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[What's up with the Gaming Industry]

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It's important to understand the sheer size of the gaming industry. Within 50 years the industry has grown from nothing, into a 165 billion-dollar behemoth. For context the American music and film industry are worth roughly half that, combined. In one recent instance Meta, formerly Facebook acquired the video game developer Oculus for over 3 billion dollars. Mobile games like Pokémon Go consistently make over 1 billion dollars in annual revenue. Gaming company Roblox became public on March 10th 2021, by March 11th 2021, the following day, it had a market cap of 37 billion dollars. With growth this excessive, and so much money on the line, comes immense stressors to the developers who create these games. These stressors if left unaddressed can have a huge impact on the health of the average developer, can lead to a degradation in working environment and subsequently a degradation in the end product that the consumer purchases. In the following, we will take a look at what these stressors are, and more importantly the effect they have on the staff who make them, and the knock-on effects that result from working in such a lucrative industry.

[History]

The gaming industry had its humble beginnings in the Brookhaven National Laboratory through the work of William Higinbotham. Higinbotham was tasked with creating an exhibit which would better capture the attention of visitors. With the help of technician Robert Dvorak the two created a small TV which had a knob, the knob could be used to adjust the angle of a digital ball which would be sent across a virtual net. Tennis for Two or as it would later

become known Pong, was a hit. What Higinbotham could not predict, however, was the rapid proliferation of video games and the capitalization on their success by large companies. Atari Nintendo Microsoft Sony among other all started to pile on more and more money into the creation of larger and larger games. And they were successful. Many of these games generated huge amounts of revenue for the companies, and their shareholders. But this financial gain often came at a cost for those who actually built the games. Unhealthy businesses practices like keeping employees stuck at work with no overtime, colloquially referred to as crunch, became commonplace. Mental health of employees took a backseat to financial gains. Not coincidentally the companies with the most egregious examples of crunch also produced some of the most flawed games. In one such example, publisher CD Projekt's hit Cyberpunk was mired in controversy when it launched in such a way that it was, for many people, unplayable. And given that many of these copies were purchased digitally, meaning there was no physical copy, Individuals who had purchased the game were now out 60 dollars or more. Yet the publish backlash resulted in very little, fundamentally because those in charge of the company had already made their money. And at its core that is the problem, gaming companies have created a system in which they can market a game in a particular way, produce a flawed or outright broken product, and suffer very little consequence.

[Media]

The media is in no small part, responsible for the mismarketing and rampant corruption within the industry. In an industry so reliant on initial sales or opening week sales, the attention generated by the media can single handedly determine what is successful and what isn't. Unfortunately, the marketing these products often receive is consistently less than truthful. Moreover, the media has consistently attempted to tie deviant behavior, especially in teens, to gaming. Grand Theft Auto had this media attention, talking about the violence within the game, and how it "changes" or "corrupts" the youths minds to shoot people and other violent or promiscuous acts. Fox news is the one of the main news networks who talked about GTA as if it was an incredibly negative force and was really

just a scapegoat for the terrible parenting that parents had done for their kids and that they already had certain thoughts. If a kid committed a crime and mentioned GTA, an automatic assumption was that GTA is the sole cause and nothing else. Video games for me and many others, including many who go on to work for the gaming industry, are a way of leaving the real world and entering a virtual world which helps relax and allows for an easy way to create social networks with people whom we may have never interacted with had it not been for gaming. I believe from my own experiences that video games are an easy outing for violence and give it a bad name. The effects of the blaming and company mishaps greatly affect employee retention and being able to bring in the best talent.

[Employees]

Employees are the people that create the world of which we play in or watch. The worlds that help us escape reality for a few hours or minutes. These people are the people that we, the consumers should thank. The companies are just a way for them to earn a living and continue doing what they want others to feel. There are a few problems with this though. The first one is as much as we, the consumers want the games to be thought thorough and cared for with passion. The employees have the hard task of doing what the company wants them to do, killing the passion for the forgers of these games. The other reason is simply the time constraints on the projects that they make. Indie developers on the other hand have time galore until they mention the game and due date that they believe the game will be done. For the employees of these bigger companies, it doesn't matter. The company decides causing the employees to have to crunch the work and release either a great game or a not so great game, it really depends on the company. The effects that we feel are the bugs and unpolished nature of the game and the crunching to finish and put out the game. The employee's retention and knowledge of the news in companies also have an effect on how well a game is made, if there are not many people working then a project has to be delayed and pushed back. Talking about employees, Ubisoft has been hiring certain people with certain backgrounds. "However, the publisher reportedly still actively employs several individuals involved in allegations of misconduct."(Hughes, 8) The employment of em-

employees with misconduct isn't helping Ubisoft, a French company, as it's pushing away the talent towards working for the company. As for Activision-Blizzard, there was a walkout that occurred on Nov 16, 2021. "Activision Blizzard employees staged a walkout following the report. They have also signed a petition with over 700 signatures and counting demanding Kotick be removed."(Fenlon,5). As employees who make up 90 percent of the workforce from designers to developers, they have a big say in what goes on, conduct wise as long as the workforce and the public are aware of the misconducts that go on in the workplace. Ubisoft is also guilty of adding male protagonists because they are under the assumption that women don't sell well, an example of this is Assassin's Creed Origins where the main protagonist was to be female but was later told to make the protagonist a male and SquareEnix, another gaming company released Tomb Raider with a female protagonist, Lara Croft which out sold Assassin's Creed Origins .This is extremely sad personally but this is the reality of the Video game industry and other industries as well. A kick in the gut but an awakened sense of knowledge to be aware of the harassment, cheating, workplace environment, video game quality, video game advertisement, and so much more.

[Conclusion]

Games and the video game industry aren't perfect, but it helps a great many of us get through tough times. We should be grateful for what we have and criticize what we love as we only want quality, workplace friendliness, and more .What we want, what I want are games that mean something and aren't just cash grabs, something that connects us and the employees, and that allows the media to criticize games to be better and not redo history from not finishing games to company management for the employees and higher ups. We care for the enjoyment of the games that we love, that I love and yes, we may complain about missing features that were promised but as long as it's made in a positive work environment and the employees enjoy the process from the good, bad, and ugly and are proud of the product that was created.

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