

In Good Company: TQ Global Revved Up for Greater Success

Singapore-incorporated game developer TQ Global sets its sights on taking next-generation console game technology online.

WHEN the console game *Baja: Edge of Control* was released in August 2008 in the United States, history was made in Singapore's game industry.

Baja, an off-road racing game for Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3, was the first console game developed by a locally incorporated company, TQ Global. The game was produced in collaboration with the US game developer 2XL.

Well received by gamers for its incredible realism and high-definition graphics, *Baja* also thrills with its wide selection of racing environments, including challenging terrains replete with sheer cliffs and bumpy dunes.

Mr Raymond Neoh, Managing Director, TQ Global, is however modest about this achievement. In his view, TQ Global makes a greater difference on the Singapore game sector with its sponsorship of the Master of Engineering programme with specialisation in game development at the Nanyang Technological University.

He said: "Game development is about people talent. By training and building a pool of people for the game industry, we are helping Singapore attract investors from around the world to set up their operations here.

"Our instructors in the master's programme offer real-life game development experience as well as theoretical knowledge, and our students graduate with practical industry experience."

As part of their training, the students get involved in the production of TQ Global's actual commercial projects. *Baja* was in fact produced with the research contributions of the programme's first batch of seven students.

The US game publisher THQ had commissioned *Baja* in 2005 for US\$10 million, a decent but modest sum in the world of game development. *Baja's* R&D and production were thus outsourced from the US. Singapore was a natural choice, given its strong commitment to intellectual property protection. Together with his US partners, Mr Neoh set up TQ Global in Singapore in 2006 to undertake R&D for *Baja* while TQ Global China, in Shenzhen, took on the art and programming work.

Mr Neoh bought over the entire stake in TQ Global after *Baja* was launched. With over 100 employees in China and Singapore, and to support its game development aspirations, TQ Global had to diversify its business for viability.

The company's operations now include content digitisation and distribution. It has also expanded its business of game development training, establishing the Institute of Digital Game Technology in 2008 to train technical artists and game programmers in two diploma programmes subsidised by the Singapore Workforce Development Agency.

But TQ Global's trump card remains its next-generation console game R&D capabilities.

The company has received a grant from the National Research Foundation, through the Interactive Digital Media Programme Office hosted in the Media Development Authority, to carry out advanced research on technologies that will create more realistic terrains, ecosystems and wildlife systems for richer, more immersive gaming experiences.

The outcomes of this research could potentially be applied in game and military simulation training design, thus offering TQ Global revenue-generating licensing opportunities.

The company is also reprising its console game technologies for an online motor racing game, *TQ Motor*. To be hosted on its own web portal, the game will be launched first in China and Hong Kong in 2010.

"This portal will be a social network where gamers can engage with one another and compete globally," said Mr Neoh. The portal's revenue model will be based on micro transactions on car accessories and equipment.

"With its high-resolution 3D graphics and immersive racing environment, *TQ Motor* will provide a rich gaming experience currently not offered by any other online game," Mr Neoh added.

It sounds like TQ Global is all revved up for another winner.