

E3 a chance to address gamers' questions

June 9 2013, by Derrik J. Lang



In a June 5, 2012 file photo attendees walk past Microsoft Xbox booth at Electronic Entertainment Expo 2012 in Los Angeles. At E3 this year about 46,000 attendees are expected to play, poke and prod new video games and gizmos from more than 200 exhibitors. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes, file)

What is the next generation of gaming? It's a question the video game industry hasn't quite figured out yet, but it's one it must confront at this week's Electronic Entertainment Expo, the much-hyped Los Angeles trade show where about 46,000 attendees are expected to play, poke and prod new video games and products from more than 200 exhibitors.

Possible answers have included better graphics, cloud computing, increased [social networking](#) capabilities, smarter [artificial intelligence](#), more [computing power](#) and new entertainment options. While the actual answer is likely a combination of all the above, it doesn't seem like next-generation console creators have been able to effectively communicate that idea.

The move from standard- to high-definition graphics, as well as the introduction of a simple-to-use gadget called the Wiimote, made the last transition between console generations easy to see—and feel. But it's been a tougher proposition this time for companies attempting to sell difficult-to-describe consoles to consumers more interested in mobile devices.

Nintendo already kicked off the next generation with a thud last November with the launch of the [Wii U](#), the successor to the popular Wii system featuring an innovative tablet-like controller yet graphics on par with Microsoft's [Xbox 360](#) and Sony's [PlayStation 3](#). Nintendo said it sold just 3.45 million units by the end of March, well below the company's expectations.



In a May 21, 2013, file photo Don Mattrick, president of interactive entertainment business for Microsoft Corp., speaks after unveiling the next-generation Xbox One entertainment and gaming console system in Redmond, Wash. With the world's attention, the Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles in June could also serve as the ultimate opportunity for Microsoft to address concerns over the connectivity and privacy of the new system. (AP Photo/Ted S. Warren, file)

[Sony Corp.](#) and [Microsoft Corp.](#) both plan to go into deeper detail at E3 about their forthcoming systems that were teased earlier this year. Sony called the PlayStation 4 a "supercharged PC," while Microsoft described

its Xbox One as an "all-in-one" entertainment solution for living rooms. The announcements of both consoles were met with mixed reactions.

"There's a lot of anxiety about the console transition," said Stephen Totilo, editor of the gaming blog Kotaku.com. "These transitions can flip a company's fortunes. Sony was up for two generations, and then they came in third place this last time. It's also difficult for the third-party publishers, who have to figure out where to allocate their resources."

The gaming industry is expected to focus more on games at its annual gathering this week at the Los Angeles Convention Center since each of the next-generation consoles have already been revealed. The technology and creativity on display on the E3 show floor could potentially shape what's to come in gaming over the next decade.

Among the titles that will be pushed at E3 are first-person shooter "Call of Duty: Ghosts"; stealth series reboot "Thief"; a motion-controlled rendition of a Disney classic, "Fantasia: Music Evolved"; Caped Crusader prequel "Batman: Arkham Origins"; shadowy action-adventure "Watch Dogs"; and new science-fiction game "Destiny." from the creators of "Halo."



In a Feb. 20, 2013, file photo Mark Cerny, lead system architect for the Sony Playstation 4 speaks during an event to announce the new video game console in New York. Sony Corp. plans to go into deeper detail at Electronic Entertainment Expo in June in Los Angeles about the system. (AP Photo/Frank Franklin II, file)

With the world's attention on E3, the event could also serve as the ultimate opportunity for Microsoft and Sony to address head on the concerns over connectivity and privacy issues with their new systems. Other questions that remain unanswered include just how much the PS4 and Xbox One will cost and exactly how the new systems will embrace previously played or used games.

In a note posted on Microsoft's site last Thursday, the company outlined many such plans. Microsoft, which intends to showcase 15 exclusive games at its Monday presentation, said the Xbox One must be connected to the Internet every 24 hours to operate, and there are specific

restrictions on how games could be shared with friends and family members.

Instead of a typical flashy E3 presentation, Nintendo is hosting demonstrations at its booth on the show floor, as well as previewing upcoming titles at more than 100 Best Buy stores in North America. The Japanese gaming giant will be showing off "Mario Kart" and "Super Smash Bros." installments for the Wii U, and they might unveil a new "Legend of Zelda" game.



In a June 5, 2012 file photo provided by Nintendo of America, Katsuya Eguchi, Producer of Software Development for Nintendo, shows off "Luigi's Ghost Mansion," an upcoming game for the new Wii U home console, during the

Nintendo All-Access Presentation at E3 2012 in Los Angeles. The Wii U, the successor to the popular Wii system has sold well below company expectations. (AP Photo/Nintendo of America, Vince Bucci, File)

"We are past the days where one game alone has the power to change the course of momentum for any given system," said Reggie Fils-Aime, president of Nintendo of America. "I think consumers need to look at an overall line-up and see three, maybe four games that they look at and say, 'These are exciting and will get me engaged with this platform.'"

There will likely be less games promoted at E3 than in previous years, a sign of the times as developers continue to focus on launching sure-fire franchises like "Call of Duty," "Halo" and "Assassin's Creed," which are capable of attracting consumers not only willing to buy new installments but also downloadable content and associated merchandise.

"The development costs and risks associated with into getting into developing games for the PS4 and the next Xbox is steep," said Tony Bartel, president of GameStop. "It is more movie-like in terms of making products for these systems. The barriers are high, but what it's leading to is phenomenal game-making, a concentration of talent that makes great games."

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