

Is Bethesda Game Studios Game Making Faltering?

By Michael Lane



Source: <https://www.gamerant.com> (Pete Hines talking to fans at E3 2015)

Bethesda Game Studios. When you hear this name, some people will more than likely remember of one of the following games: The Elder Scrolls Morrowind (TES III); The Elder Scrolls Oblivion (TES IV); Skyrim (TES V), Fallout 3; Fallout: New Vegas; and, Fallout 4. These games are universally praised for their rich story-driven worlds, letting gamers play hundreds of hours of tactical action, dive into intriguing plots, submerge themselves in ambience that is superb, and explore environments that are spectacular.

I first played TES V: Skyrim. My mother bought it for my father for Christmas in 2011, and being curious, I asked my dad if I could play the game, and after he said yes, I popped the disc into my Xbox 360. I was blown away by the content. I was amazed by how big the map was

and where and what I could do. Since then I have been a huge fan of BGS video games. I have played Fallout 1, Fallout 3, and Fallout: New Vegas, Fallout 4, and TES IV: Oblivion, and TES V: Skyrim.

Bethesda Game Studios (BGS) first franchise, The Elder Scrolls, allows you to explore the vast continent of Tamriel, where you can adventure into the wilderness and become whoever you want in this fantasy world. With five games in the series (Arena, Daggerfall, Morrowind, Oblivion, and Skyrim) and TES: Online allows you the player to explore a fantasy world rich with lore and meet very interesting characters along the way, such as Paarthunax or M'aiq the Liar. You can also become anything you want, from a stealthy assassin to a mage who has incredible magical skills.

In 2004, BGS acquired the rights to Fallout from its original developers, Interplay Entertainment. Fallout takes place in an alternate universe where technology did not evolve past the 1950's, and in 2077, a nuclear war breaks out between Communist China and the United States of America, enveloping the whole world in another Great War. Fallout 1, Fallout 2, Fallout 3, Fallout: New Vegas, Fallout 4, and Fallout 76 are set in various wastelands, from the west coast of California to Washington D.C. Again, the option to be who you want to be is yours. You can be a good person and help people survive in the wasteland, or you could be a complete psychopath and kill every single person in these wastelands.

In 2008, BGS released Fallout 3 to the public, receiving multiple awards and fantastic critical reception for its world, which took place in the Capital Wasteland of Washington D.C. Taking place in the year 2277, 36 years after the events of Fallout 2, you play as The Lone Wanderer as you explore the ruins of D.C. to search for your father, who mysteriously left your vault. The atmosphere of Fallout 3 was this lonely world where the soundtrack made you feel

alone in this never-ending wasteland. The character-leveling system is very unique, as it allows you to improve your skills by leveling-up and choosing new perks every time you level up. It is my favorite video game ever made, and I have played it five times. That should tell you how much flexibility or game mechanics is present. Today, the game is considered a classic.

In 2011, BGS released *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*. This is considered by many fans and critics to be the best *Elder Scrolls* in the franchise. The game was a massive success commercially for BGS, selling over 30 million copies by 2016 and making over \$1 billion dollars. Taking place in the province of *Skyrim* in the continent of *Tamriel*, the events in *Skyrim* take place 200 years after the events of the fourth game in the series, *Oblivion*. The player takes control of the *Dragonborn*, who has the ability to kill dragons and take the dragons' power from them by absorbing their souls. The player can then use these powers to unlock *Shouts*, which are powerful shouts that the player can use in combat.

In 2015, BGS released *Fallout 4*. Set in 2287, 10 years after the events of *Fallout 3*, you take control of the *Sole Survivor*, the only survivor of *Vault 111*, whose cryogenics failed and killed all of the vault residents, except for you the player. The *Sole Survivor* was alive before the *Great War* and entered the vault the day the bombs dropped. The game takes place in *The Commonwealth*, which is post-apocalyptic Boston.



Source: <https://www.windowscentral.com> (Image from Fallout 76 reveal at E3 2018)

BGS is considered by many to be one of the best developers and publishers of video games in the business. So how in the world did BGS manage to make the blunder that is Fallout 76? On May 10th, 2018, Fallout 76 was shown to the world. This was BGS's first attempt at the always online, open-world, massive-multiplayer market. Fallout 76 was released November 14th, 2018. Flash forward to January 2019. The game is not liked by a majority of the fan base, and critical reception is mixed. The game is constantly in a buggy state and has many glitches. Every time the game is updated, it is plagued with more bugs.

Fallout 76, which is a completely different genre, was acclaimed by BGS as being the same as previous Fallout games, with the ability to play solo and still provide much enjoyment. This is somewhat true. If I had anything positive to say about Fallout 76, it would be the soundtrack, which I believe captures the spirit of West Virginia perfectly. Another thing would be the variety of enemies in the game, and its map, which is very large, being four times bigger than Fallout 4's map, so it allows for hours of exploration. Other than those amazing features, the game is bland.

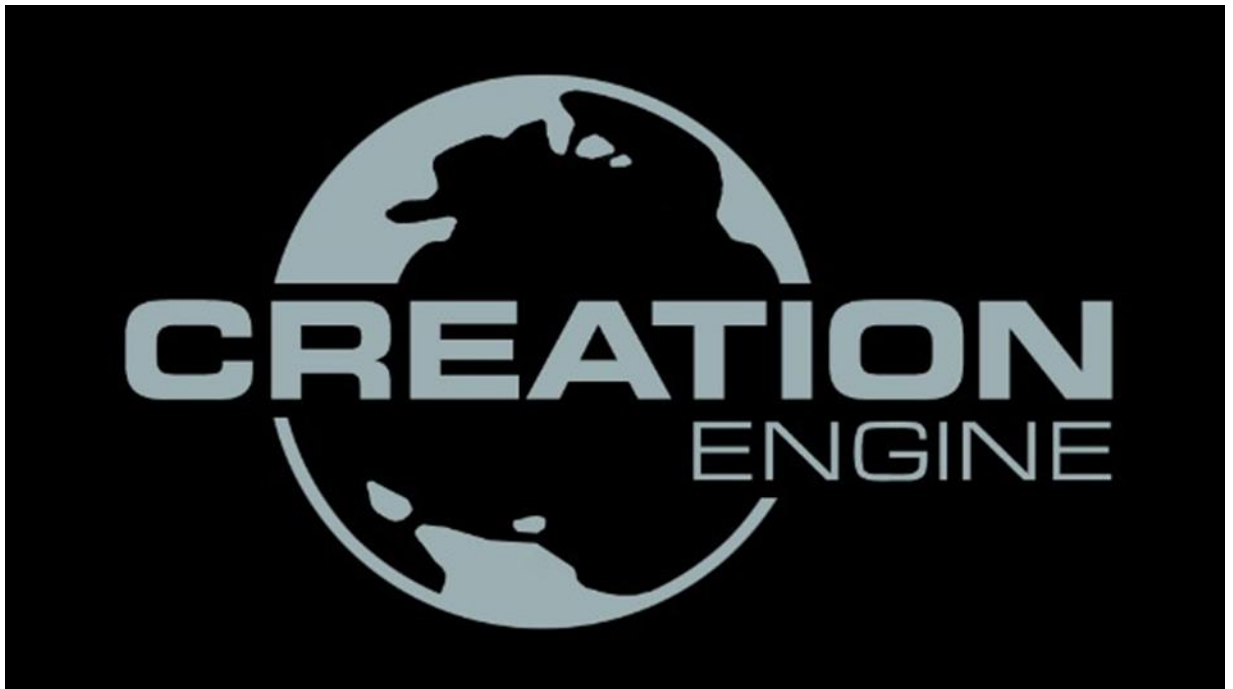
So how can BGS fix the train wreck that was Fallout 76? Let's just hope that the company has enough skill points in their Repair Skill or the Jury Rigging Perk. If the studio wants to rebuild fans' trust, they should create a new game engine, then shut down the servers for Fallout 76, and assess the current situation. While there are fans who love to play the game, BGS should announce that they plan to completely revamp and reimagine Fallout 76 to be rid of many issues and problems.

BGS should then focus on completely overhauling the game, going from a Massive-Multiplayer Online experience to a single-player experience. You are more than likely saying to yourself "Wouldn't that take time and resources to develop?" and you would be correct. However, if there is a studio that can do it, I am confident Bethesda Game Studios can get the job done. What they could do is allow Bethesda Game Studios Austin in Texas, the studio responsible for the product, to remake the game with supervision from series veterans.

By reimagining the game into a single-player experience, with a good story and interesting side-characters and companions, I am confident BGS can fulfill the promises they originally made. Fallout has been a single-player only game for decades now, and I believe the old adage "If it isn't broke don't fix it" applies here. However, what about Bethesda's other franchises? Last year at E3 2018 (Electronic Entertainment Expo), BGS announced that they were in the process of developing two new games, Starfield and The Elder Scrolls VI.

While another Elder Scrolls game was obvious, Starfield is the unknown. Bethesda has not released a new IP in over 20 years, so fans are ready. Before the release of Fallout 76, fans were excited for these two new games. After the release of Fallout 76, fans are now cautious, especially with the announcement that, after Fallout 76 was released, Bethesda will continue to use the same engine for both products.

BGS has used the Creation Engine since 2011, and by 2019, it is already outdated. If I could give Bethesda advice on how to avoid another Fallout 76 fiasco, I would suggest repeatedly to make a new engine, not redesign their current one. Bethesda has made a lot of money in the last decade from their multiple games. This has amounted to over \$1 billion dollars. That is surely more than enough money to make multiple games and a completely new engine.



Source: <https://wikipedia.com> (Logo for BGS Creation Engine)

For Bethesda to regain the trust in their fans, it will take a lot of work and sacrifice to develop a new game engine, and re-develop Fallout 76. However, I am confident that Bethesda Game Studios, a studio who has put so much passion into their past games, can learn from their mistakes and make a new, better experience for all players.

The grade I believe I deserve is a B+.