Luis Von Ahn: Empowering Minds with Technology

Luis von Ahn grew up in Guatemala, raised by his mother who bought him a Commodore 64 computer in elementary school. This computer is not the fastest or most sophisticated machine but it sparked his fascination with technology. He came to the United States for college and then pursued a doctorate in computer science.

Luis is best known for creating CAPTCHA, the tests you take online to prove you're not a robot. These CAPTCHAs help websites prevent bots from creating fake accounts. He later developed reCAPTCHA, which protects websites and helps digitize old books by having users solve words that computers can't recognize. When you solve a reCAPTCHA, you're helping to read words that computers can't recognize.

In 2009, Luis co-founded Duolingo, a popular language-learning app that makes education accessible and fun through gamification. This innovation has made Duolingo one of the most popular ways to learn languages today. Beyond technology, Luis is passionate about education and improving lives, especially in Guatemala. He founded the ILVA Foundation to support the education of women and girls, environmental conservation, and youth participation in democracy.

Luis von Ahn's story is inspiring because he turned his early interests into groundbreaking work that helps people daily. His journey from a young boy with a simple computer to a world-renowned innovator and philanthropist is a testament to dedication and creativity.