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It seems that nowadays everyone is opening up their own business, only to have it die a quick death a year or two down the line. Yet, despite this risk, the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well. Paper millionaires are a dime a dozen in the business world, but only a select few know how to maintain a successful business long enough to cash out. Wouldn't it be extra nice to know some of the secrets on how to run a successful business? While it doesn't divulge any important trade secrets, Interactive Magic's Capitalism simulation is certainly an excellent introduction to basic economic, marketing, and business elements to any of our readers with plans to rule the business world in the name of the almighty dollar.

Capitalism is a complex simulation with a very steep learning curve. Fortunately, the game comes with a set of brief tutorial games covering the major areas of the simulation. The basic goal in Capitalism is to build your fledgling business into a successful empire. How this is done is entirely up to the player who is cast in the role as the brains behind the business. At the start of each game, the player decides on a number of factors, including how many competitors, the degree of aggressiveness of each competitor, how much cash to start with, and a variety of other factors. In addition, the game map is randomly generated each time.

[Capitalize](#)

As any capitalist knows, positive cashflow is the key to running any successful business. In

Capitalism, there are numerous ways in which this can be achieved. Among them are retailing, farming, manufacturing, and raw material production. Retailing deals with the art of selling products and merchandise to the end customer, the consumer. This is where the majority of sales (and hence, the majority of the profit) comes from. Farming involves the raising/processing of livestock, and growing/harvesting of natural crops, and then selling to the retail market. Manufacturing concerns the production of various products from its components and selling the end products to retailers. Raw material production entails the extraction of raw materials from the earth and selling by bulk to factories for product manufacturing. This intricate web of interaction between supplier and buyer is all market driven and requires a keen sense of market analysis to exploit.

The player can enter this web from a variety of angles. One approach is focusing strictly on the retailing aspect, in which final products are bought, marked up, and then sold to the consumer. In this approach, where and how the products are obtained are not as important as purchasing the them at the lowest price as possible and selling at the highest price the consumer market will allow. This source of low pricing could come from anywhere within the game, from a competitor's factory to an overseas supplier. Then there's the "master-of-the-universe" approach in which the player extracts his own raw materials, manufactures products with these same raw materials in his own factories, and selling the finished items at his own retail outlets. Of course, this second method consumes gobs of cash, which the unassuming novice player is ill to possess. The smart entrepreneur will only retail or manufacture products according to what the market demands, instead of letting personal power-trips take control.

f course, this all assumes the player has a product that exhibits strong consumer demand. A product in Capitalism can be either bought from a supplier or directly manufactured by the player. In Capitalism, there are numerous consumer products, from milk and eggs to shoes to desktop computers. How these products are produced and marketed are major factors within the game. Example: one of the components required to manufacture a desktop computer is the CPU, which requires silicon, which in turn can be produced by mining silica. Then there's the three important factors associated with each product: quality, price, and brand. Quality is determined by the technological methods by which the product was manufactured. The more advanced the technology, the higher the quality. Price is the attractiveness of the player's selling price compared to competitors. Brand involves the familiarity of the public with the product. The quality of a product can be increased by building R&D facilities to investigate and research superior technologies to produce goods, thereby attracting consumers due to the increased quality. The brand name of a product can also play an important role in grabbing the attention of consumers. The player can increase the reputation of products through the spending of cash for advertising in the local media.

Bullish Bears

Then there is the stock market, where the player can sell and buy stocks of various companies. Of course, Capitalism doesn't stop there: players can issue new shares for sale on the block, tend offers, initiate hostile takeovers, perform mergers, and decide on the elements of paying dividends. All these options attempt to follow real-world restrictions and reflect the complex elements of playing the stock market, but this is where the player can elevate himself above his competitors. By making shrewd stock maneuvers and developing a keen eye on marketing and industry trends, the player just might amass enough wealth to be granted entry to Capitalism's Hall of Fame. Believe it or not, there's still the issue of private labeling, the option to hire a president to manage the player's various firms, along with a myriad of other simulation elements too many to list in detail in this review short of quoting the manual verbatim, which in passing is well documented.

s the reader can surmise, the simulation goes all out in providing a rich set of features and gaming elements to engross and engage the player for hours on end. However, the steep learning curve could scare many innocent novice players away. In addition, navigating within the game to keep track of all the various elements can be a horrendous chore, especially when the simulation disallows the player from viewing multiple information windows all at once. Reports, graphs, charts, and various statistics are scattered across a multitude of menu options and onscreen buttons. The game window also seems to be fixed and cannot be enlarged when played at high resolutions. Also on occasion, the game screen sequences corresponding to the steps within the tutorials do not match, leaving the player bewildered and confused as to what the tutorial is referring to. Capitalism also requires that the game's disc be present in the system's CD-ROM drive, all in the name of conserving 22MB of hard drive space. Coincidentally, this also serves as a subtle method of copy protection. Many players would just as soon sacrifice 22MB of space and play their favorite audio CD for inspiration rather than listen to Capitalism's cheesy music tracks.

Summary

Aside from the above knocks, Capitalism succeeds in offering one of the most realistic simulations of the business model. With 17 built-in scenarios covering a variety of gaming elements and the option to start a game from scratch, Capitalism will easily entertain and engross those players who surmount the learning curve and are willing to overlook the simulation's inconvenient interface.

Pros

- Very realistic and detailed simulation of the business model.
- Wide variety of simulation elements to control and manage.
- 17 built-in scenarios with random-map generation.
- Contains game tutorials and an informative manual.

Cons

- Steep learning curve.
- Layout of game interface is very inconvenient and can be clumsy at times.
- Occasional mismatch between screen sequences and tutorial steps.
- No option to play entirely from the hard drive, game disc is required to be in the CD-ROM drive.

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