

Generations of STEM: Jerry Lawson

Video Game Engineer

Jerry Lawson's work paved the way for the future of video games when he led development of the Fairchild Channel F console using interchangeable video game cartridges.

Growing up in Brooklyn, New York City, Lawson's parents encouraged his interest in STEM hobbies, including ham radio. He earned an amateur ham

radio license by the age of thirteen. He repaired televisions to earn money before enrolling at Queens College. One of the few Black men in the industry, he joined the Homebrew Computer Club alongside people like Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak.

He began work at Fairchild Semiconductor in 1970. Lawson's interest in video games in his personal life propelled their entry to the video game market. He worked with his team to develop a cartridge that could be repeatedly removed from a console, allowing games to be sold separately from the console. In addition to developing the removable cartridges, the console introduced a new 8-way joystick and the ever valuable "Pause" button. He later founded Videosoft, which developed games for the Atari 2600. Lawson was honored in 2011 by the International Game Developers Association and recognized as influential in the industry as well as pioneering as one of the first Black engineers in game development.

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