

Markus Persson

Markus Alexej Persson also known as Notch is a Swedish video game programmer and designer best known for creating the game Minecraft and starting the games company Mojang Studios off the back of the success minecraft received, he also created many smaller projects over the years for game jams like Ludum Dare.

Overview

Markus was born in 1978 and started programming at the very early age of 8 using his fathers personal computer, on which he produced his very first game, which like many popular games at the time was a simple text adventure game. In His early career he worked as a game programmer for King.Com, he left this job in 2009 to work at Jalbum during which time he worked to create Minecraft as a personal project eventually releasing it to be sold to the public. He moved from full-time at Jalbum to part-time as Minecraft sales grew and eventually quit his part-time job to work on Minecraft full time in June 2010, interestingly many of the original employees of Mojang that worked on Minecraft were also ex-Jalbum employees.

Minecraft was continuously worked on by Markus and his colleagues up until the Full 1.0 release in November of 2011 after which he transferred the authority of creative game development to Jens Bergensten and eventually Markus sold Minecraft and the company Mojang to Microsoft.

Early Life

As a child and teenager Markus was obsessed with lego and lived in a town surrounded by forest, both of which would influence his biggest creation Minecraft. At the age of 7 his father brought home a Commodore 128, Markus could not be kept away. Being an extremely curious kid he went as far as faking sickness to stay home and learn what makes the programs on this computer tick, in turn learning to code and creating his first game at the age of 8.

Ever since then Markus had been obsessed with learning to code and create, spending most of his teens at home in front of the computer. "I never really had the fun of exploring the world because I was sitting at home, learning programming."

Despite never finishing high school Markus had an exceptional ability to program, and his mother suggested taking an online programming course to build on his talents. This led to his first programming job at the age of 18 and after a few small time jobs he landed a job at a company that later became king.com where he met a dear friend with whom he started creating his own games.

Minecraft

When the duo started creating their own games which gained tractions their bosses were not happy at the small success of these games, which is why, with the vision of creating more games Markus left King to work at jalbum and began spending all of his free time creating games eventually quitting his job to work on Minecraft full time. Despite the game being nowhere near finished and the code in a dreadful state Markus pushed for the release to the public so people could get a hands on experience with what he had created, a simple, open world, survival game where creativity of the player was key as anything could be created with the right vision in the game. After the rushed release the game grew in popularity exponentially with about 400 copies being sold per day for about 6 dollars per download, this newfound success and popularity led Markus to start Mojang.

When minecraft was first released i was one of the many people to get onto the train of playing it, when multiplayer became available i spent most of my time outside of school playing the game and when i found about mods, that is when i really became interested in coding and the creative process of developing your own additions to the game through modding which really served as a gateway for me to get into computer science and eventually software engineering.

Mojang

In the second year after minecraft became available it was getting as many downloads a day as it got throughout its whole first year, Minecraft as well as Markus himself became extremely popular and minecraft became as much a community as it was a game. Markus was clear that he never intended to create a game which would require so much effort and upkeep, his passion was to create small projects and games. He stuck with minecraft however because of a sense of responsibility the game had over him, "I wouldn't want to do anything like 'Minecraft' again, where it's, like, an on-going thing, and there are customers I have to keep happy.". After selling minecraft to amazon he even said "If I ever accidentally make something that seems to gain traction, I'll probably abandon it immediately.".

Eventually Markus transferred creative authority of minecraft to one of his colleagues and after a long time of working with minecraft and for mojang he sold both Minecraft and Mojang to Microsoft in November 2014 for a 2.5 Billion Dollars

Personal Note

Markus is not considered an amazing software engineer as his code for minecraft was rushed and needed to be fixed and altered however his creative vision for a game where, back when the game was smaller, you needed to make your own fun was extremely influential on the Game Development area of Software Engineering. If you play games you know how many games are out there that follow

and build on minecrafts basic formula of -collect resources, craft tools and items, build structures-. Yes they add a lot but minecraft is a clear inspiration for many game oriented software engineers out there.

Minecraft Mods were my gateway into software engineering, with the games popularity there were many tutorials and youtube videos for me to watch and try while procrastinating doing my school work. It is where i learned the basics of java, not understanding it a slight bit but just following templates to make additions to the game. Eventually i learned how you make your own projects games and i learned about other more suitable languages which sparked my passion and i decided to pursue this passion by studying Computer Science and working on side projects.

Minecrafts Impact

I believe Markus' game had a huge impact on game development and in turn software engineering. Games before minecraft were largely based on instant gratification, but minecraft had no such thing, it had no exciting shooting action or gore, story, it had no end goal, the player was free to create their own end goal through the creative freedom minecraft gave them. Many games now, both indie and games from big companies follow this idea, a sandbox environment which is a base for a story where the player is free to choose how they go about doing most things.

Conclusion

Markus' work has inspired me and many others to delve into software engineering through how open the game is to modding, and the game itself caused massive changes in how the most popular games are designed.