

THE VANCOUVER SUN

DIGITAL ARTS COMPANY AIMS TO FILL A SERVICE NICHE

Reach Games competes for work often outsourced to Asian countries

By Marke Andrews

With more Canadian and American digital entertainment companies outsourcing work to China and other Asian countries, a new Vancouver based company hopes to provide the same services locally, at a competitive price.

Reach Games, which quietly opened its West Broadway office doors three months ago, will focus on supplying services such as animation, art design and modeling for developers and publishers as its first business before developing its own intellectual properties.

With industry veteran Rick Mischel as founder and president of the new company, **Reach Games** already has credibility. Mischel, who was CEO of Mainframe Entertainment before it was bought by Rainmaker – and who remains an executive producer with Rainmaker – has formed an experienced team. Ali Kojori, who headed Mainframe's game division, is general manager. Former Electronic Arts developer Ivan Allan is senior producer and another Mainframe mainstay, Michael Douglas, is art director.

In an interview, Mischel said he examined the North American industry to see what niche a new company could fill, and decided on the service market.

"Developers need high-quality work," said Mischel. "They don't want work coming back again and again. They want it done right the first time, they want it delivered on time and they like the fact that we're local, and by local I mean North America."



The Reach Games team includes Ali Kojori (left), president Rick Mischel, Michael Douglas and Ivan Allan.

"Developers and publishers want the intellectual property done in North America ,and they want the work done in a time zone and a locale that's easily accessible to them and they're willing to pay a small premium to have that work done in Vancouver instead of China."

Mischel said that **Reach Games**, which has a staff of eight and expects to triple that by the end of the year, can compete with overseas markets by having low overhead, small infrastructure and efficient work streams.

"[Developers] may pay a little more, but they get the security and the comfort in knowing that the work is done basically down the street," said Mischel, the bonus being that **Reach Games** uses a Vancouver talent pool "that is unsurpassed."

When it's suggested that established companies here may be worried about losing talent to the new, expanding **Reach Games**, Mischel said he would not bite the hand that feeds him.

"My business is with other publishers and developers, so it's not in my interest to alienate them," said Mischel. "It's a competitive market and if people have reasons for leaving companies and come to my company, that's their business.

"We post our job openings, and if people apply, great."

There are three jobs posted on the company website, www.reachgames.com

Down the road, **Reach Games** may produce, or co-produce with another developer, its own games.

"The plan is to be a service-based company and build up our talent base, our core team and our experience levels, and then branch out into our own intellectual property, either with other developers or by ourselves," said Mischel.

Reach Games does not oppose companies outsourcing work to Asian countries with cheaper labour, and part of its structure is to manage this work. The company's first four contracts all involve outsourced work.

Mischel is determined to keep his employees' lives free of the deadline stresses that have plagued the industry.

"We don't over-promise on schedules, so our employees don't kill themselves," Mischel said.