

Success and Innovation of Nintendo

Written by:
Karela Gilbert

English 1102, Section 2

Mr. Baber

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Innovation is the creation and introduction of new things or methods. Innovation is the life's blood of any industry. Without the creation of new, cutting-edge technology an industry cannot grow, it will become stagnant. The video game industry is a testament to this, with people getting bored of the current generation of consoles in a matter of five years. This brings way to the next generation that shows off improved graphical power and new ways to play games.

Nintendo has introduced something new to gaming every generation they have released a console. From the Nintendo Entertainment System to the Nintendo Wii, this company has laid the foundations for gaming as we know it today. Whether it be the D-Pad now seen on all kinds of remotes, defining the all the genres of video games we love, or the new motion sensor technology in the Wii remote, Nintendo has always strived to be one step ahead of the rest of the industry. This is why Nintendo is the most innovative company in gaming.

Starting from the beginning, Nintendo's original console, known as the NES (Nintendo Entertainment System) was released in 1985. It was created by Hiroshi Yamauchi and Masayuki Uemura with the goal of not only being better than the competition, but more affordable as well. Home consoles were brand new to the market (Nintendo Land). Games, before the existence of a home console, could only be played at arcades. The idea of being able to play video games in your living room, on your own television, was an innovative concept. However, not everyone was willing to pay for an expensive new console. Not to mention, video games weren't always a multi billion-dollar industry like they are today, and some reluctant buyers still considered them a novelty. So during the initial launch of the NES, it cost about 100 dollars, about half the cost of competing consoles, which made the Nintendo Entertainment System more accessible, and helped jump start the home console industry (Elston, Brett)

To start everything out, in 1984 there was a crash in the video game market due to a flood of poor quality video games being released for the Atari. Atari games were commonly being sold at 10%

off regular price due to the decline in quality, and Nintendo did not want their console to face a similar fate. Worried about the quality of games created by other developers, Nintendo created the Nintendo Seal of Quality. The Nintendo Seal of Quality was Nintendo's ways of ensuring that any third-party games released for the NES met their standards of quality, and of distinguishing their system from the current wave of mediocrity (Nintendo).

Another way Nintendo executives decided to distinguish the NES was by hiring artist Shigeru Miyamoto to design games. Miyamoto had previously made toys for Nintendo, but helped to distinguish Nintendo games by having characters and a narrative, which was missing from arcade games of the time. Miyamoto's games for NES were so successful at capturing people's imagination, that they are still creating games for newer generation consoles based on classic NES titles such as Mario, Zelda, Donkey Kong, and Metriod. Classic NES peripherals, such as the Zapper and PowerPad , were also so innovative they are still receiving next generation iterations in the form of the Wii controller and the Wii Fit respectively (MobyGames).

Nintendo had such a large influence on the videogame market that their major competition, the Sony Playstation, was actually a former Nintendo console. Sony originally wanted to avoid the videogame market, and felt that home game consoles were inferior technology. It wasn't until one of Sony's best engineers, Ken Kutaragi accepted a deal with Nintendo to produce a sound chip for the Super Nintendo Entertainment System (SNES), without the consent of Sony executives, that Sony had any involvement in videogames. In fact Sony executives were furious when they discovered Kutaragi's deal, but fortunately Kutaragi was a personal friend of Sony CEO Norio Ohga, and was able to keep his job.

Kutaragi eventually decided to start a new project with Nintendo to create a CD-Rom add-on for the SNES called "Super Disc Technology". However, the partnership between Sony and Nintendo did not last and in May of 1991, Nintendo cancelled their deal with Sony and decided to turn to Phillips

to produce the CD-Rom technology instead. Sony unsuccessfully sued Nintendo for the breach of contract. When Sony decided to transform the “Super Disc Technology” into its own console, Nintendo unsuccessfully tried to sue Sony on the basis that Nintendo owned some of the concepts from the system Sony was developing (Innovation Zen).

In December of 1994 Sony officially launched the Playstation in Japan. Since that time Sony has become a major competitor in the videogame market, and the Playstation has currently reached its third iteration and is still a major force in the videogame industry. Yet the technology would have never existed without the involvement of Nintendo. The success of Sony’s Playstation is a testament to Nintendo’s innovation (Innovation Zen)

Nintendo’s latest innovations have tried to break the wall between hardcore gamers and the rest of the world, tapping into what is being called the casual gaming market. The first product to attempt and succeed is the Nintendo DS. This product is a handheld gaming device that features two screens, one of which being a touch screen (NintendoLand). The touch screen allows a person to physically interact with the game by touching the screen with a finger or the stylus packaged with the DS. It also features a built in microphone. “The touch screen is great and will lead to more innovative games, as might the integrated mic (Morgan).”

Around the same time the DS was launched, Another console was beginning its rise to greatness. The idea for the Nintendo Wii arose in 2001, around the same time that the Nintendo GameCube was being released. According to an interview with Nintendo's game designer Shigeru Miyamoto, the concept involved focusing on a new form of player interaction. "The consensus was that power isn't everything for a console. Too many powerful consoles can't coexist. It's like having only ferocious dinosaurs. They might fight and hasten their own extinction.” (Nintendo) Because of this concept, it wasn't until 2003 that designers and engineers were hired to create the product.

Since its worldwide launch, the number of sales has been visibly higher than any competitors

worldwide. According to an article by the NPD group, “the Wii sold more units in North America than the Xbox 360 and the Playstation 3 combined in the first half of 2007.” This seems to be the first time since the release of the Super Nintendo Entertainment System (SNES) that a Nintendo system has led its generation in sales. Sure enough, the Wii was in short supply through the remainder of 2007. Even now, it is hard to get a hold of it. As of the fifth of January, 7.38 million Wii consoles have been sold in the United States alone.

“The most unique feature of the Wii would have to be the remote. It uses a combination of built-in accelerometers and infrared detection to sense its position in 3D space when pointed at the LEDs within the sensor bar. This design allows users to control the game using physical gestures as well as traditional button presses. The controller connects to the console using bluetooth and features rumble as well as an internal speaker.” (Nintendo Wii)

From the release of its first major console in 1985, Nintendo has done surprisingly well for itself. From the company's first hit seller of the Nintendo Entertainment System to the Super Nintendo Entertainment System and the Nintendo 64, sales and popularity ranged from 32 to 60 million sales of the three systems. The Nintendo GameCube was another console that was released, but was not as popular as Nintendo's previous releases. With the release of the Wii, Nintendo was brought to the top of the industry. By this time, not only the console was excellent, but the variety of games that were being produced was and still is phenomenal. With Nintendo's hand held products from the generic game boy all the way to the Nintendo Dual Screen, Nintendo had flourished, catering to an audience of all ages. The quality of the company is top-notch, relying on that rather than the quantity of software and hardware being produced from the company. Nintendo has finally taken its rightful place as king of the gaming industry, a spot in the top that hopefully Nintendo will not sway from for a while to come.

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