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DESCRIPTION: William (of Podcast 17) and Glenn (of Halflife2.net) interview Gabe Newell and Kutta Srinivasan of Valve Software. All main questions asked were submitted by the community.

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STEPHANIE (intro): You're listening to an exclusive interview with Gabe Newell, brought to you by Podcast 17. For complete shownotes and to check out Podcast 17's other interviews and shows, head to podcast17.com. Now sit back, relax, and enjoy the interview.

WILLIAM @ 00:29: Welcome to an exclusive interview brought to you by Podcast 17. Myself and Glenn (from Halflife2.net) are pleased to be interviewing Gabe Newell, founder and managing director of Valve Software. Welcome Gabe and thanks for taking time out of your busy schedule to talk with us.

GABE @ 00:44: Thanks for having me.

WILLIAM @ 00:46: And also with you is Kutto, I'm, I'm, don't know how to pronounce his last name but he'll be joining you shortly.

GABE @ 00:52: Yes, none of us know how to pronounce his last name, so we just call him Kutta, it's like Barracuda in terms of how you say it.

WILLIAM @ 01:00: And he's software developer over at Valve Software?

GABE @ 01:03: Yes.

WILLIAM @ 01:04: Very neat. Okay, so we've had over about 400 questions submitted to us over the past week and at the end of the interview we'll be giving away some Valve swag. Also, SteamContests.com was kind enough to give us some Eets keys to give away so we'll be doing that as well.

Before we begin the interview I'd like to say thank you to Modman for setting it up, he is certainly a dedicated listener of Podcast 17 and once again our thanks goes out to him.

So, let's get started. A lot of the questions, as you expect Gabe, re received were about the next installment of the Half-Life series and where it's going----almost 70% of all the questions submitted----so we've decided to get these out of the way first. So let's get started:

So question number 1: It's the feeling of the community that Valve has kept the next installment of Half-Life a secret. The decision from a developers point of view is obvious, but what are you feelings towards the franchise as a fan?

GABE @ 01:58: My feelings are "What the hell is Valve doing?" "Hurry up, what are you doing?" "Why won't you tell us what's going on?" "Where's Counter-Strike 2?"

WILLIAM @ 02:07: And as a developer what's the motivation behind delaying the next Half-Life game?

GABE @ 02:13: I don't think that our motivation is to delay the next Half-Life game. I think one of the things that's useful for people to, at least understand is: Whenever you are trying to figure out what we are doing, it's useful to know we have way too many things to do than people to do them. So we're always sorta measuring things in terms of trade-offs; so we look at how much time something will take versus how many of our customers it'll benefit. So for example on Linux, we obviously would like to have a Linux client and we'd like to have our games running on Linux, a lot of our--- I mean our servers run on Linux, so we've been supporting Linux since '98 in terms of having server support, but whenever we look at that we have to compare that with "Okay, well we can spend that time making the Mac version better, or the Windows version better, or the 360". Recently we started supporting the PS3, and for us that decision was mainly motivated by Sony's willingness to be more open than the console companies have traditionally been around being an internet client. And to us that seemed like something we should really get behind, that sorta tipped us over in terms of doing a PS3 version. But that's the thing that we're always faced with. It's not "What would we like to do?" it's "What five things would we give up in order to do the one thing we are able to do?". And that is the constant frustration we have is, there are only so many hours in the day, and we'd love to be doing all those things simultaneously.

Kutta's just joined me and he can explain how to pronounce his last name.

KUTTA @ 04:17: Hi guys. I go by Kutta. My actual first name is Ramanujan, my last name is Srinivasan so as you might imagine it's been helpful over the years to have a middle name that's much shorter than that. My folks are from South India and south Indians are known for having very, very long names with crazy consonant combinations like S and R.

WILLIAM @ 04:41: Kutta we know that everyone has many hats at Valve, but what's your primary hat over there?

KUTTA @ 04:48: I'm primarily a programmer. I joined Valve about 2 years ago and left Microsoft to come here. Since joining I've mostly worked on engine level technologies, so on Portal 2 I was one of the people doing the PlayStation 3 port early on and then merged in with the greater Portal 2 team to help ship the game on four different platforms.

GABE @ 05:12: Currently he's thinking a lot about mobile.

WILLIAM @ 05:14: Oh good, we have some questions about that coming up actually, but first: You've said previously Gabe that you've moved beyond the episodic model. As such there's two specific camps in the community: the "Episode Three" camp and the "Half-Life 3" camp. Which camp are you in? If any?

[He referred to it as Half-Life 2: Episode Three consistently throughout the entire interview.]

GABE @ 05:33: I'm in the "Entertainment as a Service" camp I guess, which just lets me dodge the issue totally----I always get in trouble because I always get my own quotes read back to me and I have no idea what I was thinking when I said the last thing. The latest thing I got bit on was the "no more single player games" and I spent two weeks explaining that I meant single player needed to be richer, not single player needed to be eliminated.----So I think the challenge to a game developer now is: how do you provide ongoing value to your customers? Your customers are not going to sit around and wait for a nugget of entertainment every couple of years; the irony of Half-life notwithstanding. You have to earn your customer's value every day. We talked to people over in Asia in the free-to-play world and they were essentially saying to us: "If you aren't updating every day, you aren't really serious about being in the games business". Which is a little bit of a stretch, but I think the thinking behind it is dead on which is: customers are fans of things on an ongoing basis and they need to be rewarded, or entertained, or however you want to put it on a regular basis and figuring out how to do that, how to work with the community to do that are really interesting challenges. The nice thing about Team Fortress 2 is it's given us the ability to do a bunch of experiments and try out a bunch of stuff. Some of which was a failure and some of which turned out to be extremely popular and a lot of what we've learned doing that got fed into Portal 2. And some of the things that we learned, that we thought we learned on TF2 turned out to work really well with Portal 2 and some of the things we thought we had learned turned out to not at all apply to Portal 2. So everything is sort of moving more and more in this direction of this ongoing, connected, community driven entertainment experience that we think is the key to video games going forward.

WILLIAM @ 07:58: And this is my last question, I promise, in regards to Half-Life and----

GABE @ 08:03: I will dodge it. I will dodge it as inelegantly as I've dodged your other questions.

WILLIAM @ 08:10: In 'The Final Hours of Portal 2' we saw that Valve go through development and brainstorming cycles. Care to comment on which one Valve is going through right now with

Half-life?

GABE @ 08:20: I'll just pass on that one, I don't know how to not answer that gracefully.

GLENN @ 08:29: Kind of picking on things on the Steam side: Can Steam truly be considered a social platform? What do you think Steam needs to do to catch up with mass social platforms, like Facebook for example?

GABE @ 08:43: I think that you have different notions of what your identity is and what sort of interactions you have with other people. In one extreme you have something like World of Warcraft, where you have a very clear structure so you can look at someone else and know a huge amount about them; you can tell their affiliation, you can tell how much time they spent into achieving that. And that's sort of one model of what your identity should be, that live's really narrowly within that kind of framework. Over on Facebook you have different things that people think are important about other people, there is minutia in World of Warcraft, there's minutia in Facebook, or Twitter. I think that in general, both for other game developers as well as ourselves as well as for customers, we need to be continuing to add more and more functionality. Because gaming at its heart is a social experience, whether it's you and your friends sitting on the couch playing split screen, or you and your friend going on a shared quest that spans multiple games. I think that the value of an entertainment experience increases to, I don't know if it's n squared or what the exact function is, but it does increase enormously with the amount of people you are sharing that experience with. I don't think anybody has any idea what the right answers are, I remember when AIM was supposed to be the perfect set of answers, or even Geni (just to date myself even further), Myspace was incredibly dominant. I think all those things including in the current generation, including Steam or Facebook, Twitter or whatever are all just very primitive steps towards a set of notions of what your digital identity, your affiliation, your status, what hierarchies you're part of, what economies your part of. I think we're very much at the beginning of understanding what that is. We put our sets of answers out and see how those work, and we watch what other interesting developers are doing as well to see how we can all do a better job of putting that out there.

KUTTA @ 11:18: I also think Facebook and Steam come at it from almost two different angles. When you think about social interaction in games: Platforms like Steam have 2, 4, 8, 16 people playing together at the same time in one long session and talking to each other directly, and interacting with each other directly. Other social platforms which have more users and a broader scope go with a more asynchronous approach, so social gaming there is more like "I left you a message" and "Oh by the way, that message is a free cow for this game" or something else. It's not as direct an interaction. There are two different definitions of the word social, one is me and my friends catching up over a game of Counter Strike and the other is me and my friends catching up by looking at each others cities or farms or whatever. And I think there is room for both, for both to grow.

GLENN @ 12:13: Feeding back into another thing which Valve I think has said is kind of primitive, or the whole industry is kind of primitive, is the mobile devices --- and that's something

you're working on Kutta. A few people have asked whether Steam will ever reach a mobile platform, or if we'll maybe perhaps get Steam Community features on the mobile platform?

GABE @ 12:36: Yea the first steps you'll see us taking are sort of just connecting that kind of Steam features will show up on mobile first, and then later on you will start to see us building games for mobile platforms. I think part of our problem is understanding how to take advantage of mobile in an interesting way. Just taking an existing board game and slapping it on a touch device, there is ~one billion companies doing that and it looks a little bit like the Atari--- I don't know what the logical equivalent of bulldozing cartridges under the dunes in the digital space, but we do seem to be heading that way a little bit. What is it about mobile devices that allows us to build entertainment experiences we couldn't otherwise. Obviously for the last 15+ years we've been seeing what the opportunities are for graphics fidelity and there were a bunch of bad mistakes and a bunch of interesting failures along the way, but now I think we all have a pretty good handle on what the opportunities are, that so many mobile games aren't taking advantage of the interesting and unique characteristics of the device. Is GPS an interesting thing to take care of or is it a gimmick that will fail? Is the ability to take photos an interesting opportunity or stupid? Does it turn out that photos are a part of it but it has to be motion video before it gets interesting? What kind of game is it that requires motion video but not pictures? Is overlaying gaming universe onto the real world the really sexy part? Is it the fact that your location matters in a gaming context the thing that really takes advantage of mobile.

The nice thing is we're at least starting to see well executed graphics on the mobile devices. Infinity Blade did a great job of showing---- I was impressed by Infinity Blade, it made me realize that these devices were more capable than I, in my mental model of, in terms of where we were, in terms of graphics performance on these devices, Infinity Blade sort of reset my sense of where we are. Most of the sort of innovative games I've tried in the mobile space I've tried have been, err, apologies for games----I mean it's like, the amazing thing of isn't what the game is, it's that I'm playing this on my airplane as opposed to I couldn't imagine playing this on my Xbox or I couldn't imagine doing this on my PC----but I see how the unique opportunities of mobile make this possible, so I do believe there are these opportunities and we're going to try to see if we can figure out some of those.

KUTTA @ 15:49: Mobile is kind of an interesting and somewhat loaded term. I do think it's worth, when thinking about mobile, breaking it up into a few different spaces. For starters the kind of entertainment you would want on your phone is different than what you want on a tablet, or a device with more surface area, or better interaction peripherals. When I think of the kinds of experiences I could have on my phone, and I think of traditional entertainment on the PC that Valve and other companies have spent a lot of time developing. I see a really good fit in tablet that I don't necessarily see in phone. When I see the phone though I see a device that I have at all times in my pocket, able to be pulled out and turned on in under five seconds, and I can use it for a few minutes and put it away. That is a very interesting characteristic of a phone that I don't think would translate as much to a tablet, PC, or an Xbox. In our case, right now we're looking at a bunch of different ways we can deliver a high quality, engaging experience to the user. I think in the context of mobile where we don't want to end up, would be in a place where

we will be delivering games that are strictly inferior to their PC or Xbox counterparts, or strictly inferior to their PS3 or Mac versions. We also don't want to end up delivering entertainment that you could just as easily get by playing Minesweeper or Freecell, where basically all we have done is replaced minesweeper and Freecell with a high fidelity version.

Ultimately some of the things that differentiate the phone and the tablet from consoles and PCs is that they are connected first: the devices are largely not that useful without an Internet connection of some kind, and that definitely changes my personal use case for these devices in a way that was not really true with Xbox or the PS3; where network connectivity is great, but a lot of experience that I have on those platforms doesn't really require that. I can play a great single player game but never log on to Live or PSN.

So from our point of view the kinds of games and experiences where you want to be constantly involved with the game universe and constantly checking up to see what your friends are doing, or seeing how the rest of the gaming world at large is progressing. Those kinds of experiences I think will do really well on mobile in a way that they would not have on the PC. I don't have a PC on me at all times and I can't pull my PC out and turn it on in two seconds the way I can with a tablet.

WILLIAM @ 18:20: Going back to Steam. Do you see Steam being able to support other mediums of entertainment like movies, ebooks, applications or music in the future?

GABE @ 18:35: I think the thing we try to figure out is "What's useful that we could do?". So trying to replicate what Netflix has done seems a bit silly. You've got HBO doing HBO:Go and Amazon and so on. It's more trying to figure out what our customers want us to do in terms of making those cross-media usage scenarios smooth, rather than just trying to replicate them. I don't think we have anything super innovative to say about managing large libraries of traditional media. I think we're more interested in trying to figure out how to inter-operate with the people who are doing the best job at that. I think that the area where we would try to do something more interesting is: how to make that content more valuable. So if you think of audio, we tried to convince Dylan at Audiosurf to come work on a Steam feature, which essentially was a different way of interacting with your music library.----

[Intermission as Gabe's phone starts ringing.]

So, in terms of figuring out---the dangerous thing is to copy what somebody else has done just because they're making a bunch of waves in the press or the investment community. You see that happening over and over again over the years. We seem to be in a little bit of a social media bubble right now where everybody is sorta waiting for the Facebook IPO and then the mad rush and everybody's sorta glossing over the fact that it will all end in tears. So when we think of things we tend to think not of "Oh these people are doing so lets do it as well", we try to think of "Given our limited bandwidth, what is the useful thing that we could do?" So rather than figuring out how to manage a giant library of music, which lots of people are tackling right now, it's how can we use our game development chops to make that music more interesting.

Shouldn't your music player look more like Rock Band or Audiosurf and less like a list of song titles. So that would be an example of how we would say well, doing the latter is silly and doing the former starts to sound like we could actually be doing something useful for our customers rather than replacing something they already got with a copy of it.

GLENN @ 12:52: The last Steam question we had was about all the languages Steam comes in. I think there's 22 currently, although 26 are listed on the translation site. We had a couple questions from people asking about if an Arabic version of Steam would be available. Do you know anything about that?

GABE @ 12:09: I don't know specifically about that, the guy to ask is Torsten. So if you send mail to torsten@valvesoftware.com. He manages the localization wiki and manages all the localization of the different products and he can tell you where we are with the different languages and where we will be with subsequent editions.

WILLIAM @ 12:35: Moving on to mod development, we're a very mod centric podcast and the top question we get from various mod developers is: Does Valve plan on updating the Source SDK? Either with the Portal 2 base or anything like that? and how does Valve feel about engines right now in the wild because we've seen a lot of mod developers leaving source for other pastures.

KUTTA @ 22:58: I'm not the one working on the Portal 2 SDK development, but a guy named Josh Weier's been working on that. He was the project lead with Portal 2. I think with Portal 2 there is a lot to be done to build new levels and content just using Hammer and our SDK tools because a lot of portal 2 ended up resulting in the creation of new entity types and extensions to the way we support scripting in the engine, so I would expect there to be new updates pretty soon about the map building side of it. As for the full SDK, I'm not certain where we are with that. That's something I'd need to look into.

WILLIAM @ 23:39: Any comments on other engines right now in the wild? Any ones that particularly peak your interest?

GABE @ 23:53: There are a lot of good engines out there, I haven't seen Tim's latest demos, I expect that it's pretty interesting. I have less visibility into what the Unity guys are doing. Has anyone announced that they have used the Rage engine yet?

WILLIAM @ 24:12: Not that I've been following no, I mean we've seen the Rage engine on the IOS platform right?

GABE @ 24:20: Yup, so there are a lot of engines for people to build on. People should understand what their customers want and then derive their choice of engines from that. There are pluses and minuses, and there are trade-offs. So if we have technology that's useful to people great, if Unity or Unreal is a better answer given the trade-offs that they've made then more power to them. We just love it when people ship mods so we can go play them.

GLENN @ 24:58: The next question we had was about the Gold-Source Engine and if it will ever be released as an open source license.

GABE @ 25:07: Probably not, any time those engines get released the hacker community seems to get ahead of the game in terms of destroying the community that's actually trying to play the game. So we've tended to steer away from that--- It's certainly an option, we shouldn't say there is anything keeping us from doing it. John has made it really easy for us to release the Gold-Source engine if we want to, but we're more worried about the history. And to be honest we haven't thought about it and I bet if we sat down and said "So how can do we do this without destroying these existing player communities?" we probably could. We'd just rather continue not talking about Half-Life 2: Episode Three more than not finish open sourcing Gold-Source.

WILLIAM @ 26:06: Moving on to Portal 2. The Portal 2 DLC #1 has been announced for this summer. What can we expect to see from it and when can we see it?

GABE @ 26:19: I don't know what the schedule is for showing it to people, but I'm sure it will be "more buckets of awesome", or whatever one-line slogan I'm supposed to be using to describe it. What do you know about the first DLC?

KUTTA @ 25:36: I'm not sure what we have actually decided, we have more than one DLC plan and I'm not exactly sure what we planned on what we are going to put into the first over the second. But I do know the team has been looking into a bunch of pretty awesome things to add into it to extend the re-playability of the game in general. With that in mind I'll have to leave that to a future interview with Chet to give you all the gory details.

GLENN @ 27:09: What was the feedback from the Portal 2 ARG and is it something Valve would like to continue doing for releases of their future games?

GABE @ 27:19: Well, ARGs by their nature are a little bit non-reproducible. For us it was a huge amount of fun, I think the other developers who participated had a really good experience as well, so I think that part of it we are definitely interested in. It was awesome to be on our side watching how the ARG was being developed by all the companies that got involved. We have to figure out some way to package this up and get it out there because it was just as fun for us watching all of the different participants and all of the of people who started the wiki and the IRC channel so it was probably one of the most entertaining things we've got to do in a long time. So we'll definitely figure out how to do it again.

The challenge of course is how to make it an efficient use of our time in terms of producing entertainment for other people. The big thing we took away from it though is that we can effectively create a situation where, what was it? 13, 14 different companies are involved and not have it be this nightmare of bureaucracy and lawyers and delivering this water downed generic product. That it's in fact possible to collaborate on that kind of scale and have it turn into something that people enjoy.

GLENN @ 29:02: It brought us together. All the different communities that were waiting for Portal 2, we all ended up in that same IRC channel together working on it and got to meet a whole load of new people that we never met before, which was great. So we enjoyed it. The other question we had about----

GABE @ 29:17: For us, just so you know, the real test is what the other developers say. For us, if they had fun and want to do it again, then it was a success. If they sit on it for six months then think "Ehh, that was a kind of waste of time and those guys at Valve are jerks", then it was a failure so hopefully it worked for those guys and after they reflected----Certainly at the time they were like "This is awesome" but you don't want people to be able to look back and say "Well I could have done this other stuff instead and that would have been better for my customers, or for my business or for my games". But, so far at least I think everybody's like "Okay, let's do it again", but obviously not in this--- not as an ARG, there'd have to be some other way that we figure out that we can all work together.

WILLIAM @ 30:13: Stemming from what Glenn said about the community all bundling into one. One thing that's been a massive push, or a massive question from listeners is: Will Valve ever do something like ValveCon, sort of akin to what QuakeCon does, sort of an epic gathering of all Valve fans? --- Or sorry, BlizzCon.

GABE @ 30:33: It would actually make sense for us to do an ARG-Gon, if you look at that blending of communities. I think everyone was excited to bring these communities together and have some cross fertilization. So, I think that having "Let's all stand around and look at the tables where Episode Three isn't" would be pretty boring, but bringing together a bunch of game developers and giving them that opportunity to connect in real life with a bunch of their fans would be pretty interesting. I suspect that the Super Meat Boy fans are pretty interesting people. It would be interesting to see what happens when you put them in a room with Audiosurf fans and then shake. That sort of resonates more with me than a ValveCon, would be an ARG-Con.

GLENN @ 31:41: The other question was about the Playstation Network outage, we just wondered what kind of effect that had on the Portal 2 release and did you see more players playing the PC version if they had the cross-version between the PS3?

GABE @ 31:56: It's still hard to tell, we're still gathering data and I also don't think that the negative outcome from this will be obvious for a while. I think in general if the people who buy these kinds of digital goods and services start to lose confidence they tend to lose confidence across the board and if there's another big large scale, high profile event like this then we'll all start to see kind of a slow down and a caution among consumers. So in that sense it's sort of bad for everybody, whether you're Sony, or Microsoft, or Apple, or Amazon, or us, or Google; these are bad things for all of us. We certainly raced around and thought, "are we doing this?" "where are the holes?" We're going to play bad guy for a second, "How would we attack valve?" and "How would we compromise our user data?" and sort of use this as an opportunity to remind us to be really careful about making sure that our customers can have as much

confidence in the system as possible.

It's only a question of time, but it's also just the long term track record of these kinds of things has really big implications for how successful we're all going to be. If Blizzard gets compromised, or we get compromised, or Xbox Live gets compromised; or even if Amazon, or Apple, or Google have big problems, or Skype or somebody like that people are just gonna slow down or back off on their willingness to buy music, buy games, to trust Steam with their data. So it's sort of an industry problem.

WILLIAM @ 34:01: So let's talk about Dota 2. I'm sure you wanna talk about Dota 2. It's Valves first step into a non-fps genre, other than Alien Swarm I guess----

GABE @ 34:11: What about Ricochet?

WILLIAM @ 34:12: And Ricochet, well Ricochet was still first person but we love Ricochet at Podcast 17, trust me. We would love to see a Ricochet clone, any way you can push that out would be great----or sequel.

GABE @ 34:23: Alright, I'm prioritizing Ricochet 2 above Episode Three in my next staff meeting so----

GLENN @ 34:29: That's the quote that might come back to bite you.

WILLIAM @ 34:31: Yeah, uh oh, we might get in trouble for that.

GABE @ 34:34: Because Podcast 17 asked me to. If I'm gonna be bitten I'm gonna take you guys with me.

WILLIAM @ 34:42: So what other gaming genres would you be interesting in developing for, if any?

GABE @ 34:47: Every game developer wants to do every genre, we all play games. Imagine if you were at a games company, you'd say "Okay we're gonna do an MMO, and we're gonna do an FPS, and we're gonna do an RTS and---" so, it's impossible to work on games and not want to do them all. Definitely Alien Swarm gave us some technology that becomes useful with Dota 2, as a step in that direction. What would I do right now? Right now the thing I wanna do is I wanna work on hardware, I wanna fix input hardware and other aspects of the form factor. If you're asking what, in an imaginary fantasy world where we can do whatever we wanted, it wouldn't just be software genres; it would be trying to tackle the entire consumer experience.

I think apple has done a really good job of showing what happens when you're thinking more up and down the whole stack to deliver a great consumer experience. I'm sort of jealous of his ability to use a CNC to tinker with enclosures, that sounds like a really useful dimension for a designer to have, is to have more vertically in the sets of aspects of the experience they can

challenge.

WILLIAM @ 37:17: Valve seems really interested in pushing the competitive nature of video games. With the upcoming release of Dota 2, is there anything in the pipeline to build upon competitive gaming?

GABE @ 36:36: Yeah, there are a bunch of features that you have to add and I think once we start showing off Dota 2 it'll be clear what kind of support we're gonna have. But obviously competitive play is critical. A bunch of people here have played competitively in the DotA scene as well as in the Counter Strike scene and some of the others. So we understand the importance of that. We think it's very important, and I think you'll see stuff from us before the end of the year to show our support for competition within Dota 2.

GLENN @ 37:26: You said there for a second there that you are interested in the hardware side of things, and obviously you have the Steam Hardware survey. What kind of information have you got back from that over the years, and what's really surprised you about it I guess.

GABE @ 37:41: I don't think there are a lot of surprises, I think it gives us a lot of confidence in the rate of change. I think that people always underestimate how much faster PCs are getting. If you look into the future, if you look 5 years down the road, just the sheer amount of integer, floating points, shader performance we're gonna have, it's just gonna be staggering. You have to plan accordingly, you can't just go "Whoa, look how fast everything's got, let's go make a bunch of changes to take advantage of that". So staying aware of that is interesting.

It was a little bit interesting watching the adoption curve of Windows 7 versus Vista in the gaming community. How much faster Windows 7 was adopted than Vista was. Because to me it felt like a really accurate decision by the gaming community as to what a good decision was. It was completely separate from what the press has been saying. But if you asked me, "could you use the rate with which people convert to actually generate a very useful score?", you know a review score, it seems like the gaming community is much more accurate in their scoring than most of the traditional PC reviewing magazines. I just think it's great to have the data and to have it out there where everybody can see it.

KUTTA @ 39:32: For us it serves as a really practical goal. For Portal 2 when we were trying to figure out things like the minimum specifications for PC and Mac, for our customers, being able to go to this authoritative piece of data that tells us exactly what our customers have is invaluable. It lets us spend our effort making the game look really good and play well on the most number of customers' machines. And for us, without that it would have been a lot of guess work----

GABE @ 39:56: And a lot of arguing.

WILLIAM @ 40:00: And any comments Kutta on DirectX 11?

KUTTA @ 40:04: I think DirectX 11 is kind of the next logical step from DirectX 10. I actually worked on DirectX 10 when I was at Microsoft. We did the API redesign from DX9 to DX10, we got a much cleaner API out of it, but it always takes a version to work the kinks out. And I think that DX11 is a lot better system for that. Obviously one issue right now is that we wanna deliver really high quality games to our existing customers, and given rates of adoption of operating systems and video cards and things like that, making a game that's exclusively DX11 would probably be a mistake, but making a game that supports DX11 becomes more and more interesting. As the software and hardware survey show, I think it's getting to the point where we can expect DX11 to be more standard in the next couple of years.

The rate of adoption of new graphics features after DX9 seems to have slowed in general. DX9 as an API is really pretty well done and if you look at other platforms, OpenGL yes, in OpenGL kind of, they all kind of converged on a feature set that's mostly in DX9. So that's obviously shaped some of our decisions in graphics technology as to what to support as the main line.

GLENN @ 41:30: Looking back now, over all of Valve's years what's changed in the Valve development vision since the company first started?

GABE @ 41:46: Help me out here, what's the answer you're looking for?

WILLIAM @ 41:51: How has your company grown, what are you most proud of in that regard?

GABE @ 41:56: I'm proud that the people here are happy, that they feel like they've got a good jobs, that our customers are happy, that people's families... that people don't get divorced and their children don't hate them. We've made a bunch of---I have made a bunch of my colleagues' lives better and our customers' lives better, for me that's sort of why I do this. That's a personal answer, not a company answer.

KUTTA @ 42:30: I've been here almost two and a half years, and the company's almost doubled in that time. And the thing that's impressed me the most is that the culture has not, really, the core things that make the culture great have not changed despite doubling. When we tell people what Valve is like, most people don't believe us, they're like how could you possibly run a company that way, it sounds like anarchy, or it sounds like you couldn't get things done if there wasn't somebody telling people what to do. And even though we've doubled, and that would normally place a huge stress on a flat structure, it hasn't really. Things get done just as effectively now, for good reasons and for motivated people, as they did before. I haven't really seen that at any company larger than 10 people, or 20 people.

WILLIAM @ 43:13: And Gabe, one question that's sort of fun, Do you remember how Valve came up with the idea to use a crowbar as the iconic symbol for Half-Life?

GABE @ 43:24: Yeah, it was... A lot of what we were thinking about was the identity that--- what were the sort of critical elements of your identity in a first person action game. So it was related to the decision not to have Gordon talk, it was related to the fact that he had glasses,

that he was a scientist as oppose to someone with more traditional action backgrounds. And the crowbar, what we liked about it, was it's almost sort of a blue collar sort of thing. It was workman like, I mean a crowbar is something you take to work, not a statement about how macho you are, or how powerful you are. And we also liked the fact that you can whack it on things.

There was also, a minor issue was the fact that it was believable that there would be a crowbar there rather than lots of other melee weapons. So you'd do some sketches and you'd just look and say, "so how does this read?" You've got this nerdy scientist guy in this weird suit with a crowbar; how do those elements read together. We felt that they did a good job to speaking to the experience that we wanted to promise people that they were gonna have. When we did the original Half-Life we were part of a round up of 17 first person shooters that were coming out in the same quarter, so you had to think really hard about why your game was not gonna be a waste of people's times. And you had to figure out how you could communicate that, and the crowbar was just part of that thinking.

GLENN @ 45:17: Another question we had was about Valve store items, specifically Half-Life themed ones. And some people kind of asking, should we expect to see any of those in the future?

GABE @ 45:30: I'm sure we'll have Half-Life store items on the store... You're trying to ask about Episode Three again aren't you!

WILLIAM @ 45:36: No no no, we're seriously, like Gnome Chompskis, or Alyx hoodies, or Lost Coast-ers or anything like that.

GABE @ 45:42: People who have ideas for things they'd like to see us make---the store really, the store basically breaks even. It's not something we run to make money, so the guy who runs-- we really do it because they're fun things to get made, we steal a bunch of them and take them home and play with them late at night when we're feeling lonely or--- anyhow, so Arsenio is the guy who runs the store, arsenio@valvesoftware.com so if there are things that people want, or clever ideas that people have where they'd like to see those things manufactured just send Arsenio mail. That's how a lot of the things on the store come up, somebody has an idea and sends it over to Arsenio and then he just finds a vendor who'll make it for us. So it's really supposed to be a fun thing for sort of the core fans. So anybody who has things that they'd really like to see like, actually, I've wanted a DOG pose-able robot forever, so maybe if all of your listeners pester Arsenio he'll finally actually do that, so I have something that I can play with. I can get two of them and they----

WILLIAM @ 46:57: Why don't you email him Gabe?

GABE @ 46:59: I do, all the time. Often times my input----everybody develops resistance to stuff I say, right. They're like, "oh yeah, whatever" because I'm a pretty forceful advocate for my own ideas, so everybody has to develop immunity to my ideas, at least this is how it appears to me. Kutta may tell you, "well his ideas are just bad and we don't want to tell him".

KUTTA @ 47:25: No it's cool, Arsenio shot down like three of my ideas too, I'm with him on this.

GABE @ 47:29: So we're gonna start a petition to get Arsenio to make a dog pose-able action figure.

WILLIAM @ 47:36: And the very last question and, it starts off "Not to be creepy", but when people think Gabe Newell they---

GABE @ 47:42: Any question that starts off "Not to be creepy" has immediately gone creepy.

WILLIAM @ 47:49: When people think Gabe Newell they think Valve, so what does Gabe do in his free time? We know you have your knife collection, but when you get home at the end of the night... totally not valve related, how do you spend your free time?

GABE @ 47:59: I'm teaching myself how to be a machinist.

WILLIAM @ 48:02: Interesting, that's exciting. What sort of cool things have you made, being a machinist, so far?

GABE @ 48:09: Well right now I'm... you can sort of make whatever you want, so right now I'm trying to do a bunch of thin-wall machining, so anybody in your audience who's a machinist will know what I'm talking about. There are a set of problems, so you have to make up something like "okay, what can I make that has thin walls" and you end up with a set of fixture problems, because the thing that you're machining tends to vibrate sort of like a drum head, and every time it vibrates it chips and wears at the edge of your cutting tool, so you have to come up with strategies. There are resonant frequencies that you can detect and if you don't drop... if you go out of phase essentially with those resonant frequencies you can actually machine a lot more effectively something that at a slower speed or a higher speed wouldn't work. It's just a lot of fun, it lets me get my hands dirty and bleed all over my equipment periodically and---

WILLIAM @ 49:07: Plus you could build a giant robot.

GABE @ 49:09: Plus I could build a giant robot. I could build a really big pose-able action figure.

Kutta what do you do in your spare time? You're a climber right?

KUTTA @ 49:17: Yeah, miscellaneous camping, climbing, snowboarding, that kind of thing. I tend to get outside since I spend a lot of time close to work. Plus yeah, it's just a beautiful place for that.

WILLIAM @ 49:28: Well that's all the questions we have for you Gabe, and we very much appreciate you sitting down---and Kutta, Kutta as well---

GABE @ 49:35: "Kutta, Cu-da, like Barra-cuda."

WILLIAM @ : Koota. Thank you for that as well----

KUTTA @ 49:39: Kutta.

GABE @ 49:40: I cannot pronounce his last name though, so he can, he can correct----

KUTTA @ 49:43: Srinivasan.

GABE @ 49:44: Srinivasan.

WILLIAM @ 49:55: It's been a pleasure sitting down with both of you and we definitely look forward to the next installment of... We look forward to Dota 2, that's gonna be very exciting for everybody and we wish you the best of luck in the future.

GABE @ 50:00: Thanks guys.

WILLIAM @ 50:01: Thank you Gabe.

KUTTA @ 50:02: Nice talking to you guys.

GABE @ 50:03: Happy birthday.

WILLIAM @ 50:04: Oh, thank you.

[Gabe and Kutta leave the call]

WILLIAM @ 50:07: And the winners for our question submission contest:

The Valve swag: drsjohnny

Eets 1: justinshowers

Eets 2: dogboy416

Eets3: JayBirdSupreme

Eets4: rya2012

Eets5: combinecpu

Total entries: 413