

BitTorrent creator Bram Cohen smiling at the camera with a young woman in the background

BITTORRENT

2013 Nominet Trust 100 Winner

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2013

DECONGESTING THE INTERNET, MAKING IT FASTER FOR ALL.

By BitTorrent Inc

Project URL: bittorrent.com

Project Twitter: [@BitTorrent](https://twitter.com/BitTorrent)

- Community Engagement
- Internet

It is a fair bet that when Bram Cohen, a recent graduate of the University of Buffalo, sat down in April 2001 to write a clever piece of software to allow peer-to-peer distribution of large amounts of data, he had no idea what he was getting into. Cohen was just trying to solve a problem: how to overcome the bottleneck of bandwidth which meant it was often impossibly costly and time consuming to download a large file, like a video, along a single, congested telephone line from an overworked server.

A little over a decade later, around a quarter of a billion people a month use a version of Cohen's creation: BitTorrent.

BitTorrent is controversial. Many in the entertainment, film and music industries regard it as a dark force, consuming their industries, by encouraging illegal downloading and file sharing.

BitTorrent points out that much of the internet, including Amazon, Facebook, Twitter and large archives of open source content, run on BitTorrent. If you find and download a free copy of Newton's Principia, it arrives using BitTorrent. We have BitTorrent to thank for being able to access the 9,000 live recordings of the Grateful Dead. There are as many users of BitTorrent as there are viewers of YouTube.

Whichever side of that argument you take, there is no doubting BitTorrent's ingenuity to make a lot out of a little, and the importance of the principles it

embodies. BitTorrent decongests a system that might otherwise quickly get clogged up.

BitTorrent achieves that by cleverly dividing up a large piece of content; sourcing the different bits from different places (rather than a single server) and then reassembling them in the right order as the torrent arrives with the client. The beauty of BitTorrent is that the more people there are downloading a film the easier it gets to download, because as the number of downloaders grows, so does the number of potential sources as the viewers also become distributors.

BitTorrent is a model for how to create collective swarms of content from many different sources. By making that possible it underpins much of the collaborative, peer-to-peer activity on which the web and social media thrives.

Image 'BitTorrent Creator Bram Cohen' courtesy of Thomas Hawk

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