

SKILLS

BECOMING A GAME DEVELOPER

What it takes and what obstacles await



PHOTOS: ORCHID CHAKMA

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The global gaming industry is growing at an unprecedented rate. It can rightly be called the success of the game developers, who work tirelessly to produce these games. Although late, Bangladesh is also slowly getting into the game development scenario.

Currently, there exists no undergraduate or postgraduate study specifically related to game development in Bangladesh like in universities abroad. However, it is possible to get into game development from different fields of study. Those studying Computer Science and Engineering (CSE), Software Engineering (SWE), or Electrical and Electronic Engineering (EEE) have some advantages here, given that these students are taught some of the basics, mostly programming-related, needed for game development in their respective curricula.

Like any other art, there are different types of games, such as for smartphones and consoles. Therefore, the first decision a developer needs to make is which type of game they want to work with. The next step is selecting the role one wants to work in. Game development is mostly team-based work, and different team members work in different fields. There are game programmers, graphics designers, sound engineers, writers, testers, etc.

In Bangladesh, one can work as a game developer in three ways – independent game development, working in game development companies, or working as a freelancer for international projects – each with its own perks and problems.

Although independent game developers get more freedom, there's the added pressure of handling all the jobs mentioned earlier alone like being the game designer, programmer, and tester all at the same time. However, developing games by oneself is a good way to gain confidence and experience.

"I started my journey as a game developer by uploading my games in game jams – events where participants try to make a video game from scratch – on



sites like itch.io," says Fahim Faysal, a game developer at Brain Station 23.

When working in a team, game development requires a team effort, so communication skills and teamwork are vital.

"Team members have to sit down to brainstorm ideas, work out storylines, and discuss what to do and how to do it. After all that, comes the part of actually developing the games and testing them, followed by publication and documentation," says Tanim-ul Haque Khan, the business unit head of game development at Brain Station 23.

For development, it is advisable to use Middleware, a type of software that connects software or applications, which makes game development easier. There are other tools and software to know about as well, such as FMOD

for sound design, Havok for game physics, Simplygon for 3D optimisation, and so on. These are mostly used by professional game developers. Beginners can use Unity or Unreal Engine to gain experience and can use online tutorials to learn and create games.

Publishing games is a whole other story. For mobile games, the first stage is uploading to mobile stores such as Google Play or Apple's App Store. Then the second stage is to find a publisher to publish the games.

For PC games, the game has to go on Steam, and then it can go on GOG.com – a digital distribution platform for video games. This step is a barrier for most Bangladeshi developers, which might not be the case for those working on international projects.

At present, there aren't that many dedicated game development companies in Bangladesh. However, this is changing as many game development enthusiasts and professionals are slowly stepping into the scene. Lack of funding, a negative view of game development as a serious career option among elders, and legal barriers are issues for game developers here.

"Legal barriers can demotivate a game development company even before it gets going. Piracy issues are also important to solve to make games more profitable. The government is yet to look into this sector as it is still new, but we are hopeful that it will change soon," says Minhaz Us Salakeen Fahme, co-founder and chairman at Battery Low Interactive Ltd.

Game development comes from a place of passion akin to art, and as artists, game developers should be more celebrated. Bangladesh needs more game developers to make its game industry grow and put itself in the multi-billion-dollar market the global industry has become. Fortunately, the country's youth have recognised the potential of game development and are interested in joining this sector. Building an industry from its infancy is a task that isn't going to be easy at all, but it's one that would be worthwhile and make the country proud.

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