



Jason Hall - CEO Monolith Software - No College No Problem

High-tech profile: Jason Hall, Monolith Productions

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KIRKLAND -- At age 18, Jason Hall fulfilled his childhood dream. He aced the stock brokers' exam and became the youngest broker ever to work at Stewart James Investment Banking firm.

Fortunately for computer gamers, he soon discovered that he "didn't like the kind of person you have to be to be highly successful in that area."

At 27, Hall was the CEO of an aggressive, young video game company called Monolith Productions. And it's clear that he -- and his Kirkland-based company -- enjoyed their jobs a lot more.

"We have almost no turnover here," said Hall "quite an accomplishment considering the software industry's tight labor market. And just last year, the company was rated as one of the best small businesses in the state to work for by Washington CEO magazine.

"You would think that with all the whipping around here, people would get tired of it," Hall jokes.

Formerly the Duke Nukem 3D champion of the world, Hall is a video game fanatic. And he's just as much a diehard about his company's 3D technology, the "LithTech" Engine.

"It's definitely the best 3D technology available right now," he says. "Period."

Developed in collaboration with Microsoft, the engine draws much of its strength from its adherence to standards and congruity with the level of hardware that gamers actually own. He adds: "It's almost as if we built the first commercial airline and everyone else is flying biplanes."

JASON HALL

Company name: Monolith Productions **Headquarters:** Kirkland **Web site:** www.lith.com

Employees: 65 **Founded:** 1995

Describe what your company does: "Monolith develops and publishes PC games. Many of our titles we develop and self-publish like 'Shogo: Mobile Armor Division,' we also publish other titles from external developers like 'Rage of Mages.' Along with that, we also develop games for larger publishers like GT Interactive."

Title: CEO **Residence:** Kirkland **Education:** "School of Hard Knocks," L.A.

Family and pets: None **First job:** "Paperboy (age 14)"

Other notable job experience: "I have a Series 7 trading license, and worked at an investment banking firm as an in-house broker."

Favorite game as a kid: "Archon" (Electronic Arts)

Favorite game of all time: Chess, "because it exercises the mind!"

Last books read: The Complete Writings of Josephus, The "Incredible Hulk" No. 470, "Physical Enhancement with an Edge" and "Making Management Work --"

Last CD purchased: Adam Sandler "They're All Gonna Laugh At You!"

Car you drive: '98 Corvette

Musical instruments you play: piano, violin, cello.

Business idols: Bill Gates and George Lucas

Motivational quote: "And I took the path less traveled by, and that has made all the difference." " Robert Frost

How did you first get interested in technology?: "There never was a time that I wasn't interested. I think I was just 'born' interested. As far as I can remember, I've had a need to be heavily involved with technology."

Target audience: "People who play games! We have a variety of titles for mature audiences and the whole family."

Competitors: "Other computer game publishers such as EA (Electronic Arts), Sierra, GT Interactive, etc."

Is there one event that put your company on the map?: "No. It has been a steady chain of solid growth and accomplishment that has put us on the map."

What has been the reaction to 'Shogo': "Very positive. All of the gaming magazines out there have given 'Shogo' a near perfect score. The title is definitely critically acclaimed. The strength of the title has allowed us to ship over 100,000 units already." (Note: 'Shogo' was released four weeks ago)

Explain the "Interactive Music Technology" used in Shogo: "IMA is the predecessor to Direct Music by Microsoft. The music is composed in the game controlled by action and level elements. With IMA you have CD quality sound that is a new song every time you play rather than a prewritten track that is the same over and over."

What do you see on the horizon for Monolith?: "Lots of hard work. Steady growth. Successful game products that become strong franchises."

What has been your greatest challenge so far?: "Streamlining game production. Controlling our production schedules. Minimizing our development costs has helped keep the company healthy and strong."

What do you see as your greatest challenge in the future?: "Growing our technology market share through the licensing of our 3-D engine, as well as continuing to sell lots and lots of our great games!"

What do you see on the horizon for your industry as a whole?: "It will continue to grow and change. More and more people are buying computers and more and more people are playing games, so I certainly see a lot of growth. I also see a lot of new kinds of games making their way into the market. Games that are much more mass consumer oriented."

How do you attract and retain employees?: "We have strong salary packages and an aggressive stock option plan. Everyone here has something to gain when the company does well."

What effects has growth had on the flavor of your company?: "It has made the company more serious and determined. We have a lot of our time invested into this place and we are going to make it continue to be successful " the growth has helped to create a flexible but efficient system that lets us get our work done faster."

Secret weapon: "We own our own state-of-the-art 3-D technology that we co-developed with Microsoft. We can produce games that are better than our competition, but in nearly half the time."