Chris Sawyer, Creator of Transport Tycoon: Why this 1994 Game is Premium in a 2014 World of Free-to-Play

Posted by Carter Dotson on May 9th, 2014

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Transport Tycoon, the mobile version of Chris Sawyer's classic simulation game where players help manage an empire of planes, trains, and automobiles, recently received a big update with new levels, scenarios, music, and general improvements. With that in mind, Chris Sawyer took some time out to answer some questions about the game, and give his thoughts on gaming now.

Image via Pocket Tactics

148Apps: What was the impetus behind bringing the *Transport Tycoon* back now in 2014?
Chris Sawyer (CS): The latest mobile and tablet platforms were perfect for the game with their power, high resolution screens, and touch screen interface. It just made sense to bring the game to these platforms.

148Apps: Did mobile change the way that you approached the gameplay of *Transport Tycoon*?
CS: We set out to keep the complex and detailed gameplay as unchanged as possible because that's what's at the core of *Transport Tycoon*, and the technology in modern mobiles and tablets allowed us to do that. We improved the user experience with the touch screen interface and enhanced display of the game world as well as other in-game information.

148Apps: What is the one aspect of the 1994 game market that you think 2014 needs?
CS: A reliable way for players to find the good games amongst the not-so-good. In 1994, the information about new games was quite limited, but also very thorough. By reading magazines, you could find out which games might appeal and which were worth spending money on. Nowadays, there are so many games being sold (or given away) and marketed in so many ways, it's very difficult for the good games to shine based on merit rather than clever advertising or social media manipulation.

148Apps: Conversely, what would the 1994 market be improved by something in 2014?
CS: Back in 1994, there was only one way to publish games, which was selling boxed products through a publisher and distributor. Now there are dozens of ways of publishing games and most of them mean a more streamlined and cheaper distribution channel.

148Apps: Free-to-play is obviously a huge deal now, but *Transport Tycoon* **has launched at a premium price. Why was this chosen?**

CS: *Transport Tycoon* always was and still is a premium game. It is a game with considerable detail and depth of gameplay, and making it free-to-play with in-app purchases would have ruined the depth of the game. We wanted players to be able to become immersed in the gameplay and not be faced by frustrating restrictions or demands for payment while playing.

148Apps: Has the premium price worked out for the game?

CS: It is working out for the game, but it's proving a challenge as we're perhaps the first to try publishing such a detailed strategy game as a fully-paid app. We have also published a free Lite version with limited gameplay, which helps a lot too. The Lite version allows players to get a feel for the game before moving towards purchasing the full version. We've also found that keeping the game well-supported is important. The development team is continuing to fine tune and enhance the game with regular updates and support for players.

148Apps: iOS versus Android, what do you see as the biggest difference between the overall worlds of games on each platform?

CS: The main difference is the distribution model on each. iOS is considerably more controlled and streamlined and Android is less controlled, but each has their own benefits.

Thanks to Chris Sawyer for his time.

Transport Tycoon

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