Waiting for it to record.

Very good. Thank you for joining

us, Steve. Really appreciate it.

I know you've got value. Your

time is very valuable.

No problem. I will just

start if Stevie can introduce

yourself and your role.

What you do?

Certainly so my name is Steven

Spiller. You can just call me

Steve. I work as a senior

software engineer in the Xbox or

get Microsoft. I work in a

little team is called. Let's not

so little anymore, but it's

called ATG, where the Advanced

Technology Group. And our role

in the organization is to help

game developers make the best

use of the platform of Xbox.

And then specifically, I work in

networking and multiplayer

systems. So. So

yeah, I've titles are having

trouble or they need advice or

they are behind this severely

behind and they can't get their

stuff to work on our platform.

Our team is the one that helps

them out and save the day.

Exactly on the. It's not as

interesting on the networking

multiplayer side, but the on the

graphics side. Those are the

guys that really help titles

tune on our platform so they'll

be able to take.

Basically traces the games

running, evaluate them, and

offer back tips that can help

them run faster so they'll get

games to run at least in the

previous generation. You know

all the way at 1080P instead of

only 900P. Things like that.

So really our goal is to make

all the titles that run on

Xbox the best they can be on

Xbox. I think that was our

motto at one time.

OK, now, well, I think

that answers the first

question of please tell

us about your artwork.

Can you tell us a little bit

about the industry that you're

working? So. I mean,

as being at Microsoft, I've done

a lot of things in a lot of

different areas, but most

recently we can just stay with

video games industry so the Xbox

stuff is what I've been working

on since 2013.

So the last seven years.

And mostly as a.

Is what Microsoft provides

platforms and services for

game developers.

And see I mean, it is a fairly

large industry, right? You've

got billions of dollars and

millions of millions of gamers

across the across the world. And

that's what we're trying to do.

We're trying to make things

better and easier for gamers

across the entire.

I don't know panacea of the

world. Good way of saying that,

but we want to make everybody.

Everybody's like he's here.

Is there any? I'm sorry, is what

other kinds of work do you have

to do in your role?

So in my role, I'll do things

like answer simple questions on

it. We have a.

Let's see that developer forum

that specific for Xbox Partners.

And so if they have issues,

that's one of the first places

they'll go, so I'll do a little

time answering those, and those

can be from really simple

questions like is this supposed

to work like this too? Hey,

we're getting a crash in this

very strange situation. Can you

help us figure that out? And so

I will investigate issues that

have been reported by external

developers. I work directly with

the platform team so the people

that actually, the ones that

wrote all the code.

Like I work with them to get

things figured out and resolve

bugs, find gaps in our our

solutions. I'm also developed

samples and demonstrate best

practices for using the platform

and our services. So like if you

want to know how to do

matchmaking, multiplayer

matchmaking through Xbox Live,

we have specific examples and

lots of documentation that I put

together to help with that. And

then of course if people still

have issues they can come

straight to us.

Because we do work straight not

just from forums. We will also

engage via email lot more on

teams lately over the phone,

video conferencing, but will

also go straight to.

And sit on site with developers

to help them get issues resolved

or to help them get their game

working on Xbox is.

And I've I've done that several

times. Which is it's kind of

fun. It's very busy though.

We also deliver content for what

used to be in person

conferences. I don't know. We

had to cancel the last few and

turn them into digital only and

I don't know what the future

holds as far as those go, but we

have several annual conferences.

Directed around Xbox developers

in gaming and we provide

educational. Training and.

However, there you know Doug,

discussion sessions and Whatnot

where people actually come out

and and listen to us talk, which

is just kind of fun.

I think that covers almost

everything I do right now.

Think that also covers the

different people that you

interact with in your job,

wouldn't it?

Yes, so I mean I do a lot of

different things as you could

tell right? And those have

different people I work with, so

when we're developing new

samples we want them to have a

consistent look and feel. So we

actually have designers, graphic

designers that help us design

the UI flows and figure out what

the scenarios that we want to

show. Program managers who

actually are the we call them

the butt on the line. So the

people that actually own

features that are responsible

for making sure that they're

status distract correctly that

they're doing the right thing.

All that work other software

developers obviously, and then

we have another special type of

person in the Xbox Org that we

call developer account managers

and these are the people that

actually own the relationship

with the different publishers

and Whatnot. So we have one

person that owns Electronic Arts

and so when Electronic Arts has

any sort of problems, they need

to do something they want to ask

about future plans. Anything

related to this? They talked

their damn and then their damn

will be the one that often

Contacts us with specific

issues. Or other problems they

might be having, or if they just

want advice on things, runs the

gamut. And then those roles are

internal people. Then of course

externals, which I think falls

more under your clients, yeah?

Alright um.

You can you tell us about

your interactions with other

IT professionals.

I wasn't quite sure what you

mean by this, so I mean I have.

There's five people I might

immediate team or my peers, and

we all basically work on the

same thing. Then we roll up.

There's a bunch of teams like

mine that take on the different

areas of Xbox. So you add audio

graphics. Ours is networking.

Systems and CPU and things like

that, but then of course you

have the whole platform side of

things where the guys that

actually write the OS they write

the special Xbox layers on top

of things and we interact with

them quite often. So you

wouldn't have much interactions

with other club with the clients

directly or investors, I would

say. So most of the work

I do is direct clients.

So either through a forum,

through email, through teams.

You know, up and up and up to on

site visits. Yeah.

Yeah, but some of that would be

facilitated through their

clients DM as well. Yeah, so the

the DMS will will set up what we

call an engagement. So if

there's a real problem we need

to set aside time to actually.

It's going to take more than a

day or so to look at this.

They'll set up what's called an

engagement, and then, depending

on the level of that and then

other factors like, where are

they located physically?

Travel restrictions, things

like that. So if there's a

developer that's just down the

street and there are some that

are like that, we will just go

there 'cause it's easier.

Other times, yeah, we can do

things over the phone and over

email and that that actually

works out fairly well and it's

nice 'cause it has a paper trail

so we can go back and reference

this stuff again. So anytime we

go and we solve problems, we

figure something out. We have

this big knowledge base.

It's really a OneNote now. We

stuck all this information and

so we can go back and search for

it again. Sometimes the easiest

tools are the best tools.

Think it So what would you find

that you spend the most time on

in your role at would be the

networking side of things or

more solving client issues?

That is almost like a sine wave,

right? We will go from where we

are doing nothing but working

with customers and right now is

one of those times we have the

new launch of the console coming

up in a month and we have a ton

of titles that are all trying to

certify they're trying to get

their stuff updated to the new

platform work so there's a lot

of people all working in with

new things all at the same time,

so we're quite busy.

Answering questions and helping

people figure out that how

things are supposed to work.

These days they were already

started about that new Xbox. I

know it's great, isn't it? And

then on the other side of that,

so you'll have these big lulls

where people just they've become

familiar with the platforms and

the systems. They don't have

issues as much anymore where

there's just not a lot of work

going on. 'cause you know it is

somewhat cyclical as to when

software or dog software

specifically, but games are

released. During those times we

get to work on what we think of

is more forward looking items,

so we will have incubation

projects for new tools, new

ideas, new services, as well as

being able to do work where

we're building up new samples

new. I'm trying to think new

middleware projects. So one

thing that we don't offer a lot

of his middleware and by that I

mean things like the unity and

unreal engine's. A lot of

developers go to those because

it it's pre cat has a lot of

stuff so we work with epic and

unity to have Xbox platform

support built in for everybody

and so sometimes we will do

things like that. In fact, just

recently one of my colleagues

and I finished adding a new

platform piece that's called

play fat party on Xbox which is

a pre canned voice, an

networking solution an now

that's something that you can

choose to use if you use.

In real you gonna say Yep, I

wanna use that piece. You check

the box and basically it just

automatically starts using it

'cause it's built into their

engine. So we do some of that

work too and that's a lot of

fun, right? That's when you're

spending more time coding then

troubleshooting and other times

it's more troubleshooting coding

since it's actually one of the

things I like. It comes up

later. I think a lot of us would

like to spend more time coding

than dealing with some of the

clients. Yeah, there, it's it's

really hard. I mean, I've worked

in a lot of different types of

groups around Microsoft and no

matter what, there is never a

job where you're just spending

all your time writing code.

There's just too many other

things that have to be done as

part of the process of shipping

software that you can't get away

from. What aspects of your work

would you find most challenging?

So what I find personally most

challenging often is.

Trying to understand each

different developers actual

needs so a lot of times they'll

come and say Hey I'm trying to

do this and it's not working

right. Can you tell me what the

problem is? And well, yes, I

could tell you specifically why

that isn't working, but this

seems like it's a symptom of a

larger issue, right? You may be

doing something at a more meta

level. That's incorrect as far

as the pattern that you should

follow. So we really need to

spend the time or you know to

understand what the goal is.

What are they trying to achieve

and what limitations they have

so that we can then find the

right way to solve that problem

for them or to help them solve

the problem. And then of course

you know things sometimes that

works out really well and

sometimes you go on and on and

being a global product sometimes

is challenging just with the

translations. So some things we

have where I'm saying.

Trying to say like when I work

with the Japanese developer, we

have an intermediary that

translates back and forth for us

so well like all type of

response, they'll go in and

translate it. The other person

will then type their response.

That'll get translated back and

it's kind of interesting, but

you can lose a lot easier. That

looks a bit in translation, so

yeah, it does make it take

longer, and sometimes you just

you don't. It doesn't come out

in translation exactly. You do

lose what it is. I had one on

from like, oh, I thought I saw

that they were asking for, but

then they came back and asked.

Yes, it came back a slightly

different way. Like oh OK, I

guess they meant this other

thing and so that can be a

challenge. Um? But Secondly, the

with the complexity of all the

systems and how they have to

work together like you wouldn't

believe how many things are

involved from you. Sit on your

Xbox sending an invite to one of

your friends to play a game and

for them to receive it and join

and be able to play. There are

many many steps and different

systems that all the things flow

through. Sometimes it is really

hard to find a root cause,

right? You'll say, Oh, I have

this problem. It's it's showing

up. Because of this, the user

won't sign in correctly, but

it's not actually assigning

problem, but it actually turns

out that that user is part of

this title group that has this

special properties set that only

works in this other situation,

right? And it takes 510 people

sometimes on an email thread

just to figure out what the

what's supposed to happen, what

is happening and how we can fix

it. I'm glad that showed up. And

to be fair a lot of times fixing

it means telling the title

developer that they were doing

something wrong, so it's not

always our fault, but I usually

take that. Angle first that I

take the assumption that it's

something that our stuff is

doing wrong and then let people

discover that it's not

necessarily the case. I think

the end users will just blame

you guys anyway, wouldn't I?

Yeah yeah, sometimes it's really

hard to read Twitter comments

because the lack of actual

understanding is frustrating

when you read some of the things

I say. Yeah.

Finally, can you show finally

for this group of questions? Can

you share an example of your

work? The best captures the

essence of the IT industry or

your role they suppose.

Yes, So what is the essence I've

when I thought about it, I came

up with the definition that was

it's basically utilizing

technology to accomplish tasks

or to get work done. And if I go

by that I would say that when we

were developing our samples and

it sound well I didn't really

giving you the scope of what

samples are. Samples do range

from like one code file that

just does something really

simple to a full game. We have a

full game. That example is a

sample for a bunch of different

things. Which is a lot of fun to

work on. So by doing that and

having those out there, when we

developed them, we developed in

this that they would pass our

own certifications that they

follow all our own best

practices so that it's a working

example of the right way to do

it. And nice thing about doing

that is that a lot of developers

will just take that code

directly and they'll make it fit

in their engine so we know then

with when they take that they're

taking code that we've developed

and tested and we know will pass

certification and they're just

using it. So it's it's kind of

win win and I think that's

actually one of those

synergistic things where you

gain more out of the end

results. Again, with the effort

that was put into it initially.

It also makes support easier for

it as well. I'm sorry you said

again, will also make support

easy for it as well if they're

using your examples. So yes,

yeah, in fact, that's one of my

favourites. Goto is hey, I'm

trying to use chat and my chat

doesn't work in this situation

like well. Can you load the

sample and see if the sample has

the same problem right? The

samples the same problem then?

We're probably looking at

something had changed or broken

the platform and we can

investigate that way if it works

in the sample then we can narrow

it down to OK. Well, it must be

something in the way you're

calling the code. Let's focus on

that work and in so yes it does.

It does help a lot.

I'm going to leave the last few

questions for Mattie to answer

up to ask and go from there.

Matt, Are you ready?

Hi, I'm just for the sake of

simplicity when it comes to

audio, I'll just ask the next

few questions which came from

one from each of us. So Daniel

wanted to know do you work from

home at all and if so do you

prefer it to working in the

office? Or if not, would you

like to work from home at least

some days? Yes, so current

situations aside, I had been

working about 5050 between home

and office. And I found that to

be a really good balance for me.

'cause I do enjoy the comfort

and convenience of being at

home, right? I can just get up.

I have everything around me.

It's it's simple, but there's

times when I'm working with

people directly or we're trying

to troubleshoot issues or I need

more equipment than I have

rights at work. I have a stack

of Xbox Dev kits that can

utilized in many different ways

to do things at home. I only

have two and it's.

You know I can't do as many

things and it's more difficult,

more time consuming to do

certain things, but I do like to

work from home and I will keep

when we do openoffice backup.

Stick to our 5050 style.

That's that's a surprising

answer, because I guess we might

have thought you would have

worked mainly in the office

before covid. But yeah, that

does sound like a lovely

balance. Um, so Adam wanted to

know what aspect of your work do

you find most enjoyable and why?

The things I enjoy the most is

when I provide a solution or an

answer to somebody and they come

back with oh thank you this

works. I've been working this

forever and I could beat my head

over and you solve my problem.

Thank you so much, right? So

when I help people solve

problems. That's just that's my

favorite thing. That's what I

enjoy the end up getting the

most enjoyment out of. I mean,

there's personal satisfaction

with doing your own projects,

and these things like that, but

when you, when somebody

physically tells you hey, you

solve my problem and helped me,

I really like that. Yeah, that

must be a lovely feeling and I

think we can relate when we're

able to help someone out. And I

also really enjoy the fact that

my job is so eclectic at times

that I'm not in the same rut of

doing the same things.

Each each task each problems a

new challenge, almost, so it's

it keeps it interesting.

So you like the variability?

Oh Uh, so my question was, what

advice would you give to someone

who is just beginning to study

or work in the IT industry?

So it's gone a long way for me

is to find areas that you're

really interested in and then.

Kind of saturate yourself

with that.

And really, the biggest the

biggest thing you can do to help

yourself is to do it hands on.

So if there's if you think that

you know configuring and running

server farms is going to be fun.

Go out to Azure or someplace

where you can get free VM space

for tinkering and do it. Do it

over and over again. Try

different things, break it

because you will break it.

Figure out what you did wrong.

Basically. Now give yourself a

sandbox to play in because that

immersion is what, at least for

me. Makes everything else come

together more easily.

Sixense Oh yeah, so um practiced

I just study.

Right yes. Anne Shannon wanted

to know, do you find it hard

keeping skills slash learning

up-to-date? So there's a That's

a yes or no for me since we are

providing we is Xbox, Microsoft

provide new services and new

technologies all the time. It's

just kind of part of my job to

learn and know that is that are

being developed and has we're

supporting them and helping

other people figure out. How do

we use them. But I don't have

alot of time to invest in skills

outside of my job right now. So

if I decided I wanted to learn

something that's unrelated to my

job, I would really have to

spend most of my private time to

do it and. It's just I mean, if

it's something you really love

then great, but it's harder to

invest in something that you

don't know will pay off when

it's taking up that much of your

time. In my situation so it can

be hard, but it can also.

You know, if you put yourself in

the right position, they didn't

just come along with the

territory. Do you find that's a

result of. The release date

coming up and covered or is is

that always the way with your

job over the past seven years?

Ah.

It's it's been more

lately, obviously.

It's the way I do things, like

when I find something that I'm

interested in and I want to do

it. I'm just going to do it

right now. That's why I choose

to spend my free time on if that

happens to be learning new

technology, then that's that

works out. In that case alot of

times though, I tend to want to

go back and. Do things that I

would find more relaxing I

guess, so doing more retro

things, going back and playing

on the old Apple that ers 80s

old game console programming.

You know something simplistic.

It doesn't have to go anywhere.

It may or may not help you in

the in what you're currently

doing, but it's it does still

help you. Or if it helps you

bet. Yeah, you keep using your

your skills fresh. I guess the

more you do different things,

the easier it is to switch

between things. And, Um, George

wanted to know what do you think

are the most important skills

and attributes for a job like

this? I'm sorry that means, like

my job specifically, then we're

looking at having strong

troubleshooting skills, good

knowledge of relevant

technologies, so most games are

written in C++. If you don't

know C++ very well, you'll

probably have a hard time

understanding why certain things

do certain things because you're

not feeling with what side

effects are or how memory is

treated and what not. Equally,

if you're not familiar with

rest. APIs over the web.

You could easily make a lot

of mistakes.

So basically, uh, patients

and. The dedication to be able

to complete tasks. That's one of

the hardest things I find

between myself and a lot of my

programmer friends is we all

have a million side projects

that never get done.

If you can actually sit down and

make yourself go through the

process of doing everything to

completeness, that just makes it

makes it easier because you've

practiced it and your life will

be better anyway, because you

won't have things coming back to

haunt you as much.

So you'd say dedication and.

A good understanding of.

The skills that they the job

requires initially and are

going. And patient was another

good one, sometimes it's.

It's really hard. You'll and one

of my colleagues was having this

issue today where he just

couldn't get a problem that

somebody reported to reproduce

even with their own code. And

he's like I just don't know what

to do anymore. I just don't. I'm

stuck. Like, Well, let's just

keep going through it and you

just kind of keep trucking and

eventually things pop up or you

figure something out. But if you

put it aside or you.

Yeah, you kind of give up on it

then you obviously can't do that

too much when you're getting

paid for it, but.

Anne helps overall, yeah, and

Sam wanted to know what new,

what new skills do you think

will be in demand in the

industry in five years?

Oh well, the big future

investments these days are

around artificial intelligence,

machine learning and big data

processing. In games, especially

machine learning, and not until

just for games, as in like

gameplay, but systems that are

in used to make games. So I mean

a game is really about moving

and manipulating large chunks of

data over and over and over

again. So if you can have a

computer that can use a machine

learning Type, 2 minute can look

and evaluate. Hey, I seem to be

loading these chunks from this

specific place on this interval

in this mode, so I'm going to

self optimize this. An prefetch

things that I think are going to

come up and by simply doing that

you've all of a sudden increased

your load times for your game

and for other things. As an

example, AI would be more along

the lines of if you having

smarter. Systems to you

in the. Player interaction

systems. So the computer is

doing more and the players doing

this or the creators are doing

this. It's if you think about it

as when you're developing the

game you you know there's a

certain certain way you go about

doing things and you try to

optimize for what you think are

going to be. The most common

scenarios, but you don't really

know what those are going to be,

and even if you do find the most

common scenarios, what if it's

only 60% of your users and the

other 40% are having a less than

perfect experience using

something like Emil?

The software itself could make

the determination and

dynamically pick the best

optimizations for you, instead

of having to statically choose

ones that you hope are the right

ones ahead of time.

That's great. I think that was

all the questions we had.

Um, did we want to ask any

follow up questions to those or

we all happy with bash?

I think that was really

informative. So much for

that, yeah? We really appreciate

your time and I'm not sure how

long we've been recording now,

but you've just come home from

work and put in the extra effort

for us, so we really appreciate

it. Thanks Rob.

I love to help. Like I said, I

volunteer at my local high

school and help the kids there

with programming classes. Great,

that's fantastic. Well, I guess

we won't talk about take up

anymore of your time and just

hope you have a lovely day.

And I have a nice relaxing,

lovely night. Anything you want

to ask again, or for any reason,

whatever Adam can get ahold of

me. Yeah, if you want to feel

free. It's been great getting to

know you and learning about your

work. Steve, thank you so much.

Thank you. Thanks you too.

See ya.

It's

frozen.

Thanks.

Yeah, it's alright.

The guy from Xbox should give us

some good marks. Oh yeah, yeah,

we'll put him to put him to

shame. Obviously hopeless like

the recording. I'll just Shannon

just sent a message. I'll ask

him if he wants to Join Now.

Did you wanna stop the

the meeting recording? Yeah.