

How Will Google Chrome OS Change Gaming?

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Google's Chrome OS has added a very interesting wrinkle to the future of online gaming. [As we reported back in May](#), Google reportedly plans to fully integrate O3D, the company's rich 3D graphics plug-in, into the Chrome browser by the end of this year. That gives Google a platform for game development that'd be a seamless part of its OS [when it's released next year](#). A number of developers are already creating games for O3D; for instance, [here's a demo for Infinite Journey](#) (a screenshot of which is on the left), a visually engaging, Mario-style title [showcased at the recent Google I/O conference](#). If consumers embrace netbooks pre-installed with Google OS, I think we're likely to see O3D become an increasingly popular platform for games — at the expense of Windows-based PC games and web-based games powered by Flash.

But what do game industry insiders make of Chrome OS? I just reached out via email to several leading CEOs; here's a sampling of their takes:

Jim Greer, CEO of casual game portal [Kongregate](#): "I think it will have an immediate effect on the booming netbook market, and a slower one on gaming. PC game developers always need to make sure that their games work on a very broad variety of machines, so they won't be able to target the Google OS specifically. Having said that, the more netbooks there are out there, the more attractive web game development will be."

Raph Koster, CEO of web-based virtual world [Metaplace](#): "A 3D engine plug-in, perhaps, could have impact. But bear in mind, it'd have to be pre-installed or have a very compelling killer app. And even then, that only drives adoption on the Chrome OS, not necessarily in the larger browser world. And no, [the Chrome OS announcement] doesn't change our strategy at all. Another platform, another device, yay. I would be very surprised if the Chrome OS doesn't run Flash, which would mean we would run on it out of the box."

Steve Hoffman, CEO of web-on-MMO startup [RocketOn](#): “The Chrome OS seems like just another flavor of Linux to me. Even with the Chrome OS and O3D combined, I don’t see gamers gravitating towards Google’s new OS. Hardcore gamers and virtual world enthusiasts will always choose the very best system to play on, which for the time being is a Mac, Windows PC, or console, depending on the game. For the more casual crowd, I don’t think this will win them over. The primary obstacle is that Google has to get the carriers to subsidize netbooks so they are free with a long-term subscription.

“Also, Google isn’t a hardware company like Apple, so they’ll never pull off a beautifully integrated product like the iPhone. This was made clear by the lackluster Android launch. Google will also face stiff competition in this area from a variety of Linux and Windows netbooks, which will work just fine with Firefox or IE...Maybe, if Google sticks it out, it can gradually gain a dedicated following around Chrome OS in combination with Google’s apps and services, and some of those users may take advantage of gaming on this new platform, but this is way off in the future.”