the nature of press releases, framework of layoff announcements and general communication from video game companies. Section 3 discusses the materials of the thesis and methodology of close reading. Section 4 shows the analysis of the primary material and section 5 discusses the findings of the study. Section 6 concludes the study and summarizes the thesis.

2 Background

The background section of the thesis provides information that is used for thesis. Section 2.1 covers rhetoric and persuasive language. Section 2.2 covers former studies on press releases, moves found in press releases and press releases about workforce reductions and common elements within them. Section 2.3 presents the layoff framework and what elements are present in successful layoff announcements.

2.1 Rhetoric language

Rhetoric language is used by a person or an entity with the goal of persuading the audience. The concept of persuasive language comes from Aristotle, who argues that there are three main modes of rhetoric language: logical appeal (logos), ethical appeal (ethos) and emotional appeal (pathos) (Aristotle 2001, 4). The most successful use of these rhetorics and persuasion attempts occurs when the author uses multiple modes of rhetoric to build a convincing argument (Holt and Macpherson 2010, 33). When one mode of rhetoric is utilized, another may be necessary to successfully achieve persuasive communication (Hoffman and Ford 2009, 43). Persuasive language consists of linguistic choices used with the intention of influencing the audience's way of thinking (Virtanen and Halmari 2005, 3-5). The use of persuasive language can be unintentional (Virtanen and Halmari 2005, 3), but in the context of the thesis all use of persuasive language is considered. Studies focusing on rhetoric and linguistic elements businesses use has focused on yearly recaps (Myllylä 2019) or other formal corporate communication. The utilisation ethos, pathos and logos has been studied in works of fiction, such as within the video game *Skyrim* (Känsäkangas 2024).

2.1.1 Ethos

According to Aristotle, ethos refers to how an author understands and demonstrates their own character and ethics to persuade the audience through speech (Aristotle 2001, 4). This includes the use of authority, credibility, expertise, and believability (Virtanen and Halmari, 2005, p. 5). Modern utilization of ethos focuses on the charisma of the speaker (Hoffman and Ford 2009, 27). Ethos is not limited to individuals; it can also apply to entities, such as companies leveraging their competence within their industry. In companies, identifying the speaker can be challenging (ibid.). However, layoff announcements should be attributed to a specific individual. Companies typically establish ethos through five key approaches: contributing to societal improvement, acknowledging their own shortcomings, receiving

praise from third parties, engaging in corporate social responsibility movement (CSR) (Corporate Social Responsibility), and demonstrating care for their audience (Ihlen, Bartlett and May 2011, 156–157). These strategies are often adopted by companies with a history of negative environmental impact. In the case of video game companies, these methods can be applied but often in a modified manner. When video game companies claim to be improving the world, their focus is usually on improving the industry itself. For example, Epic Games' Project offering the Unreal engine to the developers for free under a certain threshold serves as a case in point (Epic Games 2024c). Unlike in other industries, video game companies rarely participate in CSR movements, as reflected in the thesis where CSR movements are absent. In layoff announcements, the appeal to ethos comes across through expressions of care and wanting to support the affected employees and the company's qualifications and successes as a video game studio.

2.1.2 Pathos

Aristotle describes pathos as the author's ability to understand emotions and utilize them in a descriptive manner (Aristotle 2001, 4). Pathos is used to appeal to the audience's emotions. Aristotle argues that emotions, such as fear, anger and pity, and their opposites, are said to affect the decisions of people when utilized (2001, 42). Modern use of pathos focuses on appeals that satisfy the audience's needs or common values (Hoffman and Ford 2009, 29). As companies use pathos, they often appeal to values, needs and identification (Hoffman and Ford 2009, 29). These values can be the values of the company or the societal values (Hoffman and Ford 2009, 31). Companies can use pathos to appeal to what the audience needs or by establishing a new demand (Hoffman and Ford 2009, 31). Identification refers to utilizing shared values or common identifying markers, such as place of employment or a specific team (Hoffman and Ford 2009, 34). Highlighting shared values can bolster the organisation's reputation, reduce the risk of potential criticism, and help prepare audiences to be more receptive to future arguments concerning policy matters (Hoffman and Ford 2009, 32).

2.1.3 Logos

Logos is ability to reason logically (Aristotle 2001, 4). Logos utilizes data, evidence, claims and rational thinking (Virtanen and Halmari 2005, 6; Hoffman and Ford 2009, 37). Logical appeal is argued to fall into two categories: inductive and deductive (Hoffman and Ford 2009,

38). Inductive reasoning starts with a claim of a specific instance and ends with a general conclusion to support the claim (Hoffman and Ford 2009, 40-41). Deductive reasoning starts with a claim of a general idea and concludes with a specific instance to support the claim (Hoffman and Ford 2009, 40-41). In the layoff announcements, an inductive reasoning can be the prioritizing of certain teams, and the general conclusion being that it is done for creating better quality products for the consumers. When argument is provided, it should consist of three components: the claim, evidence to support the claim and the reasoning (Hoffman and Ford 2009, 38). A claim is a statement for example company stating that there will layoffs, which should be then followed by the evidence.

2.1.4 Persuasive writing

The Aristotelian forms of rhetoric are traditionally associated with spoken language. When using spoken language as a method of persuasion, a speaker can employ voice tone to show emotions such as sadness, happiness, or anger. Some adjustments ought to be made with written texts as emotions and sarcasm are not so easily expressed in words. Persuasive writing is a form of communication intended to impact the reader's mind, feelings, or actions. It is not so much about presenting facts but about crafting an argument that persuades and engages the reader (Camp 2008, 4). This type of writing is present in most contexts, ranging from advertising, emails and personal documents like resumes. Effective persuasive writing is about knowing your audience and planning content effectively. Camp emphasizes purpose and audience awareness, summarized by the Three Rs: Remember the Reader and the Result (Camp 2008, 12). Persuasive writing is successful when it considers both the reader's perspective and the intended outcome.

Persuasive writing aims to convince the reader on a particular opinion or argument by the means of persuasion (Jonsen, Fendt, and Point 2018, 32). The application of these elements guarantees that, in addition to being logical, the writing is also vibrant and trustworthy. Reflexivity, or the author's ability to anticipate and answer counterarguments, is another factor that enhances persuasive communication (Jonsen, Fendt, and Point 2018, 34). Persuasive writing goes beyond the workplace and is part of daily communication. Whether persuading a client, informing policy making, or advocating a case in daily communication, persuasive writing remains an effective tool of successful argumentation.

2.2 Press releases as a genre and studies on press releases

Previous studies on press releases have focused on the genre structures and moves, such as studies about the hybrid genre of press releases by Catenaccio (2008), and McLaren and Gurău (2005). Research by Taimi (2013) addresses press releases about workforce reductions and how the structure of those differs from other press releases. Press releases, both as standalone texts and as a hybrid genre, have been studied by Catenaccio (2008) and McLaren and Gurău (2005). A hybrid genre is a type of text that combines elements from different genres (Catenaccio 2008, 4). Press releases serve multiple purposes, being simultaneously promotional and informative (Catenaccio 2008, 9). While press releases utilize a structure and format similar to that of a news article (Taimi 2013, 18), they integrate promotional aspects into the text (Catenaccio 2008, 11). Typically, press releases are used to promote a company through the style of a news article, which results in a positive tone (Catenaccio 2008, 13). Studies by Catenaccio (2008) and McLaren and Gurău (2005) have examined the common features and general structure of press releases. Taimi's master thesis (2013) focused on the moves that are present in press releases that are about workforce reductions and how those moves are utilized in the press releases. The term moves refer to the structure of texts in a specific genre (Taimi 2013, 6). The studies mentioned here are discussed in more details in section 2.2.1.

2.2.1 Previous studies on press releases

McLaren and Gurău (2005) identified four core elements and one optional element commonly present in press releases. Table 1 provides an overview of these elements, along with their goals and functions in the context of press releases.

Table 1 based on McLaren and Gurău's Press Release Structure and Elements (McLaren and Gurău, 2005, 16)

The Structure and the Moves	Utilization
Announcement	Informs the audience about the news right away
Elaboration	Provides more details about the news
Comments (CEO)	Adds personal touch, credibility to the news and humanizes the company
Contact Details	Includes information how to contact the company for more information
Editor's note (optional)	May provide additional information or context.

According to McLaren and Gurău, a press release should begin with the announcement, which provides the audience with information about the contents of the press release. This is followed by the elaboration, and together, these elements aim to inform the audience (McLaren and Gurău 2005, 26). The comment, usually provided by the CEO or another high-ranking employee, is intended to offer a positive interpretation of the details and information presented in the announcement and elaboration (McLaren and Gurău 2005, 21). The contact details enable the audience to obtain further information about the contents of the press release (Ibid.). The optional element in McLaren and Gurău's structure is the editor's note, which serves to provide the audience with additional information, as well as definitions and explanations of terminology used in the press release (ibid.). Taimi acknowledges that while McLaren and Gurău's study is a valuable starting point, it has some flaws and weaknesses. These include the lack of numerical data about the findings and vague details regarding the number of press releases analysed in their study (Taimi 2013, 32). Furthermore, Taimi argues that the study lacks sufficient grounds to classify press releases as a static genre, given that the texts included in the study were collected between the years 2000 and 2002 and lack diversity in the material (Ibid.).

Catenaccio (2008) on the other hand finds that besides core and optional elements, there can be additional elements in the press release besides the core elements. The core elements include McLaren's and Gurău's moves which have been further elaborated in more detailed description. Catenaccio notes that not all moves need to be present in the press release and that certain moves do not need be in a rigid order (Catenaccio 2008, 24). Table 2 presents the moves in the order Catenaccio proposes as the most common structure and the function of the move. Moves not present at all in McLaren's and Gurău's study include the company logo, boilerplate and the explicit statement that the text is a press/news release. Moves inside brackets indicate an optional element of press releases according to Catenaccio. Taimi argues that peripheral features are not essential to the analysing press releases (2013, 36). Peripheral elements function as indicators of press releases (Taimi, 2013, 32).

Table 2 based on Catenaccio’s moves and suggested structure of press releases (Catenaccio 2008, 24)

The Structure and the Moves	Utilization
Press/News release caption (Peripheral)	Signals the nature of text and sets the tone.
Headline (Summary of main points)	A compelling and concise summary of the main news. Provides a quick snapshot of the content for readers to understand the essence without diving deep.
(“For Immediate release” formula) (Peripheral)	Indicates the timing of publication, clarifying when the news can be published
Lead	Communicates the most newsworthy information at the start to hook readers and provide the key details briefly
Justification for the product/service	Explains why the news matters with relevance, positive aspects and why the news are noteworthy.
Details about the product/service	Expands on the lead, providing additional context or specifics about the product, service, event, or company.
Explicit promotional component	Builds credibility and persuasion with endorsements, testimonials or expert opinions.
Boilerplate description(s)/ establish credentials (Peripheral)	Establishes the organization’s credentials with a standardized paragraph summarizing its identity and mission
Contact details (Peripheral)	Provided to the audience to be able to ask for further information or clarifications
Company Logo (Peripheral)	Used to establish the company’s identity

2.2.2 Press releases about workforce reductions

Taimi (2013) examined the specifics of press releases about workforce reductions in their master’s thesis and utilises the previously mentioned studies on press release structures. The material in Taimi’s thesis consists of press releases about workforce reductions published on company websites and is heterogeneous, meaning the data is diverse and provides a strong foundation for analysing the structure of such press releases. The study includes a corpus that utilizes 50 press releases that discuss layoffs from 2011 from multiple fields such as

information, banking for example (Taimi 2013, 37-38). Taimi found in their study that press releases about workforce reduction use commonly six elements, with two peripheral elements, and the structure presented in Table 3. The presented structure is not rigid and can change, but the structure Taimi presents is the most common one found in their study. Taimi argues that this is because the press releases are published on the companies' websites and have not been designed with traditional media in mind (2013, 44).

Table 3 based on Taimi's structure of press releases about workforce reductions (Taimi 2013, 74)

The Structure and the Moves	Utilization
Summary	Contains most essential information.
Elaboration	Expands on the information from summary.
Justification	Justifies the information from summary.
Expressing Sympathy	Highlights the difficulty of the layoffs and acknowledges the impact of said layoff on the employee, their families and local communities.
Making Amends	The steps the company is taking to lessen the impact on the employees.
Addressing customer needs	Reassures customers about the quality of the company's services and products.
Company description (Peripheral)	Details the company's mission, history, operations or expertise in certain fields. Functions as a boilerplate.
Disclaimer (Peripheral)	Provides legal protection for future statements and clarifies uncertainties around the actions.

Taimi's structure of press release that discuss workforce reductions contain a Summary, that contains the headline, a possible subheading called the standfirst and the lead (Taimi 2013, 48). The Summary is meant to brief the audience about the press release. The Elaboration provides the audience further specifics on the measures given in the Summary (Ibid.) Taimi notes that these two moves are found in both McLaren's and Gurău's study as well as Catenaccio's study (ibid.) The third move Taimi notes is the Justification, in which the audience is presented with the reasons the layoffs are necessary and what the company hopes to achieve through the layoffs (Ibid.) Expressing Sympathy is an element in which the author expresses sympathy to the impacted employees, their families and communities around the

impacted employees, such as close colleagues (Taimi 2013, 62). Another core element is the Making Amends, in which the company explains the actions they are taking to minimize the effect of the layoff on the impacted employees (Taimi 2013, 67), such as a severance package. Addressing customer needs is about assuring the customer's that the layoff will not have a negative impact on the products and services provided by the company (Taimi 2013, 70). The peripheral elements include a company description, which is used by the authors to provide the audience information about the company such as its history and expertise in the industry (Taimi 2013, 45). The second peripheral feature Taimi identifies is the disclaimer that is a legal statement to protect the company (2013, 46). Section 2.3 discusses how companies should frame and structure to minimize the negative impact of the layoff announcements, which influences how layoff announcements are created.

2.3 Layoff framework

When companies announce layoffs to the public, they aim to reduce the negative effects of the layoffs on employees (Smeltzer and Zener 2004, 4) and avoid future problems that may arise if the layoffs are not communicated effectively to the audience (Marek, Setterberg, O'Rourke 2003, 131). The gaming industry also appeals to the community surrounding the game and addressing the consumers is important to minimize the effects of layoffs on the consumer side. According to Yap (2019) brand engagement is the most important factor to build brand loyalty. Research has found that, when communicating layoffs, the layoff announcement should follow certain guidelines to minimise the negative aspects. These guidelines are derived from studies by Marek, Setterberg and O'Rourke, and by Smeltzer and Zener. From the analysis of these studies, six key guidelines can be identified for effectively announcing a layoff.

First, the company must develop a clear strategy, including business objectives, layoff criteria, and communication strategies tailored to all audiences. The decisions must be legally sound and non-discriminatory (Marek, Setterberg, O'Rourke 2003, 139-140; Smeltzer and Zener 2004, 8). Second, the company must prepare those delivering the news to handle conversations with employees. These conversations require compassion, clarity, professionalism, and understanding from the person delivering the news (ibid.). Third, employees should be informed of the news first and should not hear about it through external parties (ibid.).

The fourth key guideline is that impacted employees should receive support from the company, such as a severance package and career transition resources (ibid.). The fifth guideline emphasises the importance of providing reassurance and motivation to employees still at the company. The survivors' concerns regarding the layoffs and the potential impact these layoffs may have on their roles and the overall work environment is crucial to address (ibid.). Finally, the last guideline highlights the importance of maintaining consistent communication and monitoring to reduce rumours. Leadership must also remain visible throughout the layoffs, demonstrating accountability and commitment to the company's future (ibid.).

3 Material and Methods

Section 3 outlines the materials and methodology used in the study. The material of the thesis, which are the press releases, is introduced in section 3.1. Section 3.2 provides information about the companies, such as location their headquarters and the scope of the layoffs. The close reading method used in this thesis is introduced in Section 3.3, which focuses on two main aspects: the genre elements of press releases about workforce reductions and the rhetorical appeals and techniques used in the analysed press releases. These techniques are further explored in Section 3.3.1.

The material of the thesis consists of six press releases that discuss layoffs. The layoff announcements were published in 2023 and 2024 and are publicly available on the companies' websites. Press releases that are only available through a third party, such as a news site or a statement on a social media platform are excluded. Also excluded are press releases about a closure of the company. The websites are the companies' own websites, and the press releases are in most cases posted on the news section of the website. These websites function as a way to the user to discover products these companies offer. In the news section, the companies post announcements of upcoming releases and updates to existing products. If the company is public, such as EA, the company also might publish the financial reports. BioWare's and Sony Interactive Media's websites are titled as a blog, where the companies update the public and the community about the development of their products and celebrate occasions such as retirements and special days.

Table 4 presents the word count and structure of the press releases. The announcements by video game companies vary in length as the shortest press release in the present study is 415 words long, which is by CD Projekt Red. The longest press release is by Riot Games and is 971 words in length. The total word count of the press releases totals at 4344 words. The press releases' structures vary, but in five of the six announcements, the text is spaced in clear sections which I refer to as paragraphs. These Paragraphs consist between two and five sentences. Of the six announcements, the texts by Riot Games and BioWare utilize subheadings to divide the text and through subheadings provide the audience information about the contents of the subsections. The outlier of these texts is the press release by Sony Interactive Entertainment, which is structured into small sections that contain most often one to two sentences or at most three sentences.

Table 4 Word Count and Structure of the Announcements

Company	Word Count (Includes the title)	Structure
Riot Games	971	4 Sub-sections
Epic Games	839	9 paragraphs with an additional FAQ section
CD Projekt Red	415	4 paragraphs
BioWare	670	11 paragraphs and a lead, with 3 sub-sections
Electronic Arts	500	5 paragraphs with a lead
Sony Interactive Entertainment	503	No clear paragraphs, as the announcement consists of multiple sentences.
Total	3898	-

3.1 Information about the companies and layoffs

Table 5 provides information about the approximate number of personnel laid off, the percentage these layoffs represent of the entire workforce, the company type, and the location of the companies' headquarters. The number of personnel laid off varied, but apart from BioWare, the layoffs affected hundreds of employees in each company. Percentage-wise, BioWare laid off 20% of its workforce, the most out of the studied companies. These figures are estimates, as some companies only disclosed a single numerical value regarding the layoffs. For instance, Electronic Arts reported only the percentage of layoffs in relation to their total workforce, while BioWare disclosed only the number of affected employees. Sony Interactive Entertainment informed the percentage and number of employees laid off in an email sent to the employees (Sony 2024).

The companies studied are a mix of three types: public, private, and subsidiaries. Among the six companies, three are subsidiaries: Riot Games, BioWare, and Sony Interactive Entertainment. BioWare is a subsidiary of Electronic Arts, one of the companies included in the study. Two of the companies, CD Projekt Red and Electronic Arts, are public, while Epic Games is the only private company among those analysed. Three of the six companies—Riot Games, Electronic Arts, and Epic Games—have their headquarters in the United States. BioWare and Sony Interactive Entertainment have multiple headquarters. Both have one

location in the United States; however, BioWare also has its own headquarters in Canada and, as a subsidiary of Electronic Arts, is associated with their headquarters as well. Sony Interactive Entertainment additionally maintains headquarters in Japan.

Table 5 Numerical data about the layoffs, company structure and location

Company	Layoff amount	Company type	Headquarters
Riot Games	530 (11%)	Subsidiary	United States
Epic Games	830 (16%)	Private	United States
CD Projekt Red	Around 100 (9%)	Public	Poland
BioWare	50 (20%)	Subsidiary	United States/Canada
Electronic Arts	670 (5%)	Public	United States
Sony Interactive Entertainment	900 (8%)	Subsidiary	United States/Japan

3.1.1 Electronic Arts

Electronic Arts is a public video game company that both develops and publishes games across multiple genres through its 25 studios worldwide (Electronic Arts 2020; Arts 2021a). Established in 1982 in Redwood, California, it owns intellectual properties such as *The Sims*, *NHL* and *Battlefield*. EA offers full-priced games, additional content, and free-to-play games as services with monetization models similar to Riot Games and Epic Games. The company operates the storefront EA app for game purchases and provides EA Play, a subscription service which offers discounts and access to specific games (Electronic Arts 2021b). EA employs approximately 13,700 people globally (Stock Analysis 2024).

3.1.2 CD PROJEKT RED

CD Projekt Red is a Polish public video game developer that was established in 2002 with its main business being the development and self-publishing of role-playing games. The company's headquarters are located in Warsaw and it has four other locations, two in Poland and two in America. The company's large franchises are the *Witcher* video game series and *Cyberpunk 2077*, both based on intellectual properties under which CD Projekt Red acquired

the rights to use (CD Projekt Red n.d.). It owns GOG as well, an online store for video game purchase. It currently employs 1,134 workers in its offices (CD Projekt Red 2024).

3.1.3 BioWare

BioWare is a video game studio founded in 1995, which was acquired by Electronic Arts in 2008. Currently, BioWare develops video games, but its games are published by Electronic Arts (BioWare n.d.). The studio specializes in creating role-playing video games that are sold as complete products, with the possibility of optional additional content being offered later. Its most well-known products are the Dragon Age franchise and the Mass Effect franchise, with the studio's most recent release being Dragon Age: Veilguard. The current number of employees at BioWare remains unconfirmed.

3.1.4 Riot Games

Riot Games, founded in 2006 in the United States, is renowned for its free-to-play multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) game, League of Legends (Riot Games 2023). It has also developed Teamfight Tactics, (Riot Games n.d.), Valorant and Legends of Runeterra (Riot Games 2024). These games generate revenue from purchasable in-game visuals known as skins. Riot will release a free-to-play 2v2 fighting game featuring League of Legends characters in 2025. Riot Games is owned entirely by Tencent as of 2015 (Russell 2015), Riot employs over 4,500 people across 20 offices globally. Riot also operates esports leagues, where League of Legends is the number one esports title in the world and Valorant is also gaining traction. Riot also expanded into other media with the development of Arcane, a Netflix TV series based on League of Legends (Riot Games n.d.).

3.1.5 Sony Interactive Entertainment

Sony Interactive Entertainment is a Sony Group Corporation subsidiary that focuses on the PlayStation business and its corresponding studios (Sony Interactive Entertainment n.d.). It was originally formed in 1993 as Sony Computer Entertainment but was renamed to SIE in 2016 following its merger with Sony Network Entertainment (Kohler 2016). Sony Interactive Entertainment has 17 PlayStation Studios which produce games exclusively for the platform, IPs such as Horizon, God of War, and The Last of Us. Sony Interactive Entertainment also produces third-party exclusives such as Bloodborne by FromSoftware. Sony Interactive Entertainment also offers subscription services providing access to games, multiplayer

features, and promotions. Headquartered in San Mateo, California, with Tokyo and London offices, Sony Interactive Entertainment has around 12,700 employees worldwide (Sony Group Corporation 2024).

3.1.6 Epic Games

Epic Games was established in 1991 by Tim Sweeney in the USA. Epic Game creates and sells its own titles as well as titles from third-party developers (Epic Games 2024a). Its most successful title is Fortnite, a free battle royale title that generates revenue by selling skins and emotes, some from franchises like Marvel and Star Wars (Epic Games 2024b). Epic Games also developed Unreal Engine, a free computer graphics engine with licensing fees and royalties on revenues over \$1 million USD (Epic Games 2024c). About 40% of Epic Games is owned by Tencent, and other investors include Disney. Epic has around 4,500 employees after recent layoffs.

3.2 Close reading method

Close reading is the examination of a text in multiple contexts to uncover deeper meanings within the text and how it is used to influence the reader. According to Barry Brummett (2019, 23), close reading involves analysing a text with the goal of finding its deeper meaning. Using Brummett's close reading techniques, this thesis analyses the rhetorical strategies employed by companies in their press releases. The close reading is conducted using an inductive method that focuses on the form of press releases about workforce reductions. This method builds upon Brummett's argument that a genre is defined by texts within the same context that utilize similar linguistic and communicative elements (Brummett 2019, 57). Brummett (2019, 45) elaborates on techniques for close reading and describes form as "the structure, or pattern, that organizes the text." The technique used in this thesis emphasizes form, focusing on the narrative, personae, and genre of press releases about layoffs. The narrative examines how layoffs are presented to the audience, whether as necessary steps to improve the company or to achieve financial stability. Through the narrative, the author communicates the layoffs and their impact to the audience. The personae refer to the roles within the text, whether visible or implied (Brummett 2019, 59). In this study, the roles include the first persona, the author of the text, and the second persona, the audience (Brummett 2019, 60). The genre of the text influences the narrative and shapes audience expectations of the content (Brummett 2019, 57).

Thus, defining the genre of the text is essential to determine which elements should be present in a layoff announcement. This process utilizes the elements outlined in Table 3 by Taimi to establish that the announcements analysed in the thesis are press releases discussing layoffs. The material included in the thesis should feature the core elements identified in Taimi's study, as shown in Table 3. Since the thesis primarily examines the textual aspects of press releases, visual identifiers such as company logos and other visual materials are excluded from the analysis.

The second aspect of close reading involves identifying how rhetoric is presented in announcements and understanding the goals behind its use. Close reading of rhetorical modes emphasizes the meaning of words and the messages the author seeks to communicate to the audience (Brummett 2019, 189). This approach also considers audience reactions to the text, the choice of language, and the underlying messages (ibid.). The techniques used within different rhetorical modes are summarized in Table 4. The appeals and techniques are used in the analysis for terminology about the techniques of rhetoric modes are presented in Table 4. Higgins and Walker studied the use of rhetoric strategies in social and environmental reports and presented the elements of rhetorical appeals (2012, 198). The other table used for the study is from 2010 from the book *Organizational Rhetoric: Situations and Strategies* by Mary Hoffman and Debra Ford, where they discuss and present how rhetoric is used in organizations and corporations. The table presents the modern forms of rhetoric strategies in organizational texts (Hoffman and Ford 2009, 49-50). These rhetorical techniques are further elaborated in Section 4.1.1. Close reading focuses on the way authors construct their texts, making the contextual influences and hidden ideologies in corporate layoff announcements more transparent to the public. This method assumes a foundation of knowledge about the gaming industry, the companies involved, and their histories.

Table 6 Rhetoric modes and techniques used for the close reading

Mode	Appeal/Technique	Examples taken from the announcements
Ethos	Similitude/Othering	Team / our impacted colleagues
	Goodwill	I encourage you to stay connected and would like to thank you for being an invaluable part of our journey
	Expertise	CEO. CD PROJEKT/ General manager, BioWare / Delivering the immersive, narrative-driven stories that PlayStation Studios is known for
	Self-criticism	We know we'll still have occasional misses
	Inclination to succeed/ Consistency	These priorities align our investments with opportunities to make the biggest impact
Pathos	Metaphors	Our commitment to quality continues to be our North Star
	Identification: Common ground, unifying symbols, sympathy, loyalty	Rioters / colleagues / our staff / Saying goodbye to people who have helped build Epic is a terrible experience for all
	Emotional language	I am deeply saddened to see talented individuals leave the company
	Needs	Impacted employees will be provided with professional resources and assistance
Logos	Argumentation/Reasoning	We've been spending more money than we earn
	Justifications	We're certain that for CD PROJEKT RED to grow, we need to be consistent in implementing that approach
	Claims	Epic's prospects for the future are strong
	Evidence	Apex Legends performance is strong on the heels of a memorable 4th anniversary event
	Data	530 roles, which represents around 11% of Rioters/

3.2.1 Used persuasion methods

The techniques that utilize ethos include Similitude/Othering, goodwill, expertise, self-criticism and inclination to succeed/consistency. *Similitude* is used to appeal to the parallels between the author and another personae (Higgins and Walker 2012, 197). Vice versa, *othering* appeals to the differences between the author and other personae (Känsäkangas 2024, 16). Whilst Känsäkangas argues that othering attempts to appeal to the worse ethos of the opposing side (2024, 16), it is used in this thesis when authors refer to another group of people differently to others and does not include an explicit negative appeal. Hoffmann and Ford describe *goodwill* as “to whether or not rhetors demonstrate concern for their audiences” (2009, 26). *Expertise* is used to appeal to the audience through the person’s or company’s qualifications. Authors use self-criticism when they mention honesty in their text and take accountability of their missteps (Higgins and Walker 2012, 198). *Inclination to succeed/consistency* is done with mentions of past successes and consistent track record (ibid.).

Persuasive techniques of pathos consist of metaphors, identification, emotional language and needs. *Metaphors* are used by authors to present something differently to audiences (Brummett 2019, 96). For example, the press release by BioWare refers to the layoffs as *eliminating roles*. *Identification* is used by the author to persuade the reader with common attributes between the audience, such as place of employment, or shared values, such as sympathy (Higgins and Walker 2012, 198). *Emotional language* is seen from emotionally charged words such as *difficult* and *exciting* and is used to persuade the author through emotional aspects of the subject. The technique of appealing to needs refers to human’s having needs which need to be fulfilled (Hoffman and Ford 2009, 30). This appears in the press releases by author’s appealing to the audience with mentions of support for the laid-off employees and the needs of the company.

In this study, logos comprises of five techniques: argumentation/reasoning, justifications, claims, evidence and data. *Argumentation/reasoning* is done with a logically sound argument that the author reasons to the audience. Higgins and Walker note that justifications are used as “rationale for activities undertaken.” (2012, 198). In this thesis, *claims* are used when authors state something, but do not substantiate the claim with evidence or data. Evidence and data are used by authors to create a compelling argument for the audience but are minimally used in the text.

4 Analysis

The analysis is presented from the start of the text to the end of the text. The section presents the primary data of the thesis after using the close reading method and focusing on the rhetoric modes and persuasive techniques. The analysis of the announcements is presented in the following order: Electronic Arts, CD Projekt Red, BioWare, Riot Games, Sony Interactive Entertainment and Epic Games.

4.1 Electronic Arts

The announcement by Electronic Arts was released to the public on EA's website on February 28th, 2024, and is credited to Andrew Wilson, the CEO of EA. The post was first shared with employees of EA by Wilson and was later shared with the public. The target audience for the announcement was the employees of EA and not the public or shareholders, as the text states that it was shared to the employees of EA. The announcement is unspecific when giving details about the layoffs, only citing the need to evolve and to keep up with the changes in the gaming industry. The announcement includes only a few concrete measures that the company plans to take, such as sunsetting some intellectual properties, discontinuing development on licensed intellectual properties, and laying off 5% of their total workforce. The announcement utilizes mostly logical reasoning as well as ethical appeal towards the reader. The logical reasoning comes from the use of argumentation and logic, claims, and justifications, but it does not provide data, although it does provide evidence once. The use of ethical appeal can be seen in the inclination to succeed and Wilson's expertise, with a noticeable lack of use of techniques of ethos such as consistency, self-criticism, and similitude. The emotional appeal in the announcement is apparent as well, due to the use of emotional and vivid language mixed with phrases that utilize logical reasoning as well as sympathy towards the employees.

The first paragraph utilizes all modes of persuasion, which is clear from the utilization of different techniques. The paragraph begins with the use of emotional and vivid language, as Wilson describes the employees as *entertaining* and *inspiring* and utilizes comparative adjectives such as *deeper* and *ever before* to appeal to pathos. The second sentence starts with Wilson's claims of reorganization successes in the past and provides evidence for the claim by sharing a link to a different post on EA's website. In the accompanying post, Wilson discusses updates regarding promotions, retirements, and resignations resulting from the

company's structural reorganization. The second clause of the sentence provides justifications for the prior reorganization claim, which is shown in example 1.

- (1) to deliver our strategic priorities of entertaining massive online communities, telling blockbuster stories, and harnessing the power of community in and around our games.

In the example, Wilson names the goals of the prior reorganization but does not provide evidence or data to indicate whether the goals have been met. The audience is left to wonder whether the organizational changes were justified and whether the goals will be met in the future. However, the first paragraph ends with Wilson asserting that the company is ready and in good form to meet these goals due to the actions that have already been taken. As such, Wilson appeals through credibility and inclination to succeed, arguing that the previous restructuring was successful. Overall, the use of emotional appeal is overpowered by the use of logical reasoning, while ethical appeal only appears in the use of similitude through the pronoun *we* and inclination to succeed.

The second paragraph discusses the changing needs and wants of the consumers, whom Wilson refers to as *fans*. Wilson details the rapid change in the gaming industry and the need to adapt, as seen in example 2. The paragraph consists of justifications, arguments, and claims regarding the contents of the third paragraph. Most of the techniques that utilize logical reasoning in the announcement consist of a claim and an argument for the claim.

- (2) We are also leading through an accelerating industry transformation where player needs and motivations have changed significantly.

Example 2 consists of two clauses, the main clause followed by the subordinate clause. The first clause of the sentence claims that the industry around the company is not the same as before, and the subordinate clause provides an argument for the reason behind the change. Wilson argues that the change is accelerating faster than before and that the needs of consumers are no longer the same.

The reason behind the change in player needs is explained by Wilson in example 3, and the second sentence provides arguments for why the needs of consumers have shifted in example 4.

- (3) Fans are increasingly engaging with the largest IP,
- (4) and looking to us for broader experiences where they can play, watch, create content, and forge deeper connections.

In example 3, the argument is presented to the reader about the current needs of consumers, but the argument does not provide detailed examples of exactly what consumers seek in modern games. Example 19 includes subordinate clauses of the main clause, providing the argument for the main clause's claim. The example also incorporates, on a smaller scale, ethical appeal, as Wilson argues that consumers look for products to meet their needs from EA.

The third paragraph describes the changes Wilson discussed in the second paragraph. Wilson begins the paragraph by utilizing emotional appeal with emotional and vivid language, emphasizing teamwork and growth. The second sentence, seen in example 5:

- (5) Given how and where we are working, we are continuing to optimize our global real estate footprint to best support our business.

The sentence utilizes ethical appeal and logical reasoning as Wilson details the plan to optimize their real estate footprint. The ethical appeal lies in Wilson's expertise as they attempt to persuade the reader that they are aware of their actions and intentions. However, the implication of the sentence is softened with the word choice *optimize* (5), which carries positive connotations of improvement. Wilson means that the company will close some studios and reduce the number of workplaces. The word *footprint* (5) is used to spin the phrase in a more optimistic direction, as it is commonly associated with environmental implications, such as *ecological footprint*.

Afterwards, Wilson provides concrete examples of how the company will change, followed by an explanation of how these changes will improve the products and services that EA and its studios create. These two sentences complete the claim-and-justification technique, where Wilson utilizes logical reasoning as well as ethical appeal through their expertise, explaining that they have no faith in some of their products under development. Wilson does not use self-criticism here; rather, they rely on their expertise, asserting that they know these products would not be successful and that resources could be better redirected to other, more promising projects. Wilson ends the paragraph with the intention of restructuring the company:

- (6) Lastly, we are streamlining our company operations to deliver deeper, more connected experiences for fans everywhere that build community, shape culture, and grow fandom.

Wilson argues that the reorganization is done for the consumers and that the reorganization will provide positive outcomes for them. The first phrase begins with the word *lastly* (6), which implies that this is the final change the company will make as part of the reorganization process. The sentence and phrases consist of a claim, which is then justified, though the justification utilizes emotional appeal by claiming that the actions are done for consumer's sake, as the reorganization is said to be done for the consumers and to cultivate the community around the games.

The second last paragraph primarily utilizes emotional appeal alongside logical reasoning and ethical appeal. The paragraph details the effects of the changes on the employees and how the company and its leadership plan to support the impacted employees. It begins with a sentence that utilizes both emotional appeal and logical reasoning. The sentence starts with a clause of a metaphor *In this time of change* (7), a rhetoric technique under pathos. The metaphor is used to describe a period of transformation and uncertainty. Then the main clause provides the statement that the changes Wilson detailed in previous paragraphs will affect the personnel as well.

- (7) In this time of change, we expect these decisions to impact approximately 5 percent of our workforce.

Wilson utilizes language and word choices, such as *impact* (7) and *these decisions* (7) to avoid outright saying that the company's leadership will lay off some personnel. However, Wilson explains in a later sentence that the company's leadership will try to find new opportunities for the impacted employees at other EA studios. Wilson does not specify the exact number of employees who will be affected by the changes but estimates the percentage of employees affected from the company's total workforce. The 5 percent of employees affected translates to around 670 employees. Wilson strategically uses data to sway the reader's perception, stating that approximately 5 percent of their workforce will be impacted. This figure may appear minimal when contrasted with the total number of 670 individual employees.

After delivering the news about the layoffs, Wilson uses sympathetic language and expresses grief about the layoffs and their effects on the employees. Wilson laments the difficulty of the layoffs and assures that the leadership has explored alternatives to avoid them. The use of emotional and vivid language is evident in examples 8 and 9:

- (8) I understand this will create uncertainty and be challenging for many who have worked with such dedication and passion and have made important contributions to our company.
- (9) While not every team will be impacted, this is the hardest part of these changes, and we have deeply considered every option to try and limit impacts to our teams.

In Example 8, Wilson uses emotionally charged words and constructs, such as *dedication* (8), *passion* (8), and *important contributions* (8). Wilson also appeals to the reader through sympathy and understanding of how this will create challenges for the impacted employees. In example 9, Wilson laments the difficulty of these decisions, which, they argue, the company has made only after its best efforts to avoid them. As such, Wilson relies on their credibility and that of the leadership but does not engage in self-criticism regarding what could have been done differently or provide examples of the measures the leadership considered.

Wilson then moves on to provide some details on how the company plans to support the affected employees. Wilson utilizes their expertise and similitude, as well as loyalty towards

the affected employees. In example 10, Wilson uses specific words like *our* (10) and *team members* (10) to emphasize a sense of unity and loyalty towards employees who may face layoffs.

- (10) Our primary goal is to provide team members with opportunities to find new roles and paths to transition onto other projects.

Wilson also provides the plan in case a new role is not found for each laid-off employee. The plan promises to provide support for laid-off employees and to handle the situation with respect, which utilizes emotional appeal as Wilson sympathizes with the impacted employees. The paragraph ends with a timeline for the changes and layoffs, and Wilson is direct about when these changes will begin and end.

The last paragraph concludes the announcement with Wilson showcasing gratitude to everyone, not just the laid-off employees. Wilson leans into the use of expertise and emotional appeal, utilizing similitude by referring to the employees as a team. They demonstrate expertise through their values as industry leaders and incite hope and excitement for the future of the company and its products. Wilson ends the paragraph with a phrase of gratitude in Example 11:

- (11) Thank you for all that you do, Andrew.

The sentence thanks the reader for their contributions but is vague about the specifics of what Wilson is thanking them for. The sentence utilizes emotional appeal as Wilson showcases overall gratitude towards the reader. Wilson signs off the announcement as *Andrew* (11). By using only their first name without including any work titles, Wilson presents themselves as more relatable and approachable to the intended audience.

4.2 CD Projekt Red

On the 26th of July, CD Projekt Red posted a news update about an organizational change regarding the company. The announcement is credited to Adam Kiciński, the CEO of CD Projekt Red. The announcement is not specifically addressed to a certain target audience and is available for anyone to read. In the announcement, Kiciński states that the company will be

laying off employees or will have no further opportunities available for some individuals after their contracts with the company are complete. The tone of the announcement is emotional and repeatedly emphasizes the talent of these employees and how saddened Kiciński is about losing such skilled individuals. Kiciński utilizes emotional appeal with vivid and emotional language to convey the message to the audience. Ethical appeal is also evident in the announcement through the company's expertise, similitude, and past successes as a video game studio. However, the use of logos is noticeably less prominent compared to ethos and pathos. Logical reasoning appears through the use of argumentation, logic, and data.

The announcement begins with Kiciński informing the reader that they have news about the company and its employees to share:

(12) I have some news to share regarding the future shape of our teams and our game development philosophy.

The main clause uses pathos, as Kiciński attempts to establish a connection with the audience they intend to address. The clause also utilizes rational language and logic to provide details of the news with mentions of *shape of our teams* (12) and *game development philosophy* (12), both of which relate to the strategy of CD Projekt Red. The first paragraph introduces the revised strategy of CD Projekt Red to the audience:

(13) Those of you familiar with our strategy might remember that we have a lot going on at CD PROJEKT RED. Projects like Polaris (The Witcher franchise), Orion (Cyberpunk franchise), or Hadar (new franchise) are just some of the exciting elements in the future we see for our games.

The paragraph begins with Kiciński addressing those who are familiar with the company's strategy, attempting to build a sense of familiarity with the audience. The announcement contains a link to the strategy shared with the public in 2022. The addition of this link enhances Kiciński's credibility, as they rely on the strategy plan and provide evidence to support the claim that the company has multiple projects in progress. Kiciński builds the company's credibility by leveraging expertise, consistency, and an inclination to succeed.

This is done by naming the codenames of the company's ongoing projects. The final clause in the example uses enthusiastic language, suggesting that the mentioned projects are just a fraction of the company's future plans. Through this, Kiciński attempts to emotionally appeal to the audience's loyalty to both CD Projekt Red and its games. Kiciński then elaborates on the goals of the strategy and the necessary changes:

- (14) Part of that strategy is an ongoing process of several deep transformations within the studio which we consider key to making quality games, on time and without crunch.

Example 14 conveys the targeted goals and required actions to complete the strategy, employing logical reasoning and ethical appeal. The rhetorical strategy presents the reader with an argument followed by a logical outcome. The argument is introduced in the main clause, discussing the studio's transformations as part of the strategy, while the relative clause outlines the specific goals of these transformations. The subordinate clause assures the reader by highlighting the studio's commitment to being on schedule and avoiding *crunch*, a term referring to extended working hours during the final stages of development. Kiciński further details the changes already implemented and the upcoming focus areas:

- (15) After reshaping our development process and incorporating Agile methodologies, we're now focusing on refining the shape of our teams.

Kiciński informs the audience that changes to the development process have already been made, building credibility by mentioning the implementation of *Agile methodologies* (15). This demonstrates progress and attempts to reinforce Kiciński's credibility in executing the strategy successfully, showcasing that one part of the strategy has been completed and a new target is now in focus.

The second paragraph addresses the requirements for achieving the expectations set by the company, emphasizing the importance of having the right teams in place. Kiciński uses ethos to reassure the audience that assembling the correct teams is crucial to meeting the company's goals:

- (16) To meet our own high expectations and ambitions to create the best role-playing games, we not only want to have the *best* people but also the *right* teams.

Kiciński appeals to ethos by referencing the company's high expectations and ambitions for its renowned products. The use of the possessive pronoun *our* (16) indicates that these aspirations are shared collectively within the company. Through similitude, Kiciński aims to present CD Projekt Red as a unified company with aligned values among its leadership and employees. The words *best* (16) and *right* (16) are italicized for emphasis, underscoring the significance of building a fitting workforce to achieve these high aspirations. Kiciński then clarifies that these adjustments, along with the aligned workforce and aspirations, are necessary for the company's projects:

- (17) What we mean by that is having teams that are built around our projects' needs; teams that are more agile and more effective.

As Kiciński elaborates on the requirements for the success of the company's projects, they appeal to expertise in creating optimized teams for these goals. To further instill confidence, Kiciński uses logical reasoning, delivering a convincing argument to outline the expectations for these teams. Throughout the sentence, Kiciński consistently uses the pronouns *we* (17) and *our* (17), reinforcing the perception of CD Projekt Red as a cohesive and unified company. Kiciński continues by stressing the importance of implementing these changes:

- (18) we're certain that for CD PROJEKT RED to grow, we need to be consistent in implementing that approach.

In the first clause, Kiciński discusses the necessity of implementing changes to the company's teams. Logic is introduced as justification for these actions. The second clause reiterates the strategy's goal: the growth of CD Projekt Red. By expressing certainty, Kiciński strengthens their credibility, presenting assertions with confidence in the plan's success.

The third paragraph outlines the approach CD Projekt Red plans to take to implement these changes. In this section, Kiciński provides a rationale for the layoffs and explains what will

happen to the affected employees. Kiciński begins the paragraph with a logical argument about assessing team contributions to the strategy:

- (19) We've carefully assessed all teams in the company in terms of their expected contribution to the delivery of our strategy.

Kiciński argues for the company's credibility by stating that the teams have been evaluated with the strategy in mind. Kiciński uses logical language and phrasing within the sentence and refrains from using *our* (19) to describe the teams, creating the appearance of a neutral assessor working to meet the expectations of the strategy. Kiciński presents the layoffs as difficult news to share.

- (20) There's no easy way to say this, but today we are overstaffed.

Kiciński acknowledges that the information they are sharing is difficult for the audience to hear. Through emotional language, they attempt to convey empathy as they bear the responsibility of sharing bad news. Kiciński's ethical appeal stems from self-criticism and acknowledgment of the problem at hand. They go on to explain why the company is overstaffed:

- (21) We have talented people on board who are finishing their tasks and — based on current and expected project needs — we already know we don't have other opportunities for them in the next year.

The overall conclusion Kiciński presents is that the company is unable to provide further employment opportunities for certain employees. They emphasize the skillsets of the personnel at that time, highlighting the employees' great talents. Kiciński strengthens CD Projekt Red's credibility as an employer by noting the employees' abilities and expressing appreciation for them. The additional clause provides the reader with a logical explanation for why the layoffs are necessary. The final clause justifies Kiciński's awareness of the lack of future opportunities. Additionally, Kiciński uses empathetic language to express sympathy for

those with no future prospects at the company. They then offer numerical estimates on the scope and timeline for the layoffs:

- (22) The outcome is the studio parting ways with around 100 people, which is roughly 9% of the entire team. This will not be immediate as some employees will be let go as late as Q1 2024 (...)

Rather than using the term *layoffs*, Kiciński describes it as *parting ways* (22) to avoid the negative connotations associated with layoffs. They utilize logos by providing data on the expected scope of the layoffs, stating the percentage of impacted employees relative to the company's total workforce. Kiciński also outlines the timeline for when the last affected employees will leave the company. They additionally share the reason behind announcing the layoffs now:

- (23) but, in the spirit of transparency, we've chosen to share the information now.

Kiciński builds their credibility as a trustworthy and fair leader by emphasizing their transparency (23) in providing this information to both readers and employees. They further assure that this decision was made for the benefit of the employees in example 24:

- (24) We want team members to have ample time to process and adjust to the change, and we've also made sure to offer everyone a comprehensive severance package.

In this example, Kiciński enhances their credibility as an employer by emphasizing that they aim to support employees through the transition, including a comprehensive severance package. However, no further details are provided about what the package entails. Emotional appeal is also evident as Kiciński demonstrates loyalty, compassion, and effort toward the impacted employees. They emphasize providing employees with adequate time to adjust to the changes. The last paragraph is directed at the employees who are being laid off:

- (25) Finally, I would like to address affected CDPR team members reading this message.

Kiciński uses the pronoun *I* (25) throughout the last paragraph to make the message feel more personal. In this paragraph, they express gratitude for the employees' contributions to the company and extend wishes for success in their future endeavours. Emotionally charged language and vocabulary are employed to convey their appreciation:

(26) Although our paths will diverge professionally, I believe the relationships we have built can remain strong.

Here, Kiciński reflects on the loss of colleagues but remains hopeful about maintaining relationships even outside the company. They describe the separation as *our paths will diverge* (26), using a metaphorical word, *path* (26). The main clause includes emotionally charged phrases, such as *I believe* (26) and *strong* (26). Kiciński concludes the announcement by expressing heartfelt gratitude to the employees who are departing.

(27) I encourage you to stay connected and would like to thank you for being an invaluable part of our journey. Your impact will resonate within CD PROJEKT RED and we wish you nothing but success and fulfillment in the next chapter of your professional lives.

Kiciński utilizes pathos to evoke a sense of loyalty and emotional connection to CD Projekt Red and its employees. They express sincere gratitude to the employees who are leaving and convey their best wishes for their future endeavors. The sentences feature emotionally charged language, such as *invaluable* (27), *will resonate* (27), *success* (27), and *fulfilment* (27), along with a metaphor describing the employees' future outside of CD Projekt Red as a *next chapter* (27). Kiciński concludes the announcement by signing off with their full name, title, and the name of the company: *Adam Kiciński, CEO of CD PROJEKT*. This professional sign-off uses ethos to reinforce credibility and professionalism.

4.3 BioWare

On August 23rd, 2023, BioWare announced that the studio would be laying off approximately 50 positions in their studio. The post details the reasons behind the layoffs, what the studio will do during the time of the layoffs and what is the studio's plan for the future. The post is

credited to be written by Gary McKay, who is the general manager and vice president of BioWare studio. The announcement is analysed in four sections as the post is divided into four clear sections. The announcement begins on a neutral viewpoint as the title of the post “An Update on the State of BioWare”. The title gives very little to note on the context of the announcement, but that it is generally about the studio’s situation at the time of writing. Right after that the announcement begins with a casual greeting to the reader:

(28) Hello again,

In example 28, the greeting implies familiarity and a sense of reacquaintance with the word *again* (28) as the McKay greets the audience which identifies the reader as being familiar to themselves. With this greeting, McKay appeals to the reader through the means of identification, at the same time it appeals to the reader through similitude but the emotional appeal (pathos) in the example is stronger than the ethical appeal (ethos). McKay engages the reader by fostering a sense of identification, while also drawing on similarities. In previous updates and announcements, McKay uses the greeting *hello* without the word *again*. The last communication before this from McKay was from February 23rd, 2022, about the development of the new Dragon Age game. In the first section of the announcement other attempts to persuade the reader through the means of identification and similitude appear as specific word choices, which are repeated throughout the announcement. The use of pronouns such as *we*, *our* and *ourselves* implies similitude and identification that the reader and author are both part of the same team and studio, though McKay is in a more prestigious role in the company and is an authority figure within the company. A difference between similitude and identification can be seen in examples 29 and 31 which come from the same sentence.

(29) It will allow our developers to iterate quickly, unlock more creativity, and form a clear vision

(30) what we’re building before development ramps up.

(31) we find ourselves in a position where change is not only necessary, but unavoidable.

In example 29, McKay uses the possessive adjective *our* (29) to refer to the developers, making it seem as though they belong to BioWare while simultaneously distinguishing them from McKay. This phrasing appeals to pathos by reinforcing the developers' identity as part of the studio while subtly distancing McKay from being a developer themselves. However in example (30), McKay includes themselves as part of a team with the use of the pronoun *we* (30). This use of the pronoun *we* uses the ethical appeal of similitude, in that McKay is also responsible for the product that they develop and create. McKay uses the reflexive form of the *we* -pronoun *ourselves* (example 31), which follows or precedes the *we* -pronoun, and thus falls under the same persuasive technique of similitude.

Emotional and vivid language does not appear in the first section as much as it appears in the later sections of the announcement. In the first section of the announcement, emotional and vivid language is used to convey sympathy and that the layoffs are done out of a necessity. This can be seen in examples (32) and (33).

- (32) As difficult as this is to say, rethinking our approach to development inevitably means reorganizing our team to match the studio's changing needs.
- (33) That is deeply painful and humbling to write.

Adjectives such as *difficult* (example 32), *painful* (example 33), and *humbling* (example 33) are used to persuade the reader to see that McKay is also affected by these layoffs and feels the negative emotions of the layoffs as well. The layoffs are presented as an inevitability and as a change as the layoffs are part of the reorganization and transition of the studio, though in the announcement the only change mentioned to the reader is that the studio is laying off 50 employees. However in the announcement McKay says that they are eliminating 50 roles, which implies the company is not laying off employees, rather they are removing the position. Due to the removal of the position, the employee's employment is terminated. In example 49 McKay utilizes logical reasoning at the end of the first section when they provide justifications and arguments about the layoffs and its impact to the employees and the future of BioWare.

- (34) (...) I want to take a moment to explain how we got here, what we're doing to support our colleagues, and what this means for BioWare's current and future games.

The second section consists of three paragraphs and explains the company's plans; what the company and its leaders have visioned for the future and how the new vision will better the studio, how the company plans to handle the layoffs. The section is called "What's Happening Now" and is transparent and leads the reader to see that in this section, McKay details what is going to happen within the company and the employees due to the reorganization. The first paragraph begins with McKay detailing what the goal of the reorganizational change is. The first paragraph focuses on the credibility of the studio and relies on ethical appeal as the main mode of persuasion with the persuasion techniques focusing on the studio's expertise, inclination to succeed and consistency.

- (35) After much consideration and careful planning, we have built a long-term vision that will preserve the health of the studio and better enable us to do what we do best: create exceptional story-driven single-player experiences filled with vast worlds and rich characters.

In example 35, McKay showcases their expertise as a videogame studio and as a company that they have carefully considered what is the best way to explain the layoffs and assure the reader that the leadership knows what the best way is to ensure the company's success. They strengthen their credibility and confidence for the vision. The argumentation for the vision consists of a metaphor *health of the studio*, which could be used to describe either the development philosophy of the studio or that the company is able to remain in business. McKay clarifies the goals of the vision, which consists of assigning the focus of the company to do what the company has done always and from what they have gained critical acclaim and commercial success. When McKay reminds the reader of the studio's past successes, McKay utilises consistency and inclination to succeed to persuade the reader on their credibility. The paragraph ends with assuring the reader that the layoffs and reorganization is done to guarantee the success of the studio's future products of existing franchises. McKay names the franchises that the reader is most likely familiar with and is reminded of the track record and credibility of the company. In the second paragraph, McKay combines emotional appeal and logical reasoning (logos) to justify the timing of the layoffs.

- (36) We've chosen to act now in part to provide our impacted colleagues with as many internal opportunities as possible.

In example 36 McKay identifies the impacted employees as *our impacted colleagues*, which shows loyalty to the employees, who are about to lose their jobs. McKay utilizes logos for the timing of the layoffs, as an optimal time due to multiple open positions in the studio's parent company EA's other studios, that the impacted employees can apply to. McKay appeals to readers by displaying McKay's and company's leadership's sympathy, loyalty and wish to help their former teammates.

- (37) These changes coincide with a significant number of roles that are currently open across EA's other studios.

- (38) Impacted employees will be provided with professional resources and assistance as they apply for these positions.

In example 37, McKay uses justification, a logical reasoning, for the layoffs. McKay argues that the layoffs were planned to happen during an optimal time for the impacted employees, not just for the sake of the company. The sentence also utilizes loyalty by implying that the timing of the layoffs is done with the interest of helping impacted employees, which falls under pathos and is used further drive across McKay's point of being considerate towards the laid-off employees. Example 38 shows McKay's commitment to providing the affected employees with proper tools and guidance to success in the job market. McKay utilizes claims of providing resources to the impacted employees. In the last paragraph of the second section, McKay heavily leans into the use of emotional and vivid language to evoke sympathy and understanding from the reader. McKay reminds the reader again that they are committed to helping their staff, which implies that they still see them as part of their work-community and showcase loyalty through a common identifier in example 39.

- (39) While it's unlikely that everyone will find a new role within the company, we are committed to supporting our staff as they navigate this change.

McKay recognises the likely scenario of not every affected employee finding a new position within the parent company EA or EA's multiple studio's, which utilizes logical reasoning to a most likely outcome for the affected employees.

(40) Our sincere hope is that they can continue their exemplary work at studios who stand to benefit immensely from their talents.

Example 40 shows the use of vivid and emotional language use with phrases such as *our sincere hope* and *stand to benefit immensely*, and word choices such as *exemplary*. The example also shows similitude in a sense of referring to the affected employees as a different group of people from those that are unaffected. The sentence uses the possessive adjectives *their* and *our* which displays similitude and othering.

The third section of the press release is called "Immediate Impact" The third section of the announcement is shorter than other sections, only consisting of two paragraphs. McKay details the plan for the immediate implementation of the reorganization. The first two sentences use a blend of ethical and emotional appeal. Both can be found in example 41.

(41) Our commitment remains steadfast, and we all are working to make this game worthy of the Dragon Age name.

McKay reassures the reader that the company is dedicated to ensure the quality of the next product and that the quality of their products will not decrease. McKay relies on the use of expertise as they build their credibility on the past success and dedication to succeed with their prospects. The ethical appeal of the sentence in example 41 comes through more clearly with mentions of the studio's commitment to the upcoming Dragon Age game. McKay appeals to the emotional aspect of the reader as can be seen in example 41. In the example, McKay utilizes passionate language such as *steadfast* and *worthy* and attempts to excite the audience about what's to come. Example 42 concludes the first paragraph confident use of ethical appeal.

(42) We are confident that we'll have the time we need to ensure *Dreadwolf* reaches its full potential.

In example 42 McKay is confident in the claim that the studio will have the necessary time and resources to finish the ongoing project with success, even after the layoffs. At the same time the use of phrases *We are confident* and *full potential* evokes feelings of confidence in the reader's trust in McKay and the company. The second paragraph of the third section utilizes emotional appeal as McKay talks about the departing employees. McKay uses language such as "we would not be here without them" and "I am so proud of all the work our team has done" that evoke feelings of loyalty, pride and gratitude towards the laid-off employees.

(43) These are our colleagues and friends, and we would not be here without them.

McKay refers to the impacted employees as their colleagues and friends but refers to themselves as a part of a larger group that shares a unifying factor with the impacted employees. The shared unifying factor is the common workplace, the BioWare studio, which the unimpacted and impacted employees have worked at the same time for a certain time.

What Comes Next

The last section of the announcement starts with the heading of "what comes next". The first paragraph uses a mix of logical reasoning, emotional and ethical appeal. The last paragraph rather than providing details on what happens next, recaps points from earlier sections. Example 44 showcases use of emotional phrases such as *extremely difficult* and *brighter future* but argues that the changes must be done now to guarantee a better future for the studio.

(44) While this is an extremely difficult day for everyone at BioWare, we are making changes now to build a brighter future.

The first paragraph also utilizes the credibility of the studio and their employees to persuade the reader that the studio will succeed in its future endeavours with franchises that are beloved to consumers and fans of the franchise and studio. In this persuasion attempt, they name an employee that the reader could be familiar with to build trust in their credibility. McKay ends the paragraph with a metaphor that can be seen in example 45:

(45) Our commitment to quality continues to be our North Star.

Use of metaphors falls under the emotional appeal, and calling something their North Star implies that the company values the quality of their products above all and will remain a core value after the reorganization.

The second paragraph utilizes mostly the ethical appeal and the credibility of the studio by supporting their claims with consistency, experienced employees and employees with the right merit to lead the teams, as McKay wrote in the first paragraph. Such use of ethical appeal can be seen in example 46:

(46) we trust that we have the right leaders and team in place with vision, passion, and proven track records

The emotional appeal in the second paragraph is utilized with emotional and vivid language use such as “there truly is never a good time” and “our fans will love.” McKay also uses the phrase “As cliché as this sounds” to make themselves seem self-aware of the announcement they present to the audience. The third and last paragraph begins with the use emotional appeal as McKay extends gratitude towards all the employees who have ever worked at BioWare. McKay also extends gratitude to the fans and consumers of the studio and their products. The paragraph ends on a positive and motivated note about the future of the studio and their upcoming products.

(47) We’re eager to reveal more about *Dreadwolf*, and we look forward to discovering what else the future holds.

In example 47 McKay utilizes claims that they wish to reveal more about their future project to public, which evokes also the feeling of credibility of the studio. The main clause *We’re eager to reveal more about Dreadwolf*, installs trust on the studio and its employees to provide the product the consumers and dedicated fans want. The announcement concludes with McKay signing off using their full name along with a portion of their job title, notably omitting the detail that McKay also serves as the vice president of the studio. It could imply

that McKay does not feel the need to provide the audience this information, if McKay presumes that the audience is already aware of him being the vice president. The omission could also imply that McKay does not want to provide that information to the audience in an attempt to lessen their part on organizing the layoffs.

4.4 Riot Games

On January 22nd, 2024, Riot Games announced layoffs within the company. The announcement is credited to Dylan Jadeja, the CEO of Riot Games, and Marc Merrill, the co-founder and chief product officer. The target audience for the announcement is the player base of Riot's games. The announcement is composed of four distinct sections, where the authors go over a general explanation for the layoffs, what the company will focus on, the futures of two projects, and the company's future with the community. The authors utilize pathos and logos noticeably more than ethos within the announcement. They refer to themselves with the *we* pronoun throughout the announcement, which can imply similitude with other employees of Riot Games but may also refer to the fact that there are two credited authors.

The authors discuss the layoffs with the readers and explain why layoffs are necessary for the company. The announcement, titled "Changes at Riot and the Road Ahead", utilizes logos to convey the main points to the reader. The announcement begins with the authors addressing the audience as *players* (48), utilizing othering by addressing a specific group of people distinct from others. The authors then move to the first paragraph of the announcement, where they prepare the reader by summarizing the contents of the announcement in two sentences. The first sentence utilizes logos to encapsulate the layoffs:

(48) Players, Minutes ago, we shared with Rioters that we are refocusing on fewer, high-impact projects to move us toward a more sustainable future. Now, we want to tell you what these changes mean for our games, everything around them (esports, Arcane, music, etc.), and what to expect going forward.

The use of logos comes through with a logical and rational explanation of the changes and what the changes will be for. The authors use their credibility to address how these changes will affect the company's services and products. They build their credibility by listing how

consumers might experience the changes within the company, with examples like *esports*, *Arcane*, *music*, etc. (48). The authors begin the second paragraph by highlighting the company's success in avoiding layoffs thus far, as shown in this example:

(49) For most of our history, we've managed to avoid days like this, but this decision is critical for the future of Riot.

In example 49, the authors utilize pathos to state that, for the most part, layoffs have been avoided in the company's history, but this particular layoff is essential for the company's continuation. The authors further appeal with emotional language and metaphors, using word choices such as *critical* (49), *for the future of Riot* (49), and *days like this* (49). This is followed by the authors assuring readers that this decision is necessary for the company's sake, not for shareholders, as shown in the following example:

(50) This isn't to appease shareholders or to hit a quarterly earnings number—it's a necessity.

By stating that this action is a necessity rather than a decision to benefit shareholders, the authors establish trust with the audience, emphasizing that financial aspects are not the primary reason for the layoffs. The authors explain how the company ended up in a position where layoffs became necessary:

(51) Over the past few years, as Riot more than doubled in headcount, we spread our efforts across more and more projects without sharp enough razors to decide what players needed most.

The authors utilize logos, presenting a logical argument that the company's expansion occurred without a clear vision of what consumers wanted most. Emotional appeal is also present, with the metaphor *without sharp enough razors* (51) and the consistent reference to consumers as *players* (51). The authors use logos to link the current paragraph with the next one. The final sentence of the current paragraph, illustrated by Example 52, supports the

argument introduced in the first sentence of the subsequent paragraph, as shown in Example 53:

- (52) The adjustments we're making aim to focus us on the areas that have the greatest impact on your experience while reducing investment on things that don't.
- (53) This means we're eliminating about 530 roles globally, which represents around 11% of Rioters, with the biggest impact to teams outside of core development.

The authors provide numerical data on the number of eliminated positions, followed by the percentage of the employees impacted and the areas where most of the layoffs will occur. The focus of the announcement then shifts to the impact of the layoffs on employees. The authors acknowledge that readers might also sympathize with the affected personnel:

- (54) We recognize that many of you don't just care about the games you play, but also about the people who make them. These are not just organizational changes; they affect individuals and families, and we do our best to approach these decisions with respect and sensitivity.

The authors utilize pathos, attempting to persuade the reader with emotional language and sympathy for the impacted employees' personal lives beyond the workplace. They use words like *care about* (54), *we do our best* (54), *respect* (54), and *sensitivity* (54) to appeal to readers' emotional connections to the impacted personnel.

The second section of the announcement is the largest and is subtitled "Doubling Down on Games at the Center". This section focuses on core game development for Riot Games' primary products and services. The section primarily utilizes pathos as its main rhetorical strategy, with a smaller presence of ethos and logos. The authors begin the section by reinforcing the claim made in the title about returning games to the centre of the company's focus. They then discuss the impact on the company's main products and how consumers will experience them. This is achieved through a mix of ethos and logos, as shown in the following example:

- (55) Our vision for the future is bold and our commitment to our core live games – League of Legends, VALORANT, Teamfight Tactics, and Wild Rift – is more ambitious than ever.

The authors use emotional word choices, structures, and metaphors such as *the future is bold* (55) and *more ambitious than ever* (55) to inspire hope and excitement in the reader as a consumer. They establish expertise and consistency by listing their core products and using the possessive pronoun *our* (55), indicating that the vision and commitment are shared across the company. The authors then explain how the company is implementing the new vision:

- (56) We're prioritizing these teams so they can focus on the content, features, and updates that directly respond to what you've been asking for.

Example 56 presents a logical argument about prioritizing teams involved with the previously mentioned products. The subordinate clause utilizes emotional appeal by emphasizing that these actions are for the players and align with players' wishes, and ethical appeal is evident in the authors' commitment to listening to consumer feedback. Through pathos, the authors generate excitement in the reader by detailing how players will interact with these games and what lies ahead for them.

- (57) Expect events, modes, and long-term roadmaps that lead to vibrant (hopefully multi-decade) futures for these games.

To further build anticipation in the consumers, the authors use hopeful and descriptive language such as *long-term* (57) *vibrant* (57), and *hopefully multi-decade* (57). The authors then move on to discuss how the strategy incorporates other forms of entertainment into these games. The authors begin the announcement with a logical claim about the strategy, while the main body of the announcement primarily utilizes pathos, with a few exceptions. In Example 58, the authors elaborate on the deeper significance of esports and entertainment with emotional language and metaphors.

- (58) Esports isn't just about competition; it's about the highs, the lows, and the communities that flourish around the games. Entertainment isn't just about storytelling; it's a gateway to the deeper narratives, characters, and worlds that enrich the game experience. As we've grown, some of our efforts have become more isolated, and we aspire to more seamlessly blend gameplay, competitive excellence, and narrative

The sentences follow the same structure of arguing that there is more to *E-sports* and *entertainment*. This is amplified by a second main clause where the authors highlight the deeper meanings of the subjects and build emotional connections to them. The authors express self-criticism about their previous efforts: *As we've grown, some of our efforts have become more isolated*, (58). The authors note that the company aspires to improve to achieve the goal of the integration strategy: (58) *and we aspire to more seamlessly blend gameplay, competitive excellence, and narrative* (58). The authors argue that this is done to improve the player's experience with these products:

- (59) Whether it's the next hit from K/DA, the story unfolding in Arcane, the intensity of a TFT Open, the one-of-a-kind chills of a Worlds game 5, or the electric atmosphere of VAL Champs, our focus is on quality, impact, and unified experiences for players around the world.

The authors use pathos to evoke nostalgia in the reader by mentioning memorable moments that resonate with fans of the company's products. These include exciting events and successful music and animated series. The authors utilize emotional appeal with the promise that their focus on these forms of entertainment is done for the players. In example 60, the authors further build excitement for the future by providing information about upcoming products.

- (60) Beyond live titles, we have projects in the pipeline that we can't wait to get to you when they're ready.

The authors also assure readers that the products will be released when they are complete and ready. They name two specific projects and provide updates on them:

- (61) Project L has been making great progress and we're looking for more opportunities for you to try out the game (stay tuned for more updates coming later this year).
Arcane Season 2 is on track for November 2024.

The authors claim that the development of a project called Project L is progressing well and build excitement by promising readers the chance to experience it. They also provide information about the release window for the next season of *Arcane* (61). The authors finish the section with a promise of quality over quantity. This is done with a mix of ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos comes across in their commitment to consistency regarding the quantity of their products and their efforts to set realistic expectations for consumers. Pathos appears with promises of quality for consumers invested in Riot Games' products:

- (62) We want everything we deliver to be something that you can be proud of and excited to share with friends. That requires having financial flexibility to be able to take the time to make things that are truly great for players.

The authors use the appeal of community and friendships to increase investment in the company's products. Pathos is used to encourage excitement for the company's future releases, followed by a logical argument about what the company needs to achieve this. The authors argue that financial flexibility is required to provide quality products that consumers will enjoy.

- (63) We know we'll still have occasional misses, but we want those misses to be for the right reasons, not because we prioritized the wrong things or had to rush projects out the door before they were ready.

In this example, the authors utilize self-criticism by acknowledging the company's imperfections and failures but assure readers that these failures will occur for the right

reasons. The authors give examples, such as rushed development or misplaced priorities, to highlight what they are striving to avoid.

The authors shift their focus to two products and projects where consumers will notice the immediate impact of the layoffs: *Legends of Runeterra (LoR)* (64) and *Riot Forge* (64), which is the subtitle for this section. The authors utilize logos in the sentences as they explain the actions taken with these products and the reasoning behind them. Pathos is the primary rhetorical strategy employed when discussing these actions and their implications. The announcement begins with Example 64, where the authors provide the scope of the immediate impact on consumers.

(64) We want to specifically address two areas where you'll see immediate impact from today's changes: *Legends of Runeterra* and *Riot Forge*.

In this example, the authors specify that they wish to discuss the products directly affected. This introductory sentence is followed by two bullet points addressing how consumers will experience these impacts and delving deeper into the reasons for the actions. The authors begin with *LoR*:

(65) As *LoR* continues its journey, we're making changes to move the game toward sustainability. We know there's a passionate community who absolutely love this game—we do too.

The announcement begins with the use of logos to argue that the decision is focused on sustainability. In the context of the industry, sustainability refers to maintaining the game with little to no new content releases. The authors use pathos to prepare the reader and assure them that those making these decisions are also supporters of *LoR*, just like the player base. The authors then discuss the reasons why sustainability is the focus for this game:

(66) Despite critical achievements and the role it's played in helping to build out the world of Runeterra, LoR has faced financial challenges since launch, costing significantly more to develop and support than it generates.

The sentence utilizes logos to explain and justify the sustainability decision. The authors state that the game does not generate enough revenue to cover its development and support costs. They contrast this financial argument with mentions of critical successes and the game's contribution to the world-building of Riot's fictional universe. In example 67, the authors discuss the actions being taken to achieve sustainability.

(67) In response, we're reducing the size of our team and renewing our focus on The Path of Champions. This shift allows the team to experiment more in the PvE space, concentrating on the game mode where players have been spending the most time.

To achieve sustainability, the company is decreasing the size of the LoR development team and redirecting their focus to a specific game mode, *Path of Champions* (67). The authors provide the goals of these actions, emphasizing PvE as the focal point due to consumer preferences for this game mode. The authors end the section on LoR with a link to further details and a promise of a video discussing the game's future.

(68) The LoR team has more details here, and we have a video planned for the coming weeks to talk more about the future.

A link is attached to the word *here* (68), and additional details are said to come from the LoR development team. In the closing sentence, the authors use transparency and communication to engage consumers and sustain interest with the upcoming video. The authors then discuss *Riot Forge* and deliver the news straightforwardly, as shown in Example 69:

(69) We're ending new game development under Riot Forge after the upcoming release of *Bandle Tale: A League of Legends Story*.

The authors directly announce the decision to conclude Riot Forge and the production of any new products under this initiative. They then explain the original purpose of Riot Forge:

- (70) Forge was an experiment to see what would happen when Rioters partnered with their favorite indie devs and let them loose on Runeterra with their unique viewpoints, styles, and expertise

The main argument of the sentence is that *Riot Forge* was created as an experiment, providing creative freedom and partnerships with smaller studios. The main clause explains the concept of *Forge* as experimentation, while the infinitive clause provides its purpose. The authors then reflect on the outcomes of this experiment in Example 71.

- (71) Across six titles spanning different game genres, regions, and characters, it's been inspiring to see what these devs created in partnership with the Forge team.

In this example, the authors utilize pathos to celebrate the achievements of Riot Forge. These achievements are highlighted by focusing on the diversity of products created under the initiative. The authors conclude the section about Riot Forge's shutdown with gratitude and pride, while justifying the project's closure:

- (72) We're proud of what we've done together to bring these stories to life, but it's time to refocus our efforts on the ambitious projects underway internally at Riot.

The first main clause utilizes ethos to express the authors' gratitude for Riot Forge while employing emotional language such as *proud*, *we've done together*, and *bring these stories to life*. The second main clause justifies the reallocation of Riot Games' resources for the company's primary projects.

The closing section of the announcement is titled "The Journey Ahead with You", where the authors address the audience, the consumers of Riot Games' products. The authors rely heavily on pathos as the main mode to reassure the reader that the layoffs are done with player satisfaction in mind. The closing message begins with reiterating the main goal of the layoffs,

which is reallocating focus on products that the consumers engage with most and improving upon them. In example 73, this is achieved with the mixed use of logos and pathos.

(73) Our strategy moving forward is clear: we're honing in on what we do best and what resonates most with you. Every endeavor, from development to storytelling to competition, will be crafted to deliver meaningful, memorable experiences with games at the center.

The main clause utilizes logos with the statement that the company has a clear strategy for future game development. The clause after the colon utilizes pathos to emphasize the alignment of the company's expertise and consumers' desires. The authors expand on the clause after the colon in the following sentence using pathos and emotionally charged language, such as *meaningful* (73) and *memorable experiences* (73), to engage the audience. In the final section of the announcement, the authors focus on embracing change and the potential growth that is to follow. This is visible in example 74.

(74) While change can bring uncertainty, it also presents opportunities for growth and innovation.

The authors utilize pathos to acknowledge the negative aspects of the layoffs but highlight the positive aspects of change. These include opportunities for growth and innovation made possible through the layoffs and the changes the company is implementing. The authors end the announcement with a message of gratitude and community engagement, as shown in Example 75.

(75) We're grateful for your ongoing support; nothing Riot has ever created would be possible without you. Your passion and engagement inspire us every day, and we're excited to continue this journey together.

In example 75, the authors utilize pathos to express gratitude toward the community around Riot's games, noting that without them, the company could not operate its business. The reinforcement of community highlights the importance of a solid player base for live-service

games. The final sentence uses pathos to strengthen the emotional bond between Riot Games and the players. The authors sign off on the announcement with their first names only, *Dylan & Marc* and do not include their professional titles.

4.5 Sony Interactive Entertainment

On the 27th of February 2024, Sony Interactive Entertainment announced that the company would have layoffs. The announcement is credited to Hermen Hulst, the CEO of Sony Interactive Media. During the time of the layoffs, Sony Interactive Media had multiple CEOs, and Hermen Hulst was the CEO of Studio Business Group. The announcement addresses the layoffs, the application of the reductions, and why the layoffs are occurring now. The announcement is divided into small sections of one to two sentences. The announcement appears disjointed due to the structure and how Hulst changes the theme of the sentences. The intended audience for the announcement is non-specific and is available to the public on Sony Interactive Media's website. The announcement utilizes a mixture of rhetorical methods to attempt to persuade the reader, with no clear use of one rhetoric over others.

The press release is titled "An Important Update from PlayStation Studios", which informs the reader that this is major news including multiple studios under the PlayStation Studios umbrella. The title uses the credibility and authority of PlayStation Studios to deliver the news. After the title, the main focal point of the news, the layoffs, are announced immediately:

(76) Today, Sony Interactive Entertainment initiated *a reduction in our workforce* – including within PlayStation Studios – and *I* wanted to talk about the impact that will have.

Hulst directly addresses the layoffs, which are referred to as a *reduction in our workforce* (76). Hulst names the initiator of the layoffs as the company, Sony Interactive Media, of which PlayStation Studios is a part, though not the only target of the layoffs. Hulst is one of many CEOs within the company, and by naming the company as the initiator of the layoffs, Hulst shifts some blame away from themselves. Hulst builds their own credibility with the willingness to provide more details about the layoffs and utilizes the pronoun *I* (76). Hulst then discusses the emotional aspect and toll of the layoffs:

(77) These decisions have been extremely difficult, but they are necessary, and I think it's important to be transparent:

Hulst utilizes emotionally stimulating language like *extremely difficult* (77) to evoke an emotional appeal and showcase sympathy to the reader. The layoffs are described as a necessity, to further emphasize emotional appeal, implying that such actions are only taken under unavoidable circumstances. Hulst uses ethical appeal and builds their credibility as an authority figure by sharing their value for transparency and their willingness to disclose specific details about the layoffs. The use of the pronoun *I* (77) conveys that Hulst personally understands the importance of transparency as a leader.

(78) The US based studios and groups impacted by a reduction in workforce are: Insomniac Games, Naughty Dog, as well as our Technology, Creative, and Support teams

(79) In UK and European based studios, it is proposed: That PlayStation Studios' London Studio will close in its entirety; that there will be reductions in Guerrilla and Firesprite

Hulst shares how the layoffs will affect the company and names certain studios and teams that will be impacted. The information is divided between American locations and European locations that will be affected by the layoffs. The impact is delivered with a clear and rational tone regarding what will happen to these studios. The second section contains the next three sentences of the announcement. In these sentences, Hulst shares the ambitions and philosophy of the company, as well as the surrounding industry's impact on consumer behaviour. Hulst first utilizes the expertise of the studio:

(80) Our goal at PlayStation Studios has always been to make the best games for *PlayStation fans*, and our global community of studios represent some of the most creative and talented teams within the gaming industry.

Hulst also utilizes emotional appeal to emphasize that the products they wish to deliver are developed with the consumers, referred to as *PlayStation fans* (80), in mind. Hulst further expands the credibility of the studio with the notion that the company possesses some of the most talented employees within the industry. Hulst then moves on to discuss some reasons why the company must improve its operations:

- (81) PlayStation 5 is in its fourth year, and we are at a stage where we need to step back and look at what our business needs. At the same time, our industry has experienced continuing and fundamental change which affects how we all create, and play, games.

The statement that the PlayStation 5 has been available for several years prompts the company to consider methods for sustaining or improving business growth. Hulst argues that, given the console's age, it is imperative for the company to innovate, using logical reasoning to persuade the audience. Additionally, Hulst points out that the industry has undergone significant changes, further supporting the necessity for the company to pursue improvements: Hulst then discusses the philosophy of game development and the goals of the studios:

- (82) Delivering the immersive, narrative-driven stories that PlayStation Studios is known for, at the quality bar that we aspire to, requires a re-evaluation of how we operate.

In example 82, Hulst highlights the expertise of PlayStation Studios and their commitment to producing high-quality products. This approach enhances the company's credibility as a leading video game developer. Hulst uses self-criticism by acknowledging that the studio must reconsider its operations to meet the goals and ambitions of the company. Hulst names a few points as reasons for the company to rethink its operations:

- (83) Delivering and sustaining social, online experiences – allowing PlayStation gamers to explore our worlds in different ways – as well as launching games on additional devices such as PC and Mobile, requires a different approach and different resources.

Hulst appeals to the reader by claiming that consumers utilize multiple platforms, such as *PC* (83) and *mobile* (83), which are different markets compared to PlayStation. Hulst presents an argument that these platforms require a distinct approach and resources compared to PlayStation. With the embedded clause, Hulst utilizes the argument that the changes are made for the benefit of the consumers. Hulst then discusses how the company attempted to achieve these goals.

(84) To take on these challenges, PlayStation Studios had to grow. We have brought brilliant and successful Studios into our family. We have invested in new technology and partnerships. We have recruited talent from across our industry and beyond.

In example 99, Hulst utilizes similitude when they refer to the company's actions using the pronoun *we*. Hulst lists three main methods the company employed to achieve its goals and builds their credibility as a company and innovator. Hulst leverages the company's expertise in investments and recruitment to persuade the reader that these efforts were done with specific objectives in mind. Hulst utilizes pathos by referring to the newly acquired studios under PlayStation Studios as part of a *family* (84).

(85) But growth itself is not an ambition.

Hulst notes that the expansion of the company was not the ultimate goal and acknowledges that the company may have focused too much on growth. Hulst then draws on the company's expertise to readjust its operations and define the focus of future efforts, as highlighted in example 86:

(86) PlayStation Studios is committed to continually discovering ways to work together; collaborating and combining our efforts to ensure that we are able to craft games that push the boundaries of play and deliver what you expect from us.

In example 86, Hulst utilizes ethical appeal by asserting the company's commitment to collaboration. After the colon, Hulst provides a logical claim about the methodology for creating products, followed by a subordinate clause with emotional appeal that uses

metaphorical language: *push the boundaries of play* (86). The metaphor can also be a reference to the current slogan of PlayStation, which is *Play has no limits*. Hulst uses a mix of emotional and ethical appeal in the final clause by promising to meet consumer expectations in product development. Hulst details actions taken to halt development on certain projects that were in various stages of progress. In example 87, Hulst uses persuasion techniques grounded in logos:

(87) We looked at our studios and our portfolio, evaluating projects in various stages of development, and have decided that some of those projects will not move forward.

In this sentence, Hulst justifies ending the development of certain products, using the more neutral phrasing *will not move forward* (87). Hulst leverages leadership expertise in discussing the evaluation process. Hulst further clarifies the standing of employees who worked on halted projects:

(88) I want to be clear that the decision to stop work on these projects is not a reflection on the talent or passion of team members.

The author asserts their authority with the statement *I want to be clear* (88), while the rest of the sentence builds credibility by standing up for the employees who contributed to the halted projects. This sentence also utilizes pathos by acknowledging employees' contributions to the company and projects, with Hulst appealing to the reader through empathy.

The last few sentences primarily use pathos and ethos as Hulst discusses the philosophy of PlayStation Studios, the emotional impact of the layoffs, and promises for the company's future. When Hulst shares the studio's philosophy, they appeal through their credibility by discussing how the company operates and generates ideas. Hulst also applies self-criticism when reflecting on why certain projects don't always succeed:

(89) Sometimes, great ideas don't become great games. Sometimes, a project is started with the best intentions before shifts within the market or industry result in a change of plan.

Hulst also places some blame on the uncertainty of the industry for why projects don't always follow their original plan. The repetition of the word *sometimes* (89) and the sentence structure evoke a storytelling approach. In example 90, Hulst uses pathos to express empathy toward the laid-off employees:

(90) I am deeply saddened to see talented individuals leave the company.

Hulst reassures readers about PlayStation Studios' philosophy and vision for the future in a sentence that utilizes a mix of ethos, pathos, and logos.

(91) PlayStation Studios will continue to be a creator-led organization driven by evolving our beloved franchises and bringing new gameplay experiences of the highest quality to our fans.

The main clause reinforces PlayStation Studios' brand identity by emphasizing that the studio is a *creator-led organization* (91). The subordinate clause supports this claim with emotional appeal by referencing fans' expectations and logical reasoning with a rationalized strategy. The announcement concludes with Hulst expressing gratitude to the readers for their support in example 92.

(92) Thank you all for your continued support.

The final sentence highlights the importance of community and appreciation, closing the announcement on an empathetic and hopeful note.

4.6 Epic Games

On the 28th of September 2023, the head of Epic Games, Tim Sweeney, announced to employees through an email that the company would be laying off staff across various locations. The news was then shared with the public on Epic Games' website. The overall tone of the announcement is rational and logical, as Sweeney, who is credited as the author, outlines the reasons for the layoffs and describes the measures the company took to try to avoid them. They provide evidence of their attempts to prevent layoffs and other actions taken

to improve the company's financial position. The announcement consists of eight paragraphs and a section dedicated to frequently asked questions about the layoffs.

The announcement begins with Sweeney greeting the readers with *Hi everyone* (93), addressing a collective audience rather than an individual. The casual and approachable greeting utilizes emotional appeal to connect with the reader. The announcement mentions that the news was shared earlier, but Sweeney does not specify where or to whom. Sweeney then dives into the main focus of the email, which is the announcement of the layoffs:

(93) Hi everyone, As we shared earlier, we are laying off around 16% of Epic employees. We're divesting Bandcamp and spinning off most of SuperAwesome.

Sweeney does not delay delivering the news and gives the estimated percentage of employees affected by the layoffs. While the exact number of employees laid off is not mentioned here, it is included in the FAQ section of the announcement. Sweeney utilizes logical reasoning to present the statement about layoffs. They also provide evidence by highlighting other actions, such as divesting Bandcamp and spinning off SuperAwesome, indicating that the company is reducing its commitments in other areas as well. Sweeney moves on in the next paragraph to explain why layoffs are necessary:

(94) we've been spending way more money than we earn, investing in the next evolution of Epic and growing Fortnite as a metaverse-inspired ecosystem for creators.

Sweeney uses logical reasoning, presenting the argument that the company has been spending significantly more than it has been earning. Sweeney justifies the spending as part of an effort to strengthen the company's position in the industry. To reinforce this reasoning, they specify goals that the company aimed to achieve: fostering the next evolution of Epic and expanding Fortnite into a metaverse-inspired ecosystem. Sweeney then reflects on their previous optimism about avoiding layoffs:

(95) I had long been optimistic that we could power through this transition without layoffs, but in retrospect I see that this was unrealistic.

In example 95, Sweeney reminisces about their optimism that layoffs could be avoided. By doing so, they utilize emotional appeal, expressing regret and seeking sympathy from the reader for their efforts to prevent the layoffs. In the subordinate clause, Sweeney bolsters their credibility through self-criticism, acknowledging that their goal of avoiding layoffs was unrealistic. The second paragraph discusses the current growth of Fortnite, Epic's most profitable and popular product, and explores why it is not generating sufficient revenue:

- (96) (...) the growth is driven primarily by creator content with significant revenue sharing, and this is a lower margin business than we had when Fortnite Battle Royale took off and began funding our expansion.

Sweeney uses a logical approach, making an evidence-based claim without providing specific data to support it. The reader is expected to trust the assertion as presented. The sentence uses corporate language, such as *revenue sharing* (96) and *lower margin business* (96), to maintain a professional tone. Sweeney compares current sources of revenue from Fortnite to previous ones during its initial success, using logic to explain Fortnite's financial trajectory. While noting that the current business model is less profitable, Sweeney still celebrates its achievements:

- (97) Success with the creator ecosystem is a great achievement, but it means a major structural change to our economics.

In the main clause, Sweeney highlights the success of Fortnite's creator ecosystem, reinforcing the company's credibility. However, they follow this with self-criticism in the subordinate clause, acknowledging the significant changes needed to adjust the company's economics. The third paragraph of the announcement focuses on the company's efforts to reduce costs and avoid layoffs:

- (98) Epic folks around the world have been making ongoing efforts to reduce costs, including moving to net zero hiring and cutting operating spend on things like marketing and events.

In the main clause Sweeney appeals to the company's credibility by emphasizing the expertise and contributions of its employees. The subordinate clause uses logical reasoning, presenting specific measures taken to cut costs, such as net zero hiring and reducing operating spend.

These corporate terms lend a professional tone to the explanation. Sweeney laments over the unachieved goal of financial sustainability and further justifies the layoffs:

(99) But we still ended up far short of financial sustainability. We concluded that layoffs are the only way, and that doing them now and on this scale will stabilize our finances.

Sweeney asserts in example 99 that the previous cost-cutting measures were not enough to ensure financial sustainability. In the following sentence, logical reasoning is used to argue that layoffs are the only viable way to stabilize the company's finances. The statement further emphasizes the need for the layoffs to occur immediately and at the planned scale, thereby justifying both the scope and urgency of the decision.

In the fourth paragraph, Sweeney delves into the outcomes of their other projects and subordinate companies. In the paragraph, Sweeney utilizes different techniques of logical reasoning, such as logic, evidence, and claims. These techniques can be found in the sentences where Sweeney discusses the decisions that have been made.

(100) Bandcamp is joining Songtradr, a music marketplace company supporting artists.

In the example, Sweeney notes that the Bandcamp subsidiary is being sold to another company. In the subordinate clause, Sweeney gives details to justify to whom the subsidiary is being sold. The subordinate clause utilizes ethical appeal, as the details provided about the acquiring company highlight that it operates within the same industry and with a good cause. This builds Epic's credibility, as they appear to have properly vetted Songtradr when selling Bandcamp to them. Sweeney then discusses the outcome for SuperAwesome:

(101) SuperAwesome's advertising business will become an independent company under the SuperAwesome brand, led by their current CEO Kate O'Loughlin.

Sweeney utilizes logic by providing a clear and straightforward statement about the future of the new independent company and brand, separate from Epic. Sweeney also builds credibility for the company's future by sharing that the current CEO of SuperAwesome will remain as its head. At the same time, the action of allowing the current CEO to stay in their role builds Epic's credibility by ensuring the new company retains a familiar and trusted leader. At the end of the paragraph, Sweeney shares the outcome for Kids Web Services:

(102) Kids Web Services (KWS), the parent verification and consent management toolset, will remain part of Epic.

Sweeney explains the purpose of KWS and notes that, unlike the previous two subsidiaries, KWS will remain under Epic's ownership. By explaining KWS's purpose to the reader, Sweeney builds the company's credibility and provides insight into why the leadership decided to retain KWS. The toolset is intended for parents to monitor their children's online activity, which enhances Epic's credibility through their expertise in recognizing the importance of such tools for families.

The fifth paragraph provides details about the support the company has planned for employees who are being laid off. Sweeney begins the announcement with emotional appeal, offering sympathy to the affected employees:

(103) Saying goodbye to people who have helped build Epic is a terrible experience for all.

Sweeney uses emotionally charged language and phrases like *saying goodbye* (103) and *terrible* (103) to present themselves as someone also impacted by the layoffs, even though they are not personally being laid off. Sweeney expresses gratitude by acknowledging the contributions of those being laid off, recognizing their role in shaping Epic into what it is today. Sweeney then uses their credibility to introduce the support the company is offering to the affected employees:

(104) The consolation is that we're adequately funded to support laid off employees:

The use of the word *consolation* is notable, as it reflects Sweeney's attempt to emotionally appeal to the reader. While the layoffs are unfortunate, the word implies that there is still something positive to take away. Sweeney leverages the company's expertise to convince the reader that Epic is financially prepared to handle the aftermath of the layoffs. Following the colon, Sweeney lists the support efforts planned for the laid-off employees. These efforts are communicated in a logical manner, with an underlying ethical appeal that builds the company's credibility, as shown in example 105:

- (105) (...) we're offering a severance package that includes six months base pay and in the US/Canada/Brazil six months of Epic-paid healthcare. We're offering to accelerate people's stock option vesting schedule through the end of 2024 and are giving two additional years from today to exercise the options. In the US we're also offering to vest any unearned profit sharing from their 401k. And we'll provide benefits including career transition services and visa support where we can.

In the example, Sweeney utilizes logical reasoning through specific claims about how the company plans to support laid-off employees. In example 105, Sweeney mentions benefits such as *severance package*, *healthcare*, *flexible stock vesting*, *career support*, and *visa assistance*. By detailing these measures, Sweeney reinforces Epic's image as a competent and compassionate employer.

The sixth paragraph is meant for the employees who will remain at the company. Sweeney focuses on boosting morale and discussing Epic's successful track record in the industry. The paragraph begins with Sweeney addressing the remaining employees:

- (106) For those still at Epic, you'll hear more from senior leaders about the path forward for your team.

Sweeney indirectly addresses the employees who were not laid off by referring to them as *those still at Epic* (106). This appears to be a deliberate choice, fostering a sense of continuity within the company. The main clause uses a credible approach, as Sweeney advises employees to await guidance from their senior leaders regarding the future direction of their specific teams. Sweeney appeals to the reader through the expertise of these leaders, assuring

them that their teams will navigate the layoffs. Sweeney asserts that the company's future is promising and seeks to instill confidence in the reader regarding its prospects. To further reinforce this claim, Sweeney lists reasons why Epic's future is bright:

- (107) We have amazing game experiences across multiple platforms. We've built the best engine in the world, and will be hosting Unreal Fest next week to bring the community together and spotlight the things they are building with Unreal Engine and UEFN. Creators are making a living building for the Fortnite ecosystem, with time in third-party games now exceeding first-party.

Sweeney highlights various reasons why Epic's products and communities are thriving and will continue to succeed. The tone of these claims is optimistic and uplifting, utilizing emotional appeal to foster excitement and reassurance about the company's direction. Within the example, Sweeney uses ethical appeal through expertise and inclination to succeed, with claims such as *we have amazing game experiences* (107), *we've built the best engine in the world*, and *Creators are making a living building for the Fortnite ecosystem* (107). These statements are designed to build Epic's credibility by showcasing the company's achievements and their positive impact on both consumers and creators.

The last paragraph of the main announcement before the FAQ section details the effects of the layoffs and which part of the development most of the planned layoffs will focus on. The tone of the paragraph is logical and rational. Sweeney begins by providing the main argument for the layoffs:

- (108) We're cutting costs without breaking development or our core lines of businesses so we can continue to focus on our ambitious plans. About two-thirds of the layoffs were in teams outside of core development.

In this sentence, Sweeney utilizes logic to persuade the reader that the layoffs are presented as a necessity for the leadership's plans for the company and its products. The main clause consists of an argument about cutting costs, which is followed by a logical outcome: ensuring that the cost reductions do not disrupt product development or the company's core values. Another outcome of the argument is the ability to redirect focus toward the company's more

ambitious goals. Sweeney also indicates which aspects of development will be most impacted by the layoffs, emphasizing that neither core development nor the company's values will be compromised. However, Sweeney also outlines some negative effects of the layoffs:

- (109) Some of our products and initiatives will land on schedule, and some may not ship when planned because they are under-resourced for the time being. We're ok with the schedule tradeoff if it means holding on to our ability to achieve our goals, get to the other side of profitability and become a leading metaverse company.

Sweeney acknowledges that the schedules of certain products may be affected due to insufficient resources. They utilize argumentation for the delay and follow it up with a logical explanation: the trade off in schedules is acceptable if it enables the company to reduce costs, achieve profitability, and maintain its ambition to become a leader in the metaverse industry. Sweeney signs off on the announcement with their first name only, without including their professional title. As an addition, Sweeney includes two links directing readers to statements about Bandcamp's divestiture and SuperAwesome becoming an independent company. Alongside the links, Sweeney also includes a FAQ section addressing questions that readers may have about the layoffs.

5 Discussion

The aim of the study is to answer the research questions, the use of rhetorics in press releases about layoffs and approaches the companies take to communicate the layoffs. In this section I answer the questions according to the analysis. In the discussion the findings of the analysis are presented. The discussion section is divided into three sections. Section 6.1 briefs the findings of the analysis and answers the research questions presented in section 1. Section 6.2 discusses the rhetoric modes ethos, pathos and logos and how they function in the press releases, as well as the approaches companies took to discuss the layoffs. Section 6.3 discusses the limitations of the study and possible future releases.

5.1 General findings and conclusions to the research questions

The close reading analysis with a focus on Aristotelian rhetorics conducted on the six press releases discovered that the authors efficiently utilize all rhetoric modes within the press releases. Ethos is used by the authors to persuade the audience of their qualifications as either the company's leader or the company itself. The authors use pathos to address the emotional aspects of the layoffs, such as uncertainty for the future of the employees and quality of the products. Pathos is also used to build excitement within the reader about the future of the company after the layoffs and reorganization. Authors use logos to rationalize and justify the layoffs with arguments that rely on reason. Most arguments presented to the audience are claims that are then justified.

The press releases take three approaches to communicate the layoffs in the announcements. The approach depends how the subject of layoffs is approached and presented to the audience. These groups and their functions are discussed in section 5.2 and presented in Table 7.

5.2 Communicative approaches to discuss layoffs used by the companies

The press releases utilize all forms of Aristotelian rhetoric modes to inform the audiences of the workforce reductions. The modes varied with use and frequency across the announcements, but all contained ethos, pathos and logos at some capacity. The press releases can be divided into three groups depending how the texts are structured and how the subject of layoffs is approached.

In the first group, the texts do not address the layoffs immediately. Instead, they begin by building the companies' reputations and highlighting their positions within the industry. The

layoffs are introduced afterward, followed by descriptions of the actions the companies are taking to support affected employees. These announcements conclude with messages of gratitude directed toward the impacted employees, employing a heavy use of pathos. This category includes both announcements from Electronic Arts and the one from CD Projekt Red.

The second group consists of the announcements from BioWare and Riot Games. These texts follow a pattern where the authors begin by addressing the audience about a need for organizational change. The announcements explain the reasons why such changes are necessary and subsequently justify layoffs as part of these changes. The authors then detail the goals of the company's reorganization, the effects on existing products, and their plans for future endeavours. These announcements end by creating excitement among the audience for upcoming products and expressing gratitude to the readers.

The last group includes announcements from Epic Games and Sony Interactive Entertainment. These texts address the layoffs directly and provide details on how they are being implemented. They include concrete examples and actions the companies are taking as part of the reorganization. These actions include actions such as divestitures, closures and reductions in workforce. Additionally, these texts focus on the future improvement of the company and its outputs, or they reassure audiences that core products and development remain largely unaffected. Table 7 presents the categorization of press releases, offering a brief explanation of each group's approach and identifying which companies adopt each method.

Table 7 The approach to communicating the layoffs to the audience

Group	Approach	The companies
Company's reputation first	Builds the company's reputation and highlights successes before addressing layoffs. Ends with gratitude and sympathy for impacted employees.	Electronic Arts and CD Projekt Red
Reason for the change and strategy	Starts with a need for change, transitions to layoffs as part of broader restructuring, and concludes by focusing on future goals and excitement.	BioWare and Riot Games
Direct approach	Immediately addresses layoffs, explains actions, and focuses on concrete changes and impact on company operations and employees. Ends with reassurance.	Epic Games and Sony Interactive Entertainment

5.2.1 Ethos

All the companies studied utilized ethos to establish their credibility, achieved through the financial or critical success of their past products and services (13, 41, 73 and 82). They also emphasize their ability to manage workforce reductions by showcasing expertise, consistency, shared values, and mentions of transparency and trust. In most cases, the companies assured their audiences that they would refocus on their core strengths (examples 16, 35, 73 and 107). They emphasized values such as commitment and transparency (examples 23 and 77), to reassure readers of their ethical principles. Similarly, efforts to clean up their own shortcomings often involve improving employee working conditions such as pledges to eliminate crunch periods (14) or enhancing the customer experience by addressing community concerns (Press releases often conveyed that the companies were providing resources to laid-

off personnel while assuring that product quality would remain up to their high standards (examples 10, 24, 39 and 105).

Ethos was further established through the use of the similitude technique, with authors employing pronouns such as *we* and *our* to include themselves as part of the team. This approach fosters unity and shared ambitions. Another technique involves self-criticism, though this was not universally applied. For instance, Riot Games and CD Projekt Red acknowledged their companies had overexpanded (examples 20 and 51). Both companies justified layoffs as necessary to refocus efforts on game development (examples 14 and 55). While CD Projekt Red attributed layoffs to the unavailability of positions after specific projects concluded (20), Riot Games framed the reductions as measures to improve the player experience (73) rather than appeasing shareholders or meeting financial targets (50). Three press releases included the authors' full names and work titles to establish their credibility, and these are CD Projekt Red, BioWare and SIE. For example, McKay introduced himself as the General Manager but omitted his role as Vice President at BioWare. This demonstrates an effort to establish authority and professionalism but still remain more approachable to the audience. Companies such as CD Projekt Red, SIE Interactive Entertainment, and BioWare employed these techniques, even though they were not solely based in the United States.

5.2.2 Pathos

Pathos in the texts is showcased through three main approaches: emotional language, excitement for the future, and loyalty and unity. In the announcements, the authors utilize vivid adjectives and emotionally charged adjectives such as *deep appreciation*, *difficult decisions*, and *dedication*, to acknowledge the emotional toll of the layoffs (examples 8 and 24). The texts contain few metaphors compared to the general use of emotional and vivid language and emotionally charged words. Loyalty and unity are expressed through messages of gratitude toward impacted employees and the consumer or community surrounding the games (examples 26, 27, 43, 75 and 80). These messages are typically located at the end of the chapter, except in the announcement by Epic Games, which does not feature a message of gratitude or loyalty. Excitement for the future is reflected in mentions of upcoming products and how the authors express their enthusiasm for consumers to access these new offerings. For instance, BioWare assures the audience of their focus on *brighter futures* (44), and Riot Games highlights that actions taken besides layoffs will ultimately benefit the players (57). In four of the announcements, the authors sign off using only their first names (11). This

approach creates an impression of relatability and accessibility, rather than portraying the authors solely as CEOs of their respective companies. Notably, all the companies whose authors used only their first names are based in the United States.

5.2.3 Logos

Logos is present in the announcements through rational justifications and concrete actions. The goal of logos in the announcements is to provide the audience logical reasons, explanations and justifications that support the layoffs. Rational justifications often frame the layoffs as necessary for the companies' survival and growth (examples 81 and 108). These reasons include the need to adapt to industry changes, achieve sustainability (examples 48 and 99), and improve or expand the company. Epic Games is the only company that directly cites financial reasons for the layoffs (example 99). CD Projekt Red, Riot Games, BioWare, and SIE justify the layoffs by emphasizing the desire to grow and improve their companies, presenting the decisions as being in the companies' best interests in (examples 18, 35, 73 and 82). Similarly, Electronic Arts attributes their layoffs to the need to keep pace with changes in the gaming industry, as outlined in both of their announcements. The companies outline the actions they are implementing that contribute to or result in layoffs, presenting these actions and their goals to the audience as the reason for the layoffs (examples 37, 38, 52 and 53). These concrete actions are framed as part of broader strategies to enhance the companies' performance.

However, the authors provide little evidence or numerical data to support their claims, which could be attributed to the confidential nature of such data for private companies. Public companies, on the other hand, may suggest that the data is accessible to readers who actively seek it. Inductive reasoning is employed in the announcements through specific examples that lead to broader conclusions. For instance, Riot Games highlights their mainline of games and emphasizes the importance of refocusing their efforts on these titles (example 56). Inductive reasoning also appears with companies building confidence in the audience by patterns, such as CD Projekt Red mentioning the successful adoption of Agile methodologies (example 17). Deductive reasoning appears through general statements that support specific actions, such as that layoffs are logical outcome of certain goals, and rational justifications, such as that layoffs are the method to achieve financial stability (example 99).

5.3 Limitations of the study and future research

The study is limited to publicly available press releases on the company's own website. Internal memos, emails or press releases given to news outlets were left out and could utilize the rhetorics differently compared to current study. The companies also most likely utilize experts of crisis communication and human resources to craft these press releases, instead of the credited author having written the text all by themselves. There is also the possibility that the press releases are written by a ghostwriter, whilst the credited author has only added their name on the announcement. This would need to further analysis of the authors writing style across different genres. The close reading methodology is open to misinterpretation and other interpretation of the texts, as well as risk of over analysis when the focus of the close reading is on a specific element.

The study was also limited only to press releases about layoff announcements and does not study corporate communication in a broader context, such as communication through social media, community interactions or interviews. As the arguments in the announcements rely on claims without proper evidence or data, the claims must be taken at face value. The data could be confidential to some companies, or the companies are not willing to address them in the layoff announcement. The study does not analyse the variations of the authors' writing styles, which could show how the individual author uses the rhetoric modes. Most of the companies included in the study operate from Europe and the United States, and the only company that was outside these regions also had a secondary headquarter in the United States.

Future research could focus on other communication from video game companies as the companies utilize multiple outlets and social media platforms to communicate to the consumers and fans of the products. Studies could be done on differences between layoff announcements from Europe and America compared to those in Asia. Another subject where research surrounding use of Aristotelian rhetorics in gaming industry could focus how those are utilized in reviews about the games. Furthermore, studies could be conducted on how the use of rhetorics vary between gaming industry to other industries.

6 Conclusion

The thesis explores the use of Aristotelian rhetoric and persuasive techniques within press releases from video game companies addressing layoff announcements. The study is motivated by the significant layoffs in the gaming industry over the last few years. Its aim is to explore how layoffs are communicated to multiple audiences through public press releases. The analysis on the data was conducted with a close reading method, which got its theories and techniques from Brummett's *Techniques of Close Reading* (2019). The focus of the close reading is on Aristotelian rhetorics of ethos, pathos and logos, as well as the persuasive techniques used by the authors.

The results show that the authors utilized all three modes of the Aristotelian rhetorics to persuade the audiences about the objective of the layoffs. The application of rhetorics varied across the press releases depending on the approach used to discuss layoffs in the announcements. The press releases in this study are categorized into three groups according to how the announcements are formulated. The *Reputation first* Approach focuses on building the company's reputation and highlighting past successes before addressing layoffs. The *Reason for change and strategy* approach begins by emphasizing the need for change, framing the layoffs as part of the company's reorganization. Lastly, the *Direct* approach immediately addresses the layoffs, explains the actions taken, and concentrates on concrete changes as well as their impact on company operations and employees.

The study only focused only on six press releases about layoffs from video game companies, which are primarily from Europe and Unites States. The study found that the core elements of press releases about layoffs are present in layoff announcements within gaming industry. As the press releases in this study are all published on the companies' own websites, certain aspects and features of press releases have been left out, which can indicate the further development of press releases as the role of journalists and news outlets diminishes. The study highlights the different methods on approaching layoffs and how they are presented, which implies that there can be multiple approaches to layoffs depending on how the company wishes to present themselves.

References

Primary Sources

- BioWare. "An Update on the State of BioWare." BioWare Blog. August 23, 2023.
<https://blog.bioware.com/2023/08/23/an-update-on-the-state-of-bioware/>.
- CD Projekt Red. "CD PROJEKT RED Organizational Update." CD Projekt. June 26, 2023.
<https://www.cdprojekt.com/en/media/news/cd-projekt-red-organizational-update/>.
- Electronic Arts. "Continuing to Evolve Our Business and Teams." Electronic Arts Inc., February 28, 2024. <https://www.ea.com/news/continuing-to-evolve-our-business-and-teams?isLocalized=true>.
- Epic Games. "Layoffs at Epic." Epic Games News. September 28, 2023.
<https://www.epicgames.com/site/en-US/news/layoffs-at-epic>.
- Riot Games. "Changes at Riot and the Road Ahead." Riot Games Player Update. January 22, 2024. <https://www.riotgames.com/en/news/2024-player-update>.
- Sony Interactive Entertainment. "An Important Update from PlayStation Studios." Sony Interactive Entertainment News Blog. February 27, 2024.
<https://sonyinteractive.com/en/news/blog/an-important-update-from-playstation-studios/>.

Secondary Sources

- Aristotle. (350BC) 2001. *Rhetoric*. Translated by W. Rhys Roberts. Infomotions, Inc.
- Arts, Electronic. 2021a. "EA Play - EA Video Game Membership - EA Official Site." Electronic Arts Inc. May 4, 2021. <https://www.ea.com/en-gb/ea-play>.
- . 2021b. "EA Studio – Discover the Creators behind EA Games – EA Official." Electronic Arts Inc. October 28, 2021. <https://www.ea.com/en-gb/ea-studios>.
- . 2023. "An Update on Our People and Business." Electronic Arts Inc. March 29, 2023. <https://www.ea.com/news/update-to-our-business-march-2023>.
- BioWare. n.d. "About BioWare." BioWare. Accessed November 16, 2024.
<https://www.bioware.com/about/>.
- Brummett, Barry. 2019. *Techniques of Close Reading*. Second edition. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.
- Buckner, Dillon. 2024. "Legends of Runeterra FAQ." Playruneterra.com. 2024.
<https://playruneterra.com/en-us/news/lor-announce-faq>.

- Camp, Lindsay. 2007. *Can I Change Your Mind? : The Craft and Art of Persuasive Writing*. London: A. & C. Black.
- Catenaccio, Paola. 2008. "Press Releases as a Hybrid Genre." *Pragmatics. Quarterly Publication of the International Pragmatics Association (IPrA)* 18 (1): 9–31. <https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.18.1.02cat>.
- CD Projekt Red. 2024. "Fact Sheet." <https://www.cdprojekt.com/en/wp-content/uploads-en/2024/09/fact-sheet-september-2024.pdf>.
- . n.d. "CD PROJEKT RED - Award-Winning Creators of Story-Driven Role-Playing Games." CD PROJEKT RED - Award-Winning Creators of Story-Driven Role-Playing Games. Accessed November 15, 2024. <https://www.cdprojektred.com/en/about-us>.
- Crecente, Brian. 2013. "Tencent's \$330M Epic Games Investment Absorbed 40 Percent of Developer [Updated]." Polygon. March 21, 2013. <https://www.polygon.com/2013/3/21/4131702/tencents-epic-games-stock-acquisition>.
- Dubois, Louis-Etienne, and Johanna Weststar. 2022. "Games-As-a-Service: Conflicted Identities on the New Front-Line of Video Game Development." *New Media & Society* 24 (10): 2332–53. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444821995815>.
- Electronic Arts. 2020. "About EA." Electronic Arts Inc. April 30, 2020. <https://www.ea.com/en-gb/about>.
- Epic Games. 2024a. "About Epic Games." Epic Games. 2024. <https://www.epicgames.com/site/en-US/about>.
- . 2024b. "Switching to Unreal Engine." Unreal Engine. The Most Powerful real-time 3D Creation Tool. 2024. <https://www.unrealengine.com/en-US/uses/switching-to-unreal-engine>.
- Higgins, Colin, and Robyn Walker. 2012. "Ethos, Logos, Pathos: Strategies of Persuasion in Social/Environmental Reports." *Accounting Forum* 36 (3): 194–208. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.accfor.2012.02.003>.
- Hoffman, Mary F, and Debra J Ford. 2009. *Organizational Rhetoric*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Hoßfeld, Heiko. 2013. "Corporate Dieting. Persuasive Use of Metaphors in Downsizing." *Management Revue* 24 (1): 53–70. <https://doi.org/10.5771/0935-9915-2013-1-53>.
- Jonsen, Karsten, Jacqueline Fendt, and Sébastien Point. 2017. "Convincing Qualitative Research." *Organizational Research Methods* 21 (1): 30–67. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428117706533>.

- Känsäkangas, Teemu. 2024. "Ethos, Logos and Pathos in the Persuasion of the Sides of the Civil War in the Game Elder Scrolls v: Skyrim." *Urn.fi*. Master's Thesis, University of Turku. <https://www.utupub.fi/handle/10024/177596>.
- King, Cynthia. 2010. "Introduction to the Rhetoric of Layoff Memos." *Business Communication Quarterly* 73 (3): 320–22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1080569910376784>.
- Kohler, Chris. 2016. "Sony Interactive Entertainment Merges PlayStation Biz Units." WIRED. January 26, 2016. <https://www.wired.com/2016/01/sony-interactive-entertainment/>.
- Lassen, Inger. 2006. "Is the Press Release a Genre? A Study of Form and Content." *Discourse Studies* 8 (4): 503–30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445606061875>.
- Mclaren, Yvonne, and Călin Gurău. 2005. "Characterising the Genre of the Corporate Press Release." *LSP and Professional Communication* 5 (10-30). <https://scispace.com/papers/characterising-the-genre-of-the-corporate-press-release-1r7imogxzd>.
- Myllylä, Kalle. 2019. "Ethos, Pathos and Logos : A Comparative Study of the Rhetorical Strategies Found in CEO Letters in English Annual Reports of Finnish Companies after Desirable and Undesirable Financial Years." *Www.utupub.fi*. Master Thesis, University of Turku. <https://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe2019062021534>.
- Obsidian. n.d. "2024 - Game Industry Layoffs - Obsidian Publish." Publish.obsidian.md. Accessed September 15, 2024. <https://publish.obsidian.md/vg-layoffs/Archive/2024>.
- Øyvind Ihlen, Jennifer Bartlett, and Steve May. 2011. *The Handbook of Communication and Corporate Social Responsibility*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Pfeil, Marek P., Alison B. Setterberg, and James S. O'Rourke. 2004. "The Art of Downsizing: Communicating Lay-Offs to Key Stakeholders." *Journal of Communication Management* 8 (2): 130–41. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13632540410807600>.
- Riot Games. 2023. "Who We Are." Riot Games. 2023. <https://www.riotgames.com/en/who-we-are>.
- . 2024. "Beginner's Guide." Playvalorant.com. August 2, 2024. <https://playvalorant.com/en-gb/news/announcements/beginners-guide/>.
- . 2025. "Teamfight Tactics." Leagueoflegends.com. March 22, 2025. <https://teamfighttactics.leagueoflegends.com/en-gb>.
- Russell, Jon. 2015. "Tencent Takes Full Control of 'League of Legends' Creator Riot Games." TechCrunch. TechCrunch. December 17, 2015.

- <https://techcrunch.com/2015/12/17/tencent-takes-full-control-of-league-of-legends-creator-riot-games/>.
- Smeltzer, Larry R., and Marie F. Zener. 1994. "Minimizing the Negative Effect of Employee Layoffs through Effective Announcements." *Employee Counselling Today* 6 (4): 3–9. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13665629410071207>.
- Sony Group Corporation. 2024. "United States Securities and Exchange Commission." [Www.sec.gov](http://www.sec.gov). March 31, 2024. <https://www.sec.gov/ix?doc=/Archives/edgar/data/0000313838/000119312524167500/d797371d20f.htm>.
- Sony Interactive Entertainment. n.d. "About Us – Sony Interactive Entertainment." Sony Interactive Entertainment. Accessed November 16, 2024. <https://sonyinteractive.com/en/about-us/>.
- . n.d. "PlayStation Studios." PlayStation. Accessed November 16, 2024. <https://www.playstation.com/en-us/corporate/playstation-studios/>.
- Stock Analysis. 2024. "Electronic Arts Number of Employees 1995-2023." Stock Analysis. March 31, 2024. <https://stockanalysis.com/stocks/ea/employees/>.
- Taimi, Paula. 2013. "Communicative Purposes of Press Releases Announcing Reduction in Workforce." Master's Thesis, University of Turku. <https://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe201308224404>.
- U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR. 2024. "WARN Act Compliance Assistance | U.S. Department of Labor." [Www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov). 2024. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/layoffs/warn>.
- Unreal Engine. 2024. "Unreal Engine (UE5) Licensing Options." Unreal Engine. 2024. <https://www.unrealengine.com/en-US/license>.
- Warnick, Quinn. 2010. "A Close Textual Analysis of Corporate Layoff Memos." *Business Communication Quarterly* 73 (3): 322–26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1080569910376785>.
- Yap, Bernard. 2019. "(PDF) What Make Gamers Loyal to Game Publishers: Examining Brand Loyalty in the Video Game Industry." ResearchGate. July 2019. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334131093_What_Make_Gamers_Loyal_to_Game_Publishers_Examining_Brand_Loyalty_in_the_Video_Game_Industry.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Electronic Arts Layoff Announcement 2024

Continuing to evolve our business and teams

An update on our business from CEO Andrew Wilson

The below announcement was shared with Electronic Arts employees by our CEO Andrew Wilson.

Team,

We are entertaining, inspiring, and connecting more people with more content and deeper experiences than ever before. Over the last year, we have organized our company to further [empower our creative leaders](#) to deliver our strategic priorities of entertaining massive online communities, telling blockbuster stories, and harnessing the power of community in and around our games. These actions have positioned us to build bigger, bolder experiences for hundreds of millions of players and fans around the world.

We are also leading through an accelerating industry transformation where player needs and motivations have changed significantly. Fans are increasingly engaging with the largest IP, and looking to us for broader experiences where they can play, watch, create content, and forge deeper connections. Our industry exists at the cutting edge of entertainment, and in today's dynamic environment, we are advancing the way we work and continuing to evolve our business.

As a company full of creators and storytellers, we believe in the value of teams innovating together, and continue to learn and adopt new ways of collaborating to grow and serve our global communities. Given how and where we are working, we are continuing to optimize our global real estate footprint to best support our business. We are also sunsetting games and moving away from development of future licensed IP that we do not believe will be successful in our changing industry. This greater focus allows us to drive creativity, accelerate innovation, and double down on our biggest opportunities — including our owned IP, sports, and massive online communities — to deliver the entertainment players want today and tomorrow. Lastly, we are streamlining our company operations to deliver deeper, more connected experiences for fans everywhere that build community, shape culture, and grow fandom.

In this time of change, we expect these decisions to impact approximately 5 percent of our workforce. I understand this will create uncertainty and be challenging for many who have worked with such dedication and passion and have made important contributions to our company. While not every team will be impacted, this is the hardest part of these changes, and we have deeply considered every option to try and limit impacts to our teams. Our primary goal is to provide team members with opportunities to find new roles and paths to transition onto other projects. Where that's not possible, we will support and work with each colleague with the utmost attention, care, and respect. Communicating these impacts has already begun and will be largely completed by early next quarter.

I want to extend my appreciation to everyone who has helped contribute to EA's ongoing story. We are a team that leans into our values to lead the future of entertainment, and I look forward to what we will create together. Thank you for all that you do.

Andrew

Appendix 2 CD Projekt Red Layoff Announcement

CD PROJEKT RED Organizational Update

July 26, 2023

I have some news to share regarding the future shape of our teams and our game development philosophy.

Those of you familiar with our [strategy](#) might remember that we have a lot going on at CD PROJEKT RED. Projects like Polaris (The Witcher franchise), Orion (Cyberpunk franchise), or Hadar (new franchise) are just some of the exciting elements in the future we see for our games. Part of that strategy is an ongoing process of several deep transformations within the studio which we consider key to making quality games, on time and without crunch. After reshaping our development process and incorporating Agile methodologies, we're now focusing on refining the shape of our teams.

To meet our own high expectations and ambitions to create the best role-playing games, we not only want to have the *best* people but also the *right* teams. What we mean by that is having teams that are built around our projects' needs; teams that are more agile and more effective. At this point in time, we're certain that for CD PROJEKT RED to grow, we need to be consistent in implementing that approach.

We've carefully assessed all teams in the company in terms of their expected contribution to the delivery of our strategy. There's no easy way to say this, but today we are overstaffed. We have talented people on board who are finishing their tasks and — based on current and expected project needs — we already know we don't have other opportunities for them in the next year. The outcome is the studio parting ways with around 100 people, which is roughly 9% of the entire team. This will not be immediate as some employees will be let go as late as Q1 2024 but, in the spirit of transparency, we've chosen to share the information now. We want team members to have ample time to process and adjust to the change, and we've also made sure to offer everyone a comprehensive severance package.

Finally, I would like to address affected CDPR team members reading this message. Although our paths will diverge professionally, I believe the relationships we have built can remain

strong. I encourage you to stay connected and would like to thank you for being an invaluable part of our journey. Your impact will resonate within CD PROJEKT RED and we wish you nothing but success and fulfillment in the next chapter of your professional lives.

Adam Kiciński

CEO, CD PROJEKT

Appendix 3 BioWare Layoff Announcement

An Update on the State of BioWare

by BioWare - August 23, 2023

Hello again,

Today, rather than discuss one of our upcoming projects, I'd like to share an update about the studio itself and outline our vision for BioWare's future.

In order to meet the needs of our upcoming projects, continue to hold ourselves to the highest standard of quality, and ensure BioWare can continue to thrive in an industry that's rapidly evolving, we must shift towards a more agile and more focused studio. It will allow our developers to iterate quickly, unlock more creativity, and form a clear vision of what we're building before development ramps up.

To achieve this, we find ourselves in a position where change is not only necessary, but unavoidable. As difficult as this is to say, rethinking our approach to development inevitably means reorganizing our team to match the studio's changing needs.

As part of this transition, we are eliminating approximately 50 roles at BioWare. That is deeply painful and humbling to write. We are doing everything we can to ensure the process is handled with empathy, respect, and clear communication. With that last point in mind, I want to take a moment to explain how we got here, what we're doing to support our colleagues, and what this means for BioWare's current and future games.

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

After much consideration and careful planning, we have built a long-term vision that will preserve the health of the studio and better enable us to do what we do best: create exceptional story-driven single-player experiences filled with vast worlds and rich characters. This vision balances the current needs of the studio—namely, ensuring *Dragon Age™: Dreadwolf* is an outstanding game—with its future, including the success of the next *Mass Effect™*.

We've chosen to act now in part to provide our impacted colleagues with as many internal opportunities as possible. These changes coincide with a significant number of roles that are currently open across EA's other studios. Impacted employees will be provided with professional resources and assistance as they apply for these positions.

While it's unlikely that everyone will find a new role within the company, we are committed to supporting our staff as they navigate this change. Our sincere hope is that they can continue their exemplary work at studios who stand to benefit immensely from their talents.

IMMEDIATE IMPACT

If you're wondering how all of this will impact development of *Dragon Age: Dreadwolf*, let me be clear that our dedication to the game has never wavered. Our commitment remains steadfast, and we all are working to make this game worthy of the *Dragon Age* name. We are confident that we'll have the time needed to ensure *Dreadwolf* reaches its full potential.

I can also tell you that every member of our team, even those departing BioWare, deserves credit for crafting a spectacular experience. These are our colleagues and friends, and we would not be here without them. I am so proud of all the work our team has done.

WHAT COMES NEXT

While this is an extremely difficult day for everyone at BioWare, we are making changes now to build a brighter future. We're excited for all of you to see what we've been building with *Dreadwolf*. A core veteran team led by Mike Gamble continues their pre-production work on the next *Mass Effect*. Our commitment to quality continues to be our North Star.

As cliché as this sounds, there truly is never a good time to enact changes like this, but we trust that we have the right leaders and team in place with vision, passion, and proven track records to deliver world-class *Dragon Age* and *Mass Effect* experiences that our fans will love.

For now, I want to thank everyone at BioWare—past and present—for making the studio what it is. I also want to thank our community for your continued support. We're eager to reveal more about *Dreadwolf*, and we look forward to discovering what else the future holds.

Gary McKay

General Manager, BioWare

Appendix 4 Riot Games Layoff Announcement

Changes at Riot and the Road Ahead

Jan 22, 2024

Players,

Minutes ago, we shared with Rioters that we are refocusing on fewer, high-impact projects to move us toward a more sustainable future. Now, we want to tell you what these changes mean for our games, everything around them (esports, Arcane, music, etc.), and what to expect going forward.

For most of our history, we've managed to avoid days like this, but this decision is critical for the future of Riot. This isn't to appease shareholders or to hit a quarterly earnings number—it's a necessity. Over the past few years, as Riot more than doubled in headcount, we spread our efforts across more and more projects without sharp enough razors to decide what players needed most. The adjustments we're making aim to focus us on the areas that have the greatest impact on your experience while reducing investment on things that don't.

This means we're eliminating about 530 roles globally, which represents around 11% of Rioters, with the biggest impact to teams outside of core development. We recognize that many of you don't just care about the games you play, but also about the people who make them. These are not just organizational changes; they affect individuals and families, and we do our best to approach these decisions with respect and sensitivity. If you'd like to read the email we sent to Rioters, we've shared it here.

Doubling Down on Games at the Center

With today's moves, we're going back to putting games at the center of everything we do.

Our vision for the future is bold and our commitment to our core live games – League of Legends, VALORANT, Teamfight Tactics, and Wild Rift – is more ambitious than ever. We're prioritizing these teams so they can focus on the content, features, and updates that

directly respond to what you've been asking for. Expect events, modes, and long-term roadmaps that lead to vibrant (hopefully multi-decade) futures for these games.

Our strategy will more tightly integrate esports, music, and entertainment with our games. Esports isn't just about competition; it's about the highs, the lows, and the communities that flourish around the games. Entertainment isn't just about storytelling; it's a gateway to the deeper narratives, characters, and worlds that enrich the game experience. As we've grown, some of our efforts have become more isolated, and we aspire to more seamlessly blend gameplay, competitive excellence, and narrative depth in ways that truly make it better to be a player. Whether it's the next hit from K/DA, the story unfolding in Arcane, the intensity of a TFT Open, the one-of-a-kind chills of a Worlds game 5, or the electric atmosphere of VAL Champs, our focus is on quality, impact, and unified experiences for players around the world.

Beyond live titles, we have projects in the pipeline that we can't wait to get to you when they're ready. Project L has been making great progress and we're looking for more opportunities for you to try out the game (stay tuned for more updates coming later this year). Arcane Season 2 is on track for November 2024. Plus, we have a number of projects cooking in various stages of R&D.

Our volume of releases will never be massive. We want everything we deliver to be something that you can be proud of and excited to share with friends. That requires having financial flexibility to be able to take the time to make things that are truly great for players. We know we'll still have occasional misses, but we want those misses to be for the right reasons, not because we prioritized the wrong things or had to rush projects out the door before they were ready.

Legends of Runeterra and Riot Forge

We want to specifically address two areas where you'll see immediate impact from today's changes: Legends of Runeterra and Riot Forge.

- As LoR continues its journey, we're making changes to move the game toward sustainability. We know there's a passionate community who absolutely love this game—we do too. Despite critical achievements and the role it's played in helping to build out the world of Runeterra, LoR has faced financial challenges since launch, costing significantly more to

develop and support than it generates. In response, we're reducing the size of our team and renewing our focus on The Path of Champions. This shift allows the team to experiment more in the PvE space, concentrating on the game mode where players have been spending the most time. The LoR team has more details, and we have a video planned for the coming weeks to talk more about the future.

- We're ending new game development under Riot Forge after the upcoming release of *Bandle Tale: A League of Legends Story*. Forge was an experiment to see what would happen when Rioters partnered with their favorite indie devs and let them loose on Runeterra with their unique viewpoints, styles, and expertise. Across six titles spanning different game genres, regions, and characters, it's been inspiring to see what these devs created in partnership with the Forge team. We're proud of what we've done together to bring these stories to life, but it's time to refocus our efforts on the ambitious projects underway internally at Riot.

The Journey Ahead with You

Our strategy moving forward is clear: we're honing in on what we do best and what resonates most with you. Every endeavor, from development to storytelling to competition, will be crafted to deliver meaningful, memorable experiences with games at the center.

While change can bring uncertainty, it also presents opportunities for growth and innovation. We're grateful for your ongoing support; nothing Riot has ever created would be possible without you. Your passion and engagement inspire us every day, and we're excited to continue this journey together.

Dylan & Marc

Appendix 5 Sony Interactive Entertainment Layoff Announcement

An Important Update from PlayStation Studios

February 27, 2024

- Hermen Hulst, CEO, Studio Business Group, Sony Interactive Entertainment

Today, Sony Interactive Entertainment initiated a reduction in our workforce – including within PlayStation Studios – and I wanted to talk about the impact that will have.

These decisions have been extremely difficult, but they are necessary, and I think it's important to be transparent:

The US based studios and groups impacted by a reduction in workforce are:

- Insomniac Games, Naughty Dog, as well as our Technology, Creative, and Support teams

In UK and European based studios, it is proposed:

- That PlayStation Studios' London Studio will close in its entirety;
- That there will be reductions in Guerrilla and Firesprite

These are in addition to some smaller reductions in other teams across PlayStation Studios.

Our goal at PlayStation Studios has always been to make the best games for PlayStation fans, and our global community of studios represent some of the most creative and talented teams within the gaming industry.

PlayStation 5 is in its fourth year, and we are at a stage where we need to step back and look at what our business needs.

At the same time, our industry has experienced continuing and fundamental change which affects how we all create, and play, games.

Delivering the immersive, narrative-driven stories that PlayStation Studios is known for, at the quality bar that we aspire to, requires a re-evaluation of how we operate.

Delivering and sustaining social, online experiences – allowing PlayStation gamers to explore our worlds in different ways – as well as launching games on additional devices such as PC and Mobile, requires a different approach and different resources.

To take on these challenges, PlayStation Studios had to grow. We have brought brilliant and successful Studios into our family. We have invested in new technology and partnerships. We have recruited talent from across our industry and beyond.

But growth itself is not an ambition. PlayStation Studios is committed to continually discovering ways to work together; collaborating and combining our efforts to ensure that we are able to craft games that push the boundaries of play and deliver what you expect from us.

We looked at our studios and our portfolio, evaluating projects in various stages of development, and have decided that some of those projects will not move forward.

I want to be clear that the decision to stop work on these projects is not a reflection on the talent or passion of team members.

Our philosophy has always been to allow creative experimentation. Sometimes, great ideas don't become great games. Sometimes, a project is started with the best intentions before shifts within the market or industry result in a change of plan.

I am deeply saddened to see talented individuals leave the company. I have so much admiration, appreciation and respect for their work.

PlayStation Studios will continue to be a creator-led organization driven by evolving our beloved franchises and bringing new gameplay experiences of the highest quality to our fans.

Thank you all for your continued support.

Appendix 6 Epic Games Layoff Announcement

Layoffs at Epic

September 28, 2023

Earlier today Tim Sweeney sent the following email to Epic employees:

Hi everyone,

As we shared earlier, we are laying off around 16% of Epic employees. We're divesting Bandcamp and spinning off most of SuperAwesome.

For a while now, we've been spending way more money than we earn, investing in the next evolution of Epic and growing Fortnite as a metaverse-inspired ecosystem for creators. I had long been optimistic that we could power through this transition without layoffs, but in retrospect I see that this was unrealistic.

While Fortnite is starting to grow again, the growth is driven primarily by creator content with significant revenue sharing, and this is a lower margin business than we had when Fortnite Battle Royale took off and began funding our expansion. Success with the creator ecosystem is a great achievement, but it means a major structural change to our economics.

Epic folks around the world have been making ongoing efforts to reduce costs, including moving to net zero hiring and cutting operating spend on things like marketing and events. But we still ended up far short of financial sustainability. We concluded that layoffs are the only way, and that doing them now and on this scale will stabilize our finances.

We're also making some divestitures. Bandcamp is joining Songtradr, a music marketplace company supporting artists. SuperAwesome's advertising business will become an independent company under the SuperAwesome brand, led by their current CEO Kate O'Loughlin. Kids Web Services (KWS), the parent verification and consent management toolset, will remain part of Epic.

Saying goodbye to people who have helped build Epic is a terrible experience for all. The consolation is that we're adequately funded to support laid off employees: we're offering a severance package that includes six months base pay and in the US/Canada/Brazil six months of Epic-paid healthcare. We're offering to accelerate people's stock option vesting schedule

through the end of 2024 and are giving two additional years from today to exercise the options. In the US we're also offering to vest any unearned profit sharing from their 401k. And we'll provide benefits including career transition services and visa support where we can.

For those still at Epic, you'll hear more from senior leaders about the path forward for your team. Epic's prospects for the future are strong. We have amazing game experiences across multiple platforms. We've built the best engine in the world, and will be hosting Unreal Fest next week to bring the community together and spotlight the things they are building with Unreal Engine and UEFN. Creators are making a living building for the Fortnite ecosystem, with time in third-party games now exceeding first-party.

We're cutting costs without breaking development or our core lines of businesses so we can continue to focus on our ambitious plans. About two-thirds of the layoffs were in teams outside of core development. Some of our products and initiatives will land on schedule, and some may not ship when planned because they are under-resourced for the time being. We're ok with the schedule tradeoff if it means holding on to our ability to achieve our goals, get to the other side of profitability and become a leading metaverse company.

-Tim

(Songtradr acquires Bandcamp from Epic Games)

(SuperAwesome Leadership to acquire company from Epic Games)

FAQs

What does this mean for Epic's priorities?

We are still focused on shipping our must succeed initiatives: the next Fortnite Season and Fortnite Chapter 5, Del Mar, Sparks, and Juno. Their schedules remain in place.

We aren't cutting any core businesses, and are continuing to invest in games with Fortnite first-party development, the Fortnite creator ecosystem and economy, Rocket League and Fall Guys; and services for developers including Unreal Engine for games and enterprise, Epic Games Store, Epic Games Publishing, Epic Online Services, Kids Web Services, MetaHuman, Twin Motion, Quixel Mega Scans, Capturing Reality, ArtStation, Sketchfab and Fab.

We are divesting from Bandcamp and spinning off most of SuperAwesome.

We'll have a long company meeting later in October to talk about all of our efforts and priorities.

What was the scope of the layoffs?

We are laying off around 830 employees, or 16% of jobs. About two-thirds of the layoffs were in teams outside of core development.

Around 250 people are leaving Epic through our divestitures from Bandcamp and SuperAwesome

We're cutting costs without sacrificing development or lines of businesses so that means business functions are disproportionately impacted compared to development functions.

Will there be more layoffs?

No. These changes financially stabilize the business.

The entire goal of this process was to make our cost structure more sustainable and we believe that we have achieved this.

Will Epic continue hiring?

Yes. We will continue hiring for critical roles, while maintaining net-zero at our new size.

What about Project Liberty?

We've been taking steps to reduce our legal expenses, but are continuing the fight against Apple and Google distribution monopolies and taxes, so the metaverse can thrive and bring opportunity to Epic and all other developers.

Appendix 7 Finnish Summary

Irtisanomisten määrä videopeliateollisuudessa on noussut huomattavasti viime vuosina kysynnän muutoksen, teknologisten kehitysten ja taloudellisen tilanteen takia. Irtisanomisten kommunikointi vaatii tarkkaa suunnittelua, jotta yritykset pystyvät minimoimaan mahdolliset negatiiviset vaikutukset. Irtisanomisten kommunikointi voi tapahtua harkitusti laadittujen lehdistötiedotteiden välityksellä. Lehdistötiedotteilla on samanaikaisesti kaksi kommunikatiivista tarkoitusta: informatiivinen ja promotionaalinen. Näiden kahden kommunikatiivisen tarkoituksen takia lehdistötiedotteiden tyylilajia kutsutaan hybridigenreksi. Yritysten käyttämät lehdistötiedotteet sisältävät erilaisia retorisia keinoja, joilla pyritään vaikuttamaan tiedotteiden kohdeyleisöön.

Tämä pro gradu -tutkielma käsittelee Aristoteleen retoristen lajien käyttöä videopeliyritysten irtisanomistiedotteissa. Tutkimuksessa tarkasteltiin eetoksen, päätöksen ja logoksen käyttöä kuudessa irtisanomistiedotteessa sekä sitä, kuinka nämä retoriset lajit ilmenevät tekstissä ja miten tiedotteet lähestyvät aihettaan:

1. Miten eetosta, päätöstä ja logosta käytetään irtisanomisia koskevissa lehdistötiedotteissa?
2. Miten lehdistötiedotteet lähestyvät irtisanomisten viestintää ja miten niissä kommunikoidaan?

Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on vastata tutkimuskysymyksiin ja tarkastella retoristen lajien käyttöä irtisanomistiedotteissa videopeliateollisuudessa. Aiemmat tutkimukset ovat keskittyneet eetoksen, päätöksen ja logoksen käyttöön eri tekstilajeissa.

Irtisanomistiedotteissa on tutkittu niiden vaikutusta pörssiin sekä niiden rakennetta ja vaiheita (*move*). Tutkimuksen hypoteesi on, että kaikkia Aristoteleen retorisia lajeja hyödynnetään lehdistötiedotteissa yhtiöiden irtisanomisperustelujen tukemiseksi.

Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan videopeliateollisuudessa käytettävää suostuttelevaa kieltä. Lisäksi selvitetään, miten yhtiöt lähestyvät irtisanomisia tiedotteissaan ja onko niiden lähestymistavoissa eroja tai samanlaisuuksia. Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan, jos yrityksillä on samanlaisia lähestymistapoja ja niiden yhtenäisiä piirteitä.

Tutkimuksessa hyödynnetty teoria käsittelee suostuttelevan kielenkäytön tarkoitusta ja sen käyttöä erilaisissa tekstilajeissa, erityisesti yritysviestinnässä. Yleisesti suostuttelevan kielenkäytön tavoitteena on vaikuttaa kohdeyleisön käsitykseen kirjoittajasta tai puhujasta. Aristoteleen retorisia lajeja käytetään suostuttelevan kielenkäytön pohjana. Eetos perustuu kirjoittajan tai puhujan uskottavuuteen, pätevyYTEEN tai auktoriteettiin asiassa. Yritykset hyödyntävät aikaisempia onnistumisiaan, mainettaan ja läpinäkyvyyttään vakuuttaakseen kohdeyleisönsä yrityksen pätevydestä. Paatos vetoaa kohdeyleisön tunteisiin, joiden avulla kirjoittaja tai puhuja pyrkii vaikuttamaan yleisöön. Paatos ilmenee sympatian, optimismin, kiitollisuuden ja katumuksen ilmaisemisenä. Sen tavoitteena on minimoida negatiivisten uutisten vaikutus ja vakuuttaa työntekijät. Logos perustuu loogisiin perusteluihin, jotka ilmenevät taloudellisena datana, strategisena suunnitteluna ja loogisina argumentteina. Näiden avulla yritykset perustelevat irtisanomisia välttämättöminä päätöksinä, joilla taataan yrityksen kannattavuus ja kehittyminen. Suostutteleva kirjoittaminen hyödyntää retorisia keinoja teksteissä, joissa otetaan huomioon tekstin tavoite ja yleisön näkökulma. Suostutteleva kirjoittaminen on tärkeä osa tehokasta argumentointia.

Lehdistötiedotteet yhdistävät uutisten informatiivisen puolen ja mainosten promotionaalisen tehtävän. Aiemmin lehdistötiedotteet jaettiin medioille julkaistaviksi, mutta nykyään ne julkaistaan yleensä yritysten omilla verkkosivuilla. Lehdistötiedotteiden rakenne muodostuu eri siirroista, joilla on omat tarkoituksensa. Lehdistötiedotteiden rakenteita on tutkittu, ja näiden tutkimusten perusteella McLaren ja Gurău (2005) esittelevät lehdistötiedotteiden siirrotta rakenteet. Catenaccio (2008) laajensi ja tarkensi lehdistötiedotteiden siirtoja, jaottamalla ne keskeisiin ja perifeerisiin ominaisuuksiin. Taimi (2013) tarkasteli pro gradu - tutkielmassaan irtisanomisia käsittelevien lehdistötiedotteiden rakennetta ja siirtoja sekä niiden oleellisia tehtäviä. Irtisanomisten kommunikointi vaatii yrityksen johtoportaalta tarkkaa suunnittelua, jotta irtisanomisten negatiiviset vaikutukset voidaan minimoida. Smeltzerin ja Zenerin (2004) sekä Marekin, Setterbergin ja O'Rourken (2003) tutkimukset esittelivät puitteet irtisanomisten viestintään. Näiden puitteiden avulla yritykset pyrkivät minimoimaan irtisanomisten negatiivisia vaikutuksia henkilöstöön ja yrityksen julkikuvaan.

Tutkielman materiaali koostui videopeliyritysten irtisanomistiedotteista, jotka on julkaistu vuosina 2023–2024. Tiedotteiden tuli olla julkisesti saatavilla kyseisten yritysten omilla verkkosivuilla, minkä vuoksi sosiaalisessa mediassa tai medioille jaettuja tiedotteita ei otettu mukaan tutkimukseen. Tutkimuksessa ei myöskään huomioitu lehdistötiedotteita, joissa ilmoitettiin yhtiön sulkemisesta. Näiden kriteerien perusteella tutkimuksen aineistoksi

valikoitui kuusi irtisanomistiedotetta kuudelta eri yhtiöltä: Electronic Arts (EA), CD Projekt Red, BioWare, Riot Games, Sony Interactive Entertainment (SIE) ja Epic Games. Yhtiöistä kolme on pörssiyhtiöitä, kaksi tytäryhtiöitä ja yksi yksityisyritys. Yhtiöiden pääkonttorit sijaitsevat pääosin Yhdysvalloissa, poikkeuksena CD Projekt Red, jonka pääkonttori on Puolassa. Tiedotteiden pituudet vaihtelivat 415 sanasta 971 sanaan. Suurin osa tiedotteista noudattaa selkeää kappalejakoja, lukuun ottamatta SIE:n tiedotetta, joka koostuu useista muutaman virkkeen kappaleista. Riot Games ja BioWare hyödynsivät irtisanomistiedotteissaan alaotsikoita, joiden avulla kappaleiden aihealueet esitellään.

Tutkielma toteutettiin lähilukumetodilla, jossa tekstin luennassa ja analyysissä keskityttiin retorisiin keinoihin. Lähilukumetodissa tarkasteltiin eetoksen, päätöksen ja logoksen esiintymistä tiedotteiden sisällössä. Analyysissä lähilukumetodilla havaitut huomiot avataan ja esitellään. Tutkimuksessa hyödynnettiin aiempiin tutkimuksiin ja kirjallisuuteen perustuvaa materiaalia retorisista tekniikoista ja niiden ilmenemisestä yritysviestinnässä. Analyysissä käytettävä terminologia suostuttelevista tekniikoista on otettu Higginsin ja Walkerin (2012) sekä Hoffmanin ja Fordin (2009) tutkimuksista ja mukautettu sopivaksi tähän tutkimukseen. Tämä terminologia tukee analyysissä eri retoriikan lajien tunnistamiseen teksteistä ja niiden käyttötarkoitusten avaamiseen.

Analyysi osoitti, että tutkituissa irtisanomistiedotteissa käytettiin kaikkia kolmea Aristoteleen retorista lajia. Paatos ilmenee tunteellisena kielenä, kuten vahvoina adjektiiveina sekä katumuksen ja kiitollisuuden ilmaisemisenä. Näitä keinoja hyödynnetään irtisanomisten vaikutuksen lieventämiseksi. Logos esiintyy tiedotteissa järkevinä argumentteina, joilla perustellaan irtisanomisia sekä yritysten toimenpiteitä niiden suhteen. Numeraalista dataa on vain vähän, mikä voi johtua siitä, että yritykset eivät halua paljastaa tarkkoja lukuja julkisuuteen tai että ne ovat jo saatavilla muista lähteistä. Eetos rakentaa luottamusta yritykseen ja kirjoittajaan, jotka kommunikoivat, järjestävät ja huolehtivat irtisanomisista. Peliteollisuuden lehdistötiedotteet sisältävät mainintoja luovista ja teknologisista saavutuksista, kuten lippulaivatuotteista, yhteisön sitouttamisstrategioista ja tulevista hankkeista. Näiden avulla yritykset pyrkivät luomaan kuluttajissa tunnesiteitä tuotteisiinsa. Tiedotteissa korostetaan myös yritysten sitoutumista laadun ylläpitämiseen sekä luvataan, ettei tuotteiden laatu heikkene irtisanomisten seurauksena. Osassa tiedotteissa kirjoittajat mainitsevat erilaisia tukitoimia, joita yritykset tarjoavat irtisanotuille työntekijöille. Näihin sisältyy eropaketit ja tukipalvelut uuden työpaikan etsinnässä.

Analyysi osoitti, että lehdistötiedotteet hyödynsivät kaikkia kolmea Aristoteleen retorista lajia, mutta niiden käyttö vaihteli sen mukaan, miten tiedotteet lähestyivät irtisanomisista. Tutkimus jakaa lehdistötiedotteet kolmeen kategoriaan rakenteellisten ja retoristen valintojen perusteella. *Maine edellä* -lähestymistavassa yritykset korostavat asemaansa teollisuudessa ja aikaisempia menestyksiään ennen kuin kirjoittaja mainitsee irtisanomisista. Tähän kategoriaan kuuluivat EA:n ja CD Projekt Redin irtisanomisilmoitukset. Näissä tiedotteissa kirjoittajat hyödyntävät mainettaan peliteollisuudessa ja aiempia saavutuksiaan, joiden avulla he rakentavat pohjan uskottavuudelleen. Kirjoittajat päättävät tiedotteet osoittamalla kiitollisuutta ja sympatiaa irtisanottuja työntekijöitä kohtaan.

Toisen kategorian lehdistötiedotteet hyödyntävät *muutos välttämättömyytenä* -lähestymistapaa, jossa irtisanomiset esitetään yrityksen uudistuksen välttämättömänä osana. BioWaren ja Riot Gamesin lehdistötiedotteet kuuluvat tähän kategoriaan. Nämä irtisanomisilmoitukset tarjoavat järkeenkäypiä selityksiä, kuten muutoksia markkinoilla tai tarpeen muuttaa projektien kohdistusta. Kirjoittajat päättävät tiedotteet keskittymällä tulevaisuuden tavoitteisiin ja innostamalla lukijoita.

Kolmannen kategorian tiedotteet käyttävät *suoraa ja dataohjattua* -lähestymistapaa, jossa irtisanomisista ilmoitetaan välittömästi ja esitetään konkreettisia esimerkkejä siitä, miten yritykset leikkaavat kuluja. Epic Gamesin ja SIE:n lehdistötiedotteet kuuluvat tähän kategoriaan. Näiden tiedotteiden tavoitteena on välittää selkeä ja yksiselitteinen viesti irtisanomisten välttämättömyydestä yrityksen taloudellisen tasapainotuksen ja tulevaisuuden kannalta.

Tutkimusta rajoittaa vähäinen määrä julkisesti saatavilla olevia irtisanomisista koskevia lehdistötiedotteita, jotka on julkaistu yritysten omilla verkkosivuilla. Sisäiset viestintämateriaalit, kolmansien osapuolten mediakatsaukset ja haastattelut, joilla saattaa olla erilaisia retorisia ominaisuuksia, jäivät tarkastelun ulkopuolelle. Lehdistötiedotteissa on myös mahdollisuus, että ne on kirjoittanut haamukirjoittaja tai useampi kirjoittaja, mikä voi vaikuttaa tekstissä ilmenevään suostuttelevaan kirjoittamiseen. Lähilukumetodologiassa on mahdollisuus materiaalin väärintulkintaan ja ylianalysointiin. Tulevaisuudessa tutkimuksissa voitaisiin tarkastella ja vertailla eri alueiden irtisanomistiedotteiden eroja. Lisäksi tutkimusta voisi laajentaa yritysviestintään sosiaalisessa mediassa sekä siihen, miten videopeliyritykset kommunikoivat eri sosiaalisen median alustoilla.

Pro gradu -tutkielma havainnollistaa, että videopeliyritykset suunnittelevat huolellisesti irtisanomisia käsittelevät lehdistötiedotteet ja käyttävät suostuttelevaa kieltä irtisanomisista viestiessään. Tasapainottamalla tunteisiin vetoavia perusteita rationaalisten argumenttien kanssa sekä hyödyntämällä uskottavuuttaan yritykset pyrkivät esittämään työvoiman vähentämisen strategisena toimenpiteenä kohti kestäväää ja innovatiivista tulevaisuutta. Tutkimus edistää suostuttelevan kielenkäytön ymmärtämistä yritysviestinnässä.