



How to improve the PlayStation® Network

According to me

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About me

I'm a young (22) gamer from The Netherlands. I enjoy gaming a lot, and I've always played my games on PlayStation-consoles (ever since *Metal Gear Solid*).

With the introduction of online gaming on consoles, I stopped using my PC for that. I'm happy I did, because I can play games with most of my friends now, instead of the one or two friends that also had a high-end PC like me, back in the days.

Unfortunately, I'm pretty dissapointed in some of the features (and the lack thereof) on the PlayStation 3-console.

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1 • Introduction

The reason I wrote this 'document' is because of the way the PlayStation® Network works, and the confusion it causes due to the different use of the built-in functionality available. For instance:

- The way game-invites work
- User messages
- PlayStation® Home

More on that later though. First I would like to address that Sony already did a great job providing current features (Trophies are a very nice addition). Also, the service is completely free. That's great!

That doesn't mean I would mind paying at all, if it would improve the quality, but this way there are far more players to play with. I have a job, so I can afford it. Others, younger than me or involved in a study would have to choose between a new game or a paid membership to play their games online.

Anyway, there are a few things that could be greatly improved or added to enhance the online experience! It all feels like an 'empty shell' right now. There is almost no community-feeling. Even the launch of PlayStation® Home didn't help.

2 • Functionality

The way game-invites work

There are several games where the player can invite a friend to join his online game or 'squad'. In some games, you can even join an existing game (In *Little Big Planet*, for instance). In other games, you can only invite, or be invited. Usually, this can only be done or seen when you're in the menu's, and not when you're playing the game (which is pretty annoying, because it could take a while before the invited user notices, and responds).

Some games use the existing function (which is implemented in the XMB), like *Soul Calibur IV* or *Battlefield: Bad Company*. Here, the player can invite a friend to the game in the game-menu through a message. The invited user will receive this message, and will need to go to into the menu's of the game, check his invites and accept it.

Personally, I think this should be done for EVERY game. Though the developers should always add the option to invite friends or accept invites in the main AND start-menu of the game. You'll get a notification in the top-corner when receiving a message, so it's pretty hard to miss this.

In *Resident Evil 5*, however, I noticed you can invite a friend through the XMB (by pressing Triangle when selecting a username in your Friends list) if you want to start-up a cooperative game.

This means that Sony actually DID create some sort of 'system' for this, and gave it a little thought, but developers don't know about it, or just don't care. Which is weird, because (if used correctly) it could be quite handy and a good system.

In some games you can't invite or join friends at all. You can only choose a 'quick match', or join some random game with random people (In *Crash Commando*, for instance). Obviously, this sucks.

So, Sony: Please enhance this existing feature and force developers to use it properly (or at least instruct them on how to do this). This will take away a lot of frustation and confusion! Thank you.

User messages

Another issue I'm having with the existing functionality is that of the user messages. First of all, I want to be able to send someone a voice-message. I have a keyboard, but even then it's much slower than just recording a short message with my headset and send it to and online (or offline) friend.

Secondly, if I'm alarmed about receiving a message in the top-right corner, it would be quite handy to read it right away (especially when playing a game), and immediately get directed to the message when pressing the PlayStation® button.

Also: How about a 'inbox' overview, next to the 'battery meter' and clock (which positions needs to be fixed, by the way, as they're overlapping right now)? I mean a little message-icon with the number of unread messages in your inbox next to it.

PlayStation®Home

In PlayStation® Home, users can create a 'Game session'. Friends (and strangers) can join this session (but only if they're in the same space). When everyone is ready, you can all jump into the game immediately and start the online match. Currently, not many games support this. In fact, I only know one that does: *WarHawk*. I'm sure feature titles will support this, too.

However, there is a problem with this. **All players need to be in PlayStation® Home for it to work!**

This is pretty unfortunate, since PlayStation® Home takes a while to boot. And when it's booted, you still need to invite friends to your space where you can (finally) launch a game... Which you could have already done directly in the game by sending everyone a message!

So, it's not very user-friendly this way. It's pretty weird anyway, launching software to launch another piece of software. My suggestion would be, to either give users the choice to boot up directly into Home (with full-XMB support, obviously) so that it saves time to start playing multiplayer-games and be able to voicechat with Friends, or to **include some Home-features into the XMB** (this would be even better).

For instance:

- Private HQ voicechat with multiple Friends AT ANY TIME. Even when playing different games, or browsing the internet. This is a feature that is highly requested already, but the development teams seems to ignore it. This functionality has been available for a very long time on 'competitive platforms' now, by the way. Also, the voicechat-quality can be pretty bad in some games (*Call of Duty: World of War*, for example), so this would be a very welcome feature for friends that like to play games together often)
- Game-sessions that are created by friends in Home should be visible (and joinable) in the XMB at all times. That way, users aren't required to boot up Home, just to join (or even create) a game with friends. If you're talking 'next-gen', **this is it.**



3 • PlayStation® Home

PlayStation® Home looks great and I'm sure there will be new content soon enough (because it's pretty boring right now), but there are a few problems with some of the functions.

For instance:

- Why is there a 'Call friend' option in Home, but NOT in the XMB? It doesn't even work correctly, and you have to hold the R2-Button to talk., which is annoying.
- There are **virtual waiting lines**.. What's up with that?
- The voicechat has been disabled for public spaces. This was one of Home's greatest strenghts in terms of socializing!
- When creating a 'Game Session', you can't invite Friends to the session. You have to invite them to the space first, or even into Home. This takes TOO LONG.

Please, Sony, fix these problems. The whole Game Session and in-game Private Chat features should be available in both Home and the XMB, and work together at any time (like I described in the previous part).

4 • User profiles / Friends list

The PlayStation® Network Friends list is great as it is. I'm glad it's incorporated properly in most games right now (I hope that, one day, Konami will patch Metal Gear Online to use this as well, instead of their current, custom system).

There are a few functions I would like to see in the future, though:

- Categorize your Friends (I have 99 friends right now, and it can be pretty hard to find someone fast). It would be great to assign users to a certain group (Work / School / Clan / Forums etc). You can do this already with games and demo's on your hard disk and with your video's and music.
- Last game played
- Browse the Friendlist of one of your Friends
- Longer 'biography' field
- Gender field
- Profiles and messages should be linked to a website, so you can read and reply your messages if you're away from your PlayStation
- The option to 'report bad behaviour'
- Vote on a player (and show his/her 'reputation' in grades on the profile)
- Add more avatars and/or sell premium ones in the Store
- Let users create and use their own avatars at the PlayStation.com-website

And, one last time, as I addressed earlier:

- Private voicechat with multiple friends in High Quality, regardless of which game you're playing
- Create a Game Session within the XMB that's linked with PlayStation® Home
- Add a new 'button' to 'Friends list' where players can see existing Game Sessions, so they can be joined
- Ability to invite friends to a Game Session that has been set-up in either PlayStation® Home or the XMB

5 • Community feedback

After posting the rough, early version of this document at several forums, I received a lot of e-mail (also because several Dutch and English gaming-websites such as PS3-Sense.nl, PS3hype.nl and N4G.com mentioned this document in their news-section) and even more feedback from users all over the world.

This is the list so far:

- Option to lock user-accounts with a password
- Provide Non-US PlayStation Stores with a seperate 'Demo' section
- Include a calender for big (local and international) events in the XMB
- Include a personal calender in the XMB which can be shared with Friends (clan-matches, parties, etc)
- Mandatory support for in-game custom music. Some games support it while others don't.
- Another great addition would be the ability to place links from your bookmarks into your messages.
- Extended profiles for users (more fields, more info, games played, most played, etc)
- Auto synchronize trophies
- Try to speed up the loading times on profiles
- Play a sound when receiving a message
- Separate notifications of receiving a message and whenever a user signs in or out
- Spice up the notifications or make this theme-dependent
- More statuses (Appear Offline etc)
- Show more information when highlighting a Friend in the XMB (without clicking), such as 'Trophy level'
- Information in the upper-right corner of the XMB screen giving information such as Unread messages, number of Friends online, personal Trophy-level, etc.
- **Sony should give Caemgen a job, he seems to know what we all want**
- Just kidding, ofcourse. (Though someone actually said that)

There's a lot more, but I will translate and add those later. For now: Please sign the petition (found at <http://www.petitiononline.com/psn2009>) and keep posting your idea's and keep spreading the word and this document). Thanks a lot and let's hope this will help.

Not only would all the above features greatly enhance the PlayStation® Network-experience. Thank you, Sony, and everyone else for your attention.

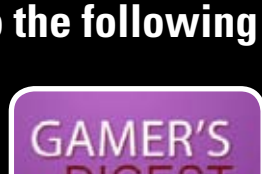
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Caemgen

Thanks to the following websites:



PS3-Sense.nl



GamersDigest.net



PS3hype.nl