

“Construction Simulator” Video Game



Imagine you’ve finally finished a long day at work. You kick off your shoes, grab your dinner, turn on your TV and boot up...a construction simulator. Filled with excavators, cranes and more, the Construction Simulator series was originally created in 2011 by German game publisher Astragon Entertainment and software firm Weltenbauer and has since spawned several mobile iterations. Today, it has licensing agreements with recognizable American and German construction brands like Bobcat, CAT, Mack, Liebherr and Schwing Stetter, as well as a substantive fanbase.

Across platforms, which include PC and mobile, the franchise has achieved 30 million downloads and sales, according to Carsten Höh, PR & community manager for Astragon. September 20th, the series plans to release a new iteration, simply called “Construction Simulator,” which will feature a co-operative multiplayer mode, where players can work together toward a common goal, and maps spread across the U.S. and Europe. Weltenbauer, the game’s developer, brought on actual construction workers as consultants on the project. CEO René Nold discusses the game’s history, the influence of actual construction workers and what value the games have for players.

Tell me about the history of Construction Simulator. Where did it start?

NOLD: Weltenbauer was not originally set in a game development environment. We were doing more B2B jobs and also real time applications and simulation stuff, but not focused on games. In 2011, one of the Astragon [employees] got to know one of our Weltenbauer staff. Astragon came up with the idea of developing some kind of construction-related simulation game. So we started to implement the first installment, which was Construction Simulator 2012. It was for PC only and very small. But it had a bunch of vehicles, around 14, and 11 missions, which had to be played in a straight line. So not really an open world game.

Simulator games can have a pretty niche audience compared to games like first-person shooters. What do fans of the game enjoy?

NOLD: Simulation [games] are niche, but it’s a growing niche. Similar to Euro Truck Simulator and Farming Simulator, the Construction Simulator is also very calm gameplay. It’s not as fast, of course, as a first-person shooter or a racing game or something like that. It’s another kind of relaxation. You feel if you’re playing these games, it’s not an intense atmosphere, it’s calm and relaxed. If you are going to dig a huge hole with a huge excavator, it’s like you’re doing repetitive tasks with some planning, and you’re losing yourself in moving earth and putting away a lot of dirt into a truck, and then you’ll get into the truck and you drive around and unload the soil. That’s what’s fascinating about Euro Truck Simulator, you’re just going down the highway, or Farming Simulator, you’re just running up and down fields and stuff like that. So this is, I think, more about relaxation.



Do you ever get feedback from real-life construction workers?

NOLD: Yes, both before and after the release. We have, over the years, [consulted with construction workers], and they've been helpful with giving us guidance and consulting on how real life construction works and how machines work and how they feel. They also play-tested our equipment. Of course, you won't get an expert for every machine, but we tried to incorporate not only their feedback, but also the feedback of our players over the years. There are quite a number of professionals in our gamer community. So if they say "I'm driving the truck" 24 hours, seven days a week, then I'm pretty sure they know what, for example, the distance needed to stop a four-ton truck or a trailer is.

Do you get any feedback about players who are inspired to get into construction as a result of the game?

NOLD: I would say for sure that we have a range of players starting at six years old, and it goes up to 70-year-old players.



Actually, from the young ones, there is a huge number that are playing these games because they like the huge machines. We don't have handwork or manual work in the game, but when it comes to the machines, these are two of the first steps into something big like this.

It's like the digital equivalent of playing in the sandbox with a scale model of an excavator or something. If you're aged like, seven, eight years old or something like that you're still addicted to this construction topic.

With literacy in the topic itself, there's the possibility to bring that interest even further in Construction Simulator by trying different machines and equipment and vehicles. We have a lot of our equipment, especially the ones like excavators and cranes, with the two joysticks set up like on a game controller, or you can attach two joysticks to your PC and play with two joysticks and the controls can be mapped like in the real world, [like how] excavators are trained.

You're able to learn how these guys operate the real-world machines on your PC or on your console and how to operate an excavator, and which stick and which axis is turning the bucket, the first arm and second arm. You're getting a glimpse, like a peek or preview into how the job might be if you would do it in real life someday.

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