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The demo is the pirated version Electronic Arts

[Weekend Reading: Game Demos, Piracy and The Sims 3](#)

Or why Riccitiello does not get it

Piracy is one of the big, ugly problems of the videogame industry and it mostly affects PC game releases. So, you would think that with the launch of one of the most anticipated PC-only games of the year, Electronic Arts would make sure to limit piracy. Still, [The Sims 3, which we have reviewed](#), got pirated quite a lot, probably even more than Spore last year, because of two main reasons: the game got leaked more than two weeks before the official release date, and the publisher never bothered to offer a demo.

When asked about the piracy issues, [John Riccitiello, the president of Electronic Arts](#), said that "In the game that was pirated there's only one city out of two and Sims 3 has a massive amount of content, and a lot of it is downloaded once you register with EA and join the online community. So you get that content in addition to the second city which is downloadable for people who register, and that's a major component. A huge amount of the gameplay is an overlay for the community, where you are sampling assets created by other people. So for the pirate consumer, they don't get the second town, they don't get all the extra content, and they don't get the community. It was only concentrated on Poland and China, but I think of it as not being that different than a demo."

The problem with the above statement is that a leader of a gaming company does not seem to realize the clear line that he is drawing between the existence of piracy and the lack of a demo version for games. There are a lot of players out there interested in seeing what they buy before offering their money with no guarantee that they can take it back.

And a well designed, early released and widely available demo is the best way to allow gamers to sample a game and make an informed decision about it, evaluating it through their own filter and without the rose-colored glasses that developers, publishers and even games journalists seem to be wearing sometimes.

The Sims 3 would have been easier to demo. Just offer three very different characters, demonstrating the new moodlet system and the way traits can be combined. Put them in a house with a small number of items, demonstrating some of the actions and the interactions possible. Just take away the neighborhood and sell it via a few images and put a limit on how much time is spent watching the demo.

Something like this would have shown interested players what the game has to offer while leaving enough new stuff to be experienced in the final version. And I'm still a bit amazed that it took a huge level of piracy and a question from a journalist for the leader of a huge publisher to realize all of this.