This year Pokémon is 20 years old, and it's easy to think it was always a success.

But the truth is the opposite. It took Satoshi, the creator of Pokémon, over 15 years from his first idea for the game until it took off, driving his company to the edge of bankruptcy in the process. The inspiration for Pokémon came from when Satoshi collected insects as a child. His friends called him 'Dr Bug', and he remembers: "Every time I found insect, it was mysterious to me. And the more I searched for insects, the more I found."

"Then development started taking place, and as it grew, all the insects were driven away." As Japan's cities grew and space for hunting bugs was lost, Satoshi dreamed of creating a video game that would give kids the same feeling of discovery.

Then, in 1981 when he was 17, Satoshi created a gaming magazine, 'Game Freak'. Satoshi describes his first creation: "It was handwritten. I stapled the pages together. It had techniques on how to win games, secret tips for games like Donkey Kong." An early reader, Ken Sugimori, became a fan and 8 years later the two of them turned Game Freak into a video game development company to develop Satoshi's 'pocket monsters' concept.

Satoshi pitched the idea of Pokémon to Nintendo in 1990, as a way for Game Boy players to play together. Nintendo didn't really get the concept, and asked him to develop the idea further. So the two of them began working on building the game with Satoshi coming up with the characters, Ken drawing them and a third partner, Junichi Masada, making the sounds and music. The next 6 years of hard work took Game Freak to the edge of bankruptcy. Staff quit for not getting paid, and the team struggled with side-jobs to pay the bills.

Junichi remembers "It was a difficult time but we never thought about giving up, or throwing it all away. We were at the office the entire time. I remember thinking how dumb it was for me to be renting an apartment because I spent so little time there. I was always at the office. We lived in that place." Desperate to see the project finished, Satoshi took an investment from Creatures Inc, a company that ended up owning a third of the rights to Pokémon.

Then, when the first Pokémon game was finally launched, there was little media interest as the Game Boy itself had lost popularity… Satoshi says of the launch, "Game Boy's popularity was declining. Just when I finished the game and took it to Nintendo, I felt like a baseball player who slides into second base even though you know you're going to be out… but then it turns out you are safe."

Luckily for Satoshi, Shigeru Miyamoto (who created Super Mario & Donkey Kong) took a liking to Satoshi, mentored him through the tough times and championed Pokémon within Nintendo.

It was 15 years after Satoshi's dream of kids collecting pocket monsters like he had collected insects that Pokémon finally took off in 1996. Pokémon has gone on to generate over $40 billion worldwide, and continues to generate over $2 billion each year. This year is Pokémon's 20th

birthday, and this week Pokémon Go has broken all records within a week to become the biggest mobile game in US history, with more daily users than the previous No.1 games, Candy Crush and Draw Something had at their peak. It's hit those records just as the worldwide launch begins, with Pokémon Go released in Germany yesterday and UK today.

Was Satoshi (an autistic, introverted creator that has had Asperger's Syndrome since birth) just lucky? Or is there a take-away in his story that applies equally to all of us?

When asked by TIME magazine if all the Pokémon creatures names meant anything, Satoshi said: "They all have meaning. Like Nyarth. It's from a Japanese proverb about a cat with money on his head that doesn't know it's there." Most likely, like Nyarth, there's money on your head that's just waiting to be discovered… So while you're exploring the world around you, remember your greatest treasure is always a lot closer than you think. "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes." ~ Marcel Proust

(Link to the article on John Hanke, the founder of Niantic Labs & creator of Pokémon Go - http://bit.ly/JohnHankes-PokemonGo)