

Microsoft Is Buying ZeniMax Media and Bethesda for \$7.5 Billion

The tech giant gains control of 'The Elder Scrolls,' 'Doom,' 'Dishonored,' 'Prey' and many more valuable IPs.

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In what must count as some of the biggest and most surprising news of 2020, Microsoft has announced it's acquiring ZeniMax Media for \$7.5 billion in cash, which includes Bethesda Softworks and Bethesda Game Studios.

"Gaming is the most expansive category in the entertainment industry, as people everywhere turn to gaming to connect, socialize and play with their friends," says Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella. "Quality differentiated content is the engine behind the growth and value of Xbox Game Pass – from *Minecraft* to *Flight Simulator*. As a proven game developer and publisher, Bethesda has seen success across every category of games, and together, we will further our ambition to empower the more than three billion gamers worldwide."

ZeniMax Media owns a range of high-profile games companies, including id Software (*Doom*, *Quake*, *Rage*), Arkane (*Dishonored*, *Prey*), MachineGames (*Wolfenstein*), Tango Gameworks (*The Evil Within*), and the most well-known of the bunch: Bethesda. By owning Bethesda, Microsoft gains control of *The Elder Scrolls* IP, including MMO *The Elder Scrolls Online*, but also just as importantly, the *Fallout* games and

IP.

“This is an awesome time to be an Xbox fan. In the last 10 days alone, we’ve released details on our two new consoles which go on pre-order tomorrow, launched cloud gaming in Xbox Game Pass Ultimate, and now we’re making another investment in the most critical part of our strategy: the games,” says Phil Spencer, EVP of Gaming at Microsoft. “Generations of gamers have been captivated by the renowned franchises in the Bethesda portfolio and will continue to be so for years to come as part of Xbox.”

Microsoft is aiming to complete the deal in the second half of fiscal year 2021, but it changes the trajectory of ZeniMax and its studios immediately. Any future games from a ZeniMax-owned developer could be Xbox and PC exclusives, potentially leaving PlayStation owners without a new *Elder Scrolls* or *Doom* experience to play this coming hardware generation. It’s a move that could also help sell quite a few Xbox Series X devices later in its life cycle.

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Pete Hines, VP of PR and Marketing at Bethesda, posted an article on Bethesda.net entitled, “Why Microsoft is the perfect fit.” In it he points out that, “We’re still Bethesda. We’re still working on the same games we were yesterday, made by the same studios we’ve worked with for years, and those games will be published by us.”

However, he goes on to explain, “Microsoft is an incredible partner and offers access to resources that will make us a better publisher and developer. We believe that means better games for you to play. Simply put – we believe that change is an important part of getting better. We believe in pushing ourselves to be better. To innovate. To grow.”

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