

Biography of a Software Engineer:

Todd Howard

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Early Life

Todd Howard as a person and business person is quite the controversial figure occupying a heated space in the world of video games and I'd dare to say increasingly mass media as a whole. Todd Howard as a software engineer, however, is an interesting story of early entry and following your passions to make it in and in many ways define the industry.

Born in the Lower Macungie Township of the U.S. State of Pennsylvania in 1969 (or 1970) his early life would be a small town one. An early interest in computers and computing, especially in the realm of gaming, would see him as what one could call an early adopter of gaming as a whole and as such he would also delve somewhat deeper into the industry as a whole taking inspiration from the companies, developers and that of the games themselves like Wizardry and Ultima III: Exodus both providing many takeaways that one would see in The Elder Scrolls (TES).

He would, in 1989, graduate of Emmaus High School in Emmaus, Pennsylvania and in 1993, he would go on to graduate from the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, with a major in finance/business, deeming and saying of such that "it seemed like the easiest path to get through college" despite his present desire to create video games.

On a visit to Bethesda Softwork's offices (the company he would later go on to direct) during his senior year of college, he would ply his application for a job but would be turned down and told to complete his studies first as a prerequisite. Yet after graduating on applying once more he would be again turned down due to a lack of openings. Disheartened he would not give up on his goal of working in the video game industry and instead would start "working for a smaller game company in Yorktown, Virginia, which enabled him to visit several conventions like the Consumer Electronics Show," where he would still approach his dream company from time to time with the goal of getting poached. That said goal would eventually see fruition and in 1994 he would be taken up as a producer.

Work

His first game development credit for Bethesda was as producer and designer of The Terminator: Future Shock (1995), which would be followed by work as a designer on SkyNET and The Elder Scrolls II: Daggerfall, both released in 1996. He would quickly rise to the rank of project leader on The Elder Scrolls Adventures: Redguard which would be released in 1998. Impressed by his work he would once again be appointed project lead and designer on a core TES game such being the critically

acclaimed Morrowind which would go on to win multiple game of the year awards. Promoted yet again, he would function as Executive Producer on TES IV: Oblivion and would follow up such with another Executive Producer and Game Director role with Fallout 3. Howard would return to The Elder Scrolls series to lead the development as the creative director of its fifth instalment, The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim. He would subsequently direct Fallout 4, released in November 2015, and Fallout 76, a multiplayer instalment in the series that attracted much criticism and would be a body blow to his high-highs of longterm praise souring many against Bethesda the company and him personally as a whole.

Impact

Todd's impact while not as reverberating throughout the software engineering industry and suite of practices and other more storied engineers would be and will be one that will certainly leave a legacy in his part of the industry both in terms of video game design and industry-customer relations. Taking the open-world genre to its highest of highs Todd would emphasise the "wonder of discovery" in the playing and consumption of his games, though deviating slightly from such with the also acclaimed Oblivion. His favourability towards modding and the establishment of aid towards modders would open up a section of software and graphics design towards loyal and capable hands who in past time would be much shut out from shaping their own, small yet fulfilling, visions.

"Howard has been a frequent speaker at industry events and conferences. He spoke to developers at the 2009 D.I.C.E. Summit, sharing his rules of game development. He returned as a keynote speaker at the 2012 D.I.C.E. Summit". Saying developers should ignore demographics and installed base, and follow their passions, and that "if install base really mattered, we'd all make board games, because there are a lot of tables".

This commitment towards user adventure and openness and his past work have rightfully earned him much acclaim and will rightfully see him remembered as one of the best video game designers of all time, in fact, being named amongst "Top 20 Most Influential People in Gaming over the Last 20 Years".