

Gamespot Interviews Roper

Contributed by Robbie
Tuesday, 01 July 2003

Recently after Bill Roper resigned from Blizzard North, Gamespot got a chance to ask him a few questions. Read the Full Story to get the interview, or get it at gamespot.com.

Earlier today, Blizzard Entertainment revealed that the Blizzard North cofounders Erich Schaefer, Max Schaefer, and David Brevik, plus Blizzard vice president Bill Roper, have left the studio responsible for the Diablo series, which has sold more than 10 million units worldwide. The four held the key management positions at Blizzard North, with Brevik as president and the others holding vice-president titles. We talked with Bill Roper on the phone this afternoon to get his perspective on the group's departure and their plans to form a new game company.

As surprising as the announcement may be for fans of the Diablo games, it may be even more surprising to know how quickly the group made the decision to leave. Roper said that the departures were the result of a series of very quick events. Indeed, the first time the group will meet to discuss their company plans in depth will be tomorrow morning. But what they do know for sure is that they want to start a new game project.

Roper said, "We made a very difficult decision. We love everyone at Blizzard... at the San Mateo office and at Blizzard in Irvine." And in addition to this personal well-wishing, he did reveal other reasons for wanting to see Blizzard North continue on, and said, "I want to play Diablo."

Asked what role Vivendi Universal's corporate management had to play in the decision, Roper admitted that was a big part of it: "We wanted to have a level of involvement [in deciding the studio's direction] that was not going to be made available. For the interests of the people that we work with, we should have been able to talk to the people that make the decisions and that knew what was going on." But in further describing Blizzard's situation, he said, "It's the same challenges we always faced. I have absolutely no doubt that they will keep fighting the good fight. We tried to leave them in a good place, and I honestly expect that Blizzard will continue to make great games."

The group's future isn't limited by employment contracts or non-compete agreements. Roper said that there's nothing "to stop us from approaching this any way we'd want." Lacking such legal constraints, the new game company may hire current Blizzard employees at some point in the future.

Roper repeatedly mentioned how very excited the group is at the possibilities that lie ahead. The four have worked as a very tight knit creative group, according to Roper. The Schaefer brothers are artists by training and Brevik is a programmer, and all have been project leads and designers as a part of Blizzard's philosophy that has developers wearing many hats.

Starting over as a "lean and mean" company will grant them new creative freedom. In fact, Roper is sure that they'll initially come with too many ideas and will have to trim back to find the great one. He also admitted, "We'd love to be talking with publishers" and mentioned that interested parties could get in touch on the company cell phone at 650-207-6030 (serious inquiries only, please).

The company's next steps are to decide on a name and set up a Web site. We can expect to hear more concrete details on the company's future plans very soon.

source: gamespot.com