

North American Amusements, Inc.

North American Amusements (NAA) is run out of a warehouse-office building on the outskirts of Bakersfield, California. It's been there since about 1974 or so; the company employs about ten or so people, mostly in the warehouse. The company owner is listed as 'Maggie Rogan,' but nobody's seen her for decades. But the taxes and utilities get paid on time, so nobody fusses much. Besides, in some ways working for NAA is a dream job.

Why? What does NAA do, precisely? Well, it's weird: it apparently has long-term contracts to fulfill video game contests and promotions. Remember those old giveaways, where if you got a high score or something you could send a photo to a particular address and they'd send you a T-shirt, or some other reward? Yeah, all those contests are actually still active. If you meet the criteria, your letter will get forwarded to NAA and they'll fulfill it. Simple as that; but people actually have to meet the criteria, and they can't email or even fax the submission in. NAA doesn't even have a web page or email account. It's all strictly analog.

And how does NAA make money on this? Nobody at the company knows; but it's definitely not just a money-laundering front for the mob, either. Money isn't exactly rolling in, as the company consistently makes just enough from these 'contracts' to make payroll and expenses, with a little extra left over to pay Ms. Rogan's salary (which hasn't increased in thirty-four years). There is definitely something weird going on with NAA, but as far as anybody can tell it's neither immoral-weird nor illegal-weird, so why worry about it? A job's a job.

One note, though: NAA does keep a record of the people that send in entries for promotions that should have ended decades ago. Oddly comprehensive ones, at that. It would take a team of researchers several weeks to go through the files and discover that roughly two percent of the people that use NAA's services once eventually go out and enter all the old video game promotional challenges they can find -- and that everybody in that two percent tends to disappear about a year or so after they start running up all those high scores. Not that there's any evidence that NAA had anything to do with that, mind you. Neither is it indicative of foul play, really. The people involved just sort of wind up their affairs, quit their jobs, and fall off of the grid.

Which is, again, weird but not illegal. And nobody at NAA has ever really noticed that this is happening, either. Nor would they much care: to repeat, a job's a job.

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