



Sid Meier's Civilization VI is one of the most massive—and massively complex—strategy games around. An empire-builder where you employ diplomacy, technology, and military might, it's the sort of epic experience that originated on desktop computers—and that, many assumed, would be folly to run on anything else.

Thankfully, someone forgot to tell that to Aspyr Media, the wizards who brought the game to iPad. "*Civilization VI* is probably the most complicated application ever published on the App Store," says Jez Sherlock, Aspyr's VP of development. We don't doubt him for a moment.

Jez Sherlock plots world-altering machinations at Aspyr's Austin office.



Veteran hands

Based in Austin, Texas, Aspyr has been porting popular games to new platforms for more than 20 years. When the team started on *Civilization VI*, they knew there could be no compromise with the iPad version of this extraordinarily intricate game. "Not a stripped-down experience," Sherlock tells us, "but something that you hold in your hands and say, 'That's definitely *Civ VI*.'"

For starters, this required taking an interface developed for mouse and keyboard and making it function flawlessly on a touchscreen, whether players are guiding military units into battle or choosing new technologies to research.

“It’s surprising how well the desktop version of *Civilization VI* worked simply by re-implementing mouse clicks as touches,” says Sherlock. But there were plenty of challenges. The team had to make game menus legible—and the user interface intuitive—on a much smaller, touch-driven screen.

From there, Aspyr kept vaulting one technical hurdle after another, including optimizing the game’s lush visuals to run smoothly on the iPad’s graphics processor.

Civilization VI’s iPad version has all of the game’s wonders and tech trees and breathtaking detail.



Creative freedom

You’d think Firaxis Games and 2K Games—*Civilization VI*’s original developer and publisher, respectively—would be worried about Aspyr tinkering with their baby. But Aspyr’s impressive track record put them at ease.

This is the same company that managed to port BioWare’s acclaimed *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* from consoles to iOS—a feat the game’s publisher, LucasArts, deemed impossible until Aspyr built a working demo on spec, recalls Ted Staloch, Aspyr’s executive VP of publishing.

“The problem was one of imagination,” recalls Staloch. “In the coming years, we imagine more and more console games coming to mobile sooner and sooner after their initial release.”

Where builds are tested and bugs are slain: Aspyr’s QA den.



Paving the future

The success of *Knights of the Old Republic* led to Aspyr porting BioWare's *Jade Empire* and Quantic Dream's *Fahrenheit*. With that kind of track record, it wasn't too hard to convince longtime partner 2K Games to let them swing for the fences with *Civilization VI*.

"We made the pitch. They said, 'Prove it,'" says Staloch. "And we did."