

Dear Carcassonne-Fans, customers and community,

we decided to address an open letter to you, in order to clarify several topics which came up in the last time. Feel free to share it.



### **Community & customers**

First, we want to thank all of you for your vital interest on Carcassonne and your engagement in the community. We hope that we could satisfy the vast amount of our customers, but we also know, that there where some who where quite unhappy or even aroused. We gave our best in the last months and did nothing else than proceeding nearly 6000 orders and answering thousands of service requests. This is no excuse, but it is an explanation that there is always a small percentage of cases which can go wrong. But also that is no excuse for not constantly working to become better.

### **New shop & service**

The switch to the new shop is naturally a hot topic and it brings several topics with it. We decided to set up a new shop system to be able to fulfill the requirements of a modern online shop and to advance our possibilities. The old shop was just a plugin of the webspace-software of the "Hans im Glück Verlag" and this set us boundaries which prevented us from advancement. So we had to set up a whole new system with it's own software and webspace. Unfortunately, we were not able to export the customer data in a proper file format and import them in the new system. That simple outrage was the reason that you had to register again. Belief us, we where more upset than you.

Another reason for the system change was the possibility to offer you a shopping in english. Which was one of the most desired concerns of our international customers. Of course, we calculated with more customers and work, but we underestimated the rapid escalation of the service requests. On a global scale, there is another mentality of online shopping. Everything has to be very fast and answers should be there within one day. The delivery within a few days is expected. We are trying to improve our work here, but still can not compete with big systems like Amazon. Especially if we want to treat everyone fair.

Our target now is to constantly optimize our service in a way which is both, efficient and customized. To realize that, we'll develop our informations on the website as well. Because many questions could be answered by the customer himself within seconds, if he or she reads the provided information on the website instead of writing an email (where the answer could take days).

### **Processes & products**

Another topic is managing the balancing act between individual wishes and economical calculation. Since the vast amount of our orders is rather small, we have to optimize our processes to keep the whole business model working. All single special treatments for a low-priced order, need to be backed up by about 20 other orders to compensate the human resources needed.

Of course, that should not mean that we're not willing to fulfill special wishes. Especially for long-term customers like most of the community. But we have to sum up the mass of orders to a mostly automatically running processes.

There is also a trade-off between the desire for some products and our possibility to produce them. For sure we know, how hot a new print of “Die Belagerer” or “Die Tunnel” would be for the community. But we just can't let turn on the machines to reproduce a few hundreds of Tableaus. To make the calculation worthwhile, we have to reproduce at least thousands of them. And we can't be sure that a reprint of rarities is attractive enough for the critical mass. We're sorry, but naturally we have to think also economically to keep the complete brand Carcassonne alive.

Though we think of ways to give you what you want :), you can be anxious... But please be patient! We'll publish news via our newsletter and website, requesting by email is futile.

## **Spare parts & rarities**

This leads to the next topic, our spare part service. As the name says, it is a service to replace lost or broken single tiles. There are ten-thousands of different tiles in millions of sold games, so you can imagine how hard it is to handle that in a way which satisfies all hypothetical needs. Since years we got a lot of compliments, that we care so much, even when it's just a single tile. Economically, the spare part service is a minus deal for us, since the effort is bigger than the profit. But we want to offer long-term support for our customers, because we see this as a part of our games. We built them to last (mechanically and physically), but due to a natural product, this is hard to keep up for all the time.

In fact, no single tile is produced separately. Every single game or expansion is designed and produced as a whole in one product. The separate production of every tile is simply not possible due to economical reasons (see above). So what we do is opening new games and salvage them. We just have one big shelf with a few editions of all our games and take the needed tiles out of them. It's obvious that this procedure is not able to deliver huge amounts of tiles, complete sets or even rarities. And a precise stock management of every tile is also impossible. It's all about a handful of regular tiles, which are hopefully left, so we don't have to open a new game because of a single tile.

Unfortunately we have serious problems with the “misuse” of the service. People try to order whole expansions, the half of a whole game, or rarities which where never been seen since years. Every order of this type, means a slightly annoying effort of cancelation the order, refunding the payment, informing the customer (who mostly writes back and has another question) and so on. But due to the nearly infinite possibilities, we have to keep the ordering options for spare parts open, since the effort to create a single article for every single tile would occupy us for years. As you know, Carcassonne is an always changing product.

In the last weeks, one mistake of us was exemplary. We're talking about “Die Kornkreise”. We tried to improve the clearness of the availability of Carcassonne spare parts by using the awesome list of the Carcassonne Forum and marked everything we don't have anymore. “Unfortunately” we had some single “Kornkreise” left and we didn't cross them out. Oh, we regretted that... Because you can imagine what was happening after this backdoor went public. That we're under constant observation and that, as soon as something interesting is going online, the whole Carcassonne world is going crazy, is a blessing and a curse. As some even try to “hide” their order between other random products because they guess that it's not really designated, we have to ask ourselves if this is a basis we can work on. On the other hand we are very thankful for those who write us if they think they found a mistake/backdoor and not try to misuse that. Thank

you very much!

Anyway, we tried to proceed as much orders we could, but some missed out unfortunately.

## Payment & PayPal

In the old shop, we offered two payment possibilities, simple bank transfer and PayPal. In the new shop we also offer SofortBanking, but this is only working in some european countries. We get asked often, why we don't offer the payment by credit card. At first, we only want to send out already paid orders, since the effort of running after unpaid bills would be to much. And secondly, we don't want to support a strained credit-based economy. But there is the possibility to pay via PayPal with credit card, so if there is no other way (even if bank transfer is always possible for everyone), you can use this backdoor.

In the beginning of the new shop, we had several problems with the PayPal-plugin. That's a bit tricky, since the PayPal form and the DHL form have different requirements. So we had to harmonize the requirements of PayPal and DHL in our form, which was a hell of an act. After working for weeks on the payment and address forms to make them suitable for european, asian or american address formats too, we thought that it should work now worldwide. But with every new update of PayPal, there might be a new compatibility problem to tackle.

In the past, we offered the option to sent your PayPal-payment via email, in case that PayPal doesn't work correctly. But since the system change, we're not longer clicking through the PayPal mails manually. *That means, that we need a second email to [service@cundco.de](mailto:service@cundco.de), which is not from PayPal, to register the payment.* Otherwise, we simply don't know about and we can't click through hundreds of mails every day just to look if there might be one irregular payment. That's why we missed some payments in the past. Please: Never send any payments in any way without being sure that this is designated. Otherwise we can't feel responsible, sorry! So please spread the message and follow that in the future, thanks!

## Delivery costs & shipping time

This is a topic where we've to admit that we're a bit tired of. It's quite simple: If you're ordering online, there are shipping costs incurred. If you don't want to pay shipping costs, you just can't order online. And no, there is no way to circumvent them, since we've to pay for them too. And we're not earning money with that. Our shipping costs are simply the costs of DHL for business clients, rounded up a bit to cover the expenses for the packaging. Cheaper is impossible... If you know a cheaper provider with the same capabilities of DHL, please let us know. And please understand that we can't repack or rearrange your orders by a special treatment to save a few Euros shipping costs for the customer. Since we can be sure, that this extra effort costs us more than the saving for the customer would be.

It's a quite simple calculation. If you don't pay shipment costs, we would have to increase the price of the products, or we have to close down the shop. Believe us, no one here is getting rich of the 4€ you pay for shipping or of the margin on our products...

Also the "quick add on" of something to an existing order is not as easy as it sounds. First, we have to search for the order within the packaging and dispatch process. Second, we have to compile a second invoice manually and have to rearrange our accounting (we're legally bound to do that, even if it's just one cent!). Third, we have to contact the customer again to conclude the extra-payment properly. Forth, we've to

repack the order. And finally, we've to keep our eyes open for the extra payment within the next days.

As you can imagine, the saving for the customer is almost always lower than the extra effort for us. So please think twice before you complete your order, thanks! Unpaid orders expire without consequences. So as long as you haven't paid for it, you can ignore a wrong order and set up a new one (we delete unpaid orders after about 3 months).

The shipping time is another important topic. Somehow some customers don't take our stated delivery times seriously. When it says 10 to 25 workdays, does that actually mean that it could take up to 25 workdays. That does not mean, that we don't try to be faster, and mostly we are, but it could be that we need nearly the whole time. So please, consider the stated shipping times before you're asking where your order has gone.

## **In general**

We always aim for a friendly relationship with our customers and in 95% we're successful with that since most of you are simply loveable. Maybe we're not the fastest, but at least we try to be the nicest!

But even our thread of patience has boundaries. For example: If anybody is getting verbally abusive and rants at us even when it's not our fault, we have to end up the customer relationship. Especially when those affected didn't follow the regular ordering process, didn't pay the full invoice amount, didn't recognize the stated delivery time, and in spite of it all makes us appear as the guilty ones.

As an online shop, we offer the products presented on our website, for the conditions presented on the website, with the payment options presented on our website. If this whole offer is not correlating with your ideas, please feel free to not order...

We know that not all is perfect and especially our response time has to improve, we're working on that. Also we are always open for new ideas and improving our system, so constructive critics are always welcome!

Please feel free to discuss that and get back to us with new ideas.

Last but not least, we want to thank everyone who did that already in the past and helped us to develop the world of boardgames (and especially Carcassonne) together!

Thanks and best regards,  
your Carcassonne-Team,  
Christiane, Moritz, Andreas and Till