

Gearbox's Pitchford: Steam may be "a dying store" in 5 to 10 years

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Earlier this month, Gearbox drew some ire from Steam-loving *Borderlands* fans by announcing the next game in the series, due in September, would be exclusive to the Epic Games Store on PC. In a massive tweet thread earlier this week, though (helpfully collated in this reddit post), Gearbox founder and CEO Randy Pitchford defends that decision and highlights what he sees as the long-term positives that Epic's competition with Steam will bring to the industry.

While acknowledging that Epic's platform currently lacks many quality-of-life features available on Steam, Pitchford pointed to Epic's public road map for adding many of those features before September's *Borderlands 3* launch. In fact, Pitchford sees the game's impending release as a "forcing function... that will, in turn, make all those features available on a faster timeline than otherwise possible... If I were to bet on this... Epic will inevitably surpass Valve on features and quality of service."

Pitchford acknowledges that publisher 2K and developer Gearbox could have hedged their bets by releasing on both Steam and

Epic. But he added that he feels the entire industry will be better served in the long run if *Borderlands 3*'s exclusivity can help make the Epic Games Store competitive with Steam. (The sizable investment Epic has made in paying to get exclusive content on its store probably didn't hurt, either)

Before Epic came into the platform picture, Pitchford says, "a huge amount of the value that Valve has generated [through Steam] has been used to enrich the handful of people who own and manage the company... They've been able to do this because they haven't had to worry about it. There has been no viable competitor to Steam. They have had no external force sufficient to challenge their revenue share and no external force sufficient to motivate a sufficient reinvestment of revenue."

Pitchford sees Epic as "the only guys who can really come along to disrupt Steam's monopoly and help all this get fixed... From a track record point of view, my expectation is that Epic's investment in technology will outpace Valve's substantially. When we look back at Steam in five or ten years, it may look like a dying store and other, competitive stores, will be the place to be."

Pitchford points to the way Steam has already upped its revenue sharing for popular games as evidence of how seriously it is taking the new competition. "Holy shit! That's a miracle," he added. "I think the folks at Valve are really smart and really great and they are also, probably, starting to redirect investment into their store."

By way of summary, Pitchford suggests that Epic's competition means that "Steam will have no choice but to either give up, lose, or to get better faster than ever before [and] because Valve is pretty damn good with some awesome talent, I do not expect them to give up or to lose.

"At the end of the day when we look back at this moment we'll

realize that this was the moment where the digital stores on PC became unmonopolized," he continued. "And we're all going to look back and see how change happened and how costs for developers and publishers to be on stores went down and how that value was passed on to the customers."

Pitchford's lengthy thoughts on the issue are well worth reading in full for anyone interested in a major developer's direct, involved opinion on the expanding PC game store wars.

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