Amazon launches free engine for video games

February 10 2016, by Angel Gonzalez And Matt Day, The Seattle Times

Amazon Web Services is launching a free video game engine to enable studios to make sophisticated games and connect them to the cloud.

The move is the latest step by Amazon.com into the realm of video games, an industry revolutionized by the wide availability of broadband, cloud storage and open-source software.

Small studios can now produce and distribute runaway hits that in the past were exclusive to big publishers such as Electronic Arts, Sony and Microsoft.

By offering small studios Lumberyard, a free engine that helps craft artificial video game worlds, Seattle-based Amazon aims to connect the startup crowd to its AWS platform.

Online video game hosting is increasingly big business for Amazon and its competitors with revenue derived from renting computing power and data storage, and Amazon is betting that its own game tools will boost its presence in that market, said Patrick Walker, a vice president with EEDAR, a video game industry research group. "This could have a dramatic impact on the game development ecosystem." The move into video game engines puts Amazon in competition with leading engine makers Epic Games, builder of the Unreal engine, and Unity Technologies. Both companies develop those engines, in part, at studios in the Seattle area.

The Seattle area is also home to Valve, the software maker behind the

Source video game engine and the Steam game distribution platform, which Amazon's retail arm already competed with.

"By starting game projects with Amazon Lumberyard, developers are able to spend more of their time creating differentiated gameplay and building communities of fans, and less time on the undifferentiated heavy lifting of building game engine components and managing server infrastructure," Amazon said in a statement.

The effort is also part of Amazon's increasing interest and expertise in a key entertainment sector that provides content for the many media devices it sells, from tablets to set top boxes.

The company also has bought game enterprises and hired game developers. In a $1 billion deal in 2014, it bought Twitch Interactive, a site that lets gamers stream their game-playing. Lumberyard, which is available in beta for developers, has a feature that lets developers engage with fans on that service.

"Amazon wants to be more involved in the video game industry," said Colin Sebastian, an analyst with Robert W. Baird.

Amazon says Lumberyard will soon have mobile and virtual reality platforms. The company also announced a new service for running multi-player games on the cloud dubbed Amazon GameLift. That service will have a "small" per-player fee, the company said.

Amazon's move into video game tools is another example of the company's interest in advancing beyond just building Internet-based plumbing for developers, and toward creating more advanced building blocks for specific industries. "Building and operating the back end for a game is both increasingly important for success, and also increasingly challenging," said James Gwertzman, chief executive of PlayFab. The

Seattle startup builds infrastructure tools for game developers, services it hosts on Amazon Web Services.

"There's no reason developers should be building this sort of technology from scratch."

"What Amazon announced today is still very early days," he said. "We expect more from them over time."

©2016 The Seattle Times
Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Amazon launches free engine for video games (2016, February 10) retrieved 2 May 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2016-02-amazon-free-video-games.html