

Biography and Impact of Gabe Newell

Biography

Gabe Logan “Gaben” Newell is an American computer programmer and businessman. He is best known as the co-founder of Valve Corporation, a video game development and digital distribution company.

Newell was born on November 3, 1962 in Colorado, U.S. After finishing high school, Newell attended Harvard University from 1980 until 1983, before dropping out to work for Microsoft [1]. Newell worked in Microsoft for thirteen years, serving as a producer of the Windows 1.01, Windows 1.02 and Windows 1.03 operating systems [2]. Newell and another Microsoft employee, Mike Harrington, left Microsoft in 1996 to form Valve L.L.C. in 1996 [3]. The two used their money to fund Valve through the development of the video game *Half-Life*, as well as the *GoldSrc* game engine.

While developing *Half-Life 2*, Newell spent several months working on the *Steam* project [4]. *Steam* is a video game digital distribution service platform for PC games. It is currently the largest digital distribution platform for PC games, estimated in 2013 to have 75% of the market space [5]. As of 2019, it has over a billion registered accounts and 90 million monthly active users.

In December 2010, *Forbes* named Newell as “A Name You Should Know”, mainly due to his work on Steam having partnerships with multiple major developers [6]. In March 2013, Newell was awarded the *BAFTA Fellowship* award for his work in the video games industry [7]. In 2017, *Forbes* listed Newell among the top 100 richest people in the United States, with an estimated net worth of \$5.5 billion [8]. As of 2019, his estimated net worth is roughly \$3.9 billion [9].

In the online gaming community, Newell is known as “Gaben”, which originally comes from his work email address [10].

In 2011, Newell stated that *Super Mario 64* and *Doom* were among some of his favourite games [11]. *Doom* convinced him that games were the future of entertainment, and *Super Mario 64* convinced him that video games are a form of art.

Impact and Influence

When I was younger, I played a lot of video games, and I mean a lot. It wasn't until I played Valve's *Portal 2* that I actually considered programming one as something to do. The game was unlike anything I'd ever played before, it was so unique. The story was great sure, but the actual gameplay was something else entirely. The graphics were cool, the gameplay was fun, but it was something about the physics of the game that really got me hooked. It got me interested in how a game worked under the hood, and how lines of writing could make a machine do something like this at all. I started programming a bit after, although what I could do was fairly limited. I tried making my own games, and while they could do simple things like move left or right, I was nowhere near Newell's level of programming games. However, that never deterred me, and while video game programming isn't exactly a focus of mine anymore, I still strive to create projects as unique and interesting as his. I honestly can't remember what I wanted to be when I grew up as a kid, but after getting into programming, my decision was made, and I guess I have Newell and his games to thank for that.

Newell also inspires me in another way, but not exactly because of his programming. If you've ever seen a picture of Newell, you can see he's kind of... not skinny? Fat, Newell is pretty fat. While this doesn't change my opinion of him, it does inspire me to take better care of my health. Unfortunately, the stereotypical computer programmer is either extremely overweight or extremely underweight. I don't want to be a stereo typical computer programmer; I want to be better. Newell might be content with the weight he's at, but if it was me, I wouldn't be. Because of this, I strive to take better care of my body, and not fall into the trap that most computer programmers do, that is spend way too much time in front of a computer screen and neglecting to take care of themselves.

Newell's stance on piracy is also something that I, and hopefully many others, should be inspired by.

"We think there is a fundamental misconception about piracy. Piracy is almost always a service problem and not a pricing problem," he said. "If a pirate offers a product anywhere in the world, 24 x 7, purchasable from the convenience of your personal computer, and the legal provider says the product is region-locked, will come to your country 3 months after the US release, and can only be purchased at a brick and mortar store, then the pirate's service is more valuable."

He's completely right. Why would anybody want to buy your product if you have to go through a million hoops to get it and be bound by a million restrictions? I take his stance to heart whenever I'm trying to program something for someone else. Would you rather pay a little for something and get it straight away, or waste hours or days scouring the internet trying to find it for free? I think a small price is worth paying to avoid the massive inconvenience. So again, Newell is 100% correct, and this

practise is something I'm going to consider every time I have to program something for someone else.

Sources

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