

Foreword

When I was in Salt Lake with the rest of the crew living with my wife and 4 other guys in that 3 bed room apartment working 80 hours a week making "Legacy Of the Fallen", I'd often thought about writing one of the "postmortem" article you have in "Game developer" magazine, not only as a personal therapy but also to help any other starting developer that may be in the situation we were last year.

Here it is Ewen...)

Legacy Of the Fallen
(Shogo-MAD ADD-ON pack)

Developed By:
Anarchy Arts
Salt Lake City, Utah
<http://www.anarchy-arts.com>

Release Date: never

Intended platform: Windows 95/98/NT

Project budget: 60 000 (17 500\$)

Project length: 7 months

Team Size: 10 (5 in house)

Everything began around September 1998, Shogo was about to be release and we were working on our own project, when one day our Agents asked us if we wanted to do a ADD-ON pack for Shogo, being a young and unknown developer that was a good way to make ourselves notice and to make some money in the process, of course we accepted.

The Gathering.

At that point Anarchy Arts was still a virtual company, with member spread all over the worlds. With that contract we had to gather somewhere to work on the Game, most of the member being American we decide to all moved to Salt Lake city, where Shawn, my friend and co-owner live. That move was also because I knew it was impossible for us to do the job if we had stayed a virtual company.

By the start of December all the Core member of the team, were assembled under one roof and ready to make their First ADD-ON Pack. Here is what went right, what went wrong, and thing to avoid when doing your first game project.

What Went Right.

The Way "Legacy of the Fallen" development went, its kinda hard to find bright spot to this whole experience, but there is some.

1-Freedom.

The fact that Monolith gave us a lot of creative freedom was very appreciated, although this freedom allow you to built a story the way you like it, and produce the materials you want, it is also dangerous when you are starting, because without a minimum of guidance you can wander off path pretty quickly, and produce material that is not exactly what the people owning the franchise are expecting.

2-The Engine.

Monolith Did a good job with LithTech, Although this can be argued for a long time, I think LithTech, is a very good Engine, not awesome one, but not a poor one either. With a minimum of practice you can built good level geometry, the Hollow and extrude function are sweet as hell, sure thing get tricky when you use to much of the Hollow function, (you have to be careful and delete the illegal brush you are sometime creating) but the time it save make up for it. Adding Door and other Objects can be a pain at first, but once you know how to do it and if you use good Grouping Technique it can be done in a effective way.

3-Our Agent.

In all this turmoil there was one guy who stand with us all the way, our Agent. Heck he even gave us some money at the end when we were really short, thank a lot George.

That's about it for What went right, Sure I met some new good friend, saw some beautiful part of the USA, but that is another story.

What went wrong.

1-Overdesign.

The first mistake we did, with LOF was to make it too big, for the ability of our crew. being an ADD-ON pack, and our first project we should have kept it simple, but the wish to release a kick ass ADD-ON product, and to do something new and unique was too strong, So We then Ended-up with multiple ending, almost 20 different way to go from level 00 to level 18, and a very complicated storyline. Very Soon we realized that we had put too much stuff into the game, and that it would be hard to do it all. Wanting to be true to our contract we tried to do everything, but near the end we found ourselves cutting stuff out.

2-Be prepared.

The Project was offered to us in September 98, and was supposed to be out around April 99. 7 Months of development, looking back, it was crazy to accept. Anyway the point I want to make is by the time we started the development, the Design document was not done yet, sure we had a story and a couple of sketches, but nothing more, so often I found myself designing monster or weapons minutes before the modelers start building it or even give the whole design job to the modelers themselves. Needless to say that this way of doing things, is a huge waste of time, and effort, often we found ourselves redoing models twice because the first one was not good enough.

3-Right Tools.

Even if the LithTech Engine was nice to work with this is only a part of the tools you need to make a game good model and textures tools are needed too, unfortunately both were absent. The Story about those tools is quite simple, Monolith developed Shogo using Softimage, of course they built an export plugin for Softimage which works really well. Unfortunately for us our modelers were using 3DS MAX. In an attempt to build an exporter for MAX Monolith contracted a third party, at first the exporter they did seem to work ok but as time went on, we started to run more and more into export problems, geometry, texture and

sometimes both, were not right. All these problems delayed us a lot. After a couple of versions from the third party, Monolith helped us out, by taking some of their time to build a new exporter from the ground up. When we stopped the development, the plugin from Monolith was not perfect, but it was better than all the others. As for texture tools, the Photoshop plugin was nice, but the skinning job would have been a lot easier and faster if we would have been able to view the skin of the model in the ModelEditor provided by Monolith. I understand these were first generation tools and I am confident the problems will be fixed eventually.

4-Get an Office.

This would seem, obvious, but in the situation we were in it was impossible and quite frankly at the time it seem useless, we could just work, eat and sleep in the apartment. In theory its perfect you save a lot of travelling time, you can be aware at 7h00 am and working at 7h05. But in reality its not. I wont go into specific situation, but soon enough we ran into problem. Trust me there is nothing like an office space where you peoples know they are their to work, not play or watch movie.

5-Hire Local peoples.

Once again this would seem obvious, but the way our company started (Guys all over the world working together to make games) there was no way we would fire everyone and hire peoples living in Salt Lake city. Well 8 months later we know that's what we should have done.

6-Be sure of Your funding.

Even if its Rare for a first project team to get, upfront money to develop an ADD-ON pack, our Agent was able to do it, so we started out with a somewhat small budget that was spread out in four Milestone and a signing Bonus. When you look at other budget in the game industry our was very small, but we were ready to use that money to pay the bill, give ourselves a small salary and hire outside help if need be. To make a long story Short we never got pay for 2 months of work. This turn of event was what hurt the production the most.

7-The support.

Upon the opening of our LOF web site, we were hit pretty hard by Shogo Fan on some forum, about the quality of our work, Maybe we had earn some of those harsh critic, but I think that in the situation we were in and with the tools we had, it was the best we could do. Peoples should be sure they can do better before flaming anyone, and in the light of the recent event with other Shogo ADD-ON and what is happening in the Shogo community

I think no one could have achieve what we did.

The Bottom line.

We could go on and on about whose fault, the cancellation of LOF was, Monolith, Anarchy Arts, the publisher, the Agent, the Fan?

At Some point and to some extend we all did something wrong that added up to lead to the cancellation. Its no use pointing finger, we have learn from our mistake and we will go on with other project.

In the end I'd like to thank a few Peoples that helped us and Gave us a change to make Anarchy Arts and Legacy of the Fallen work.

Monolith
GamesAgents
PlanetShogo
GaGames
My Wife, Julie
Shawn Gonzales and his Family
Ewen Vowels
Chris Gentile
Jeff Gouge
Jeremy Northup
Jon Olson
Dustin Morell
Tommy Mellberg
Richard Vale
Christopher Buecheler
Paul Cottingham
Tom Cain
And every Fan who sent letter of support,
Thanks to you all.

Daniel Marcoux
Producer of LOF
Head Graphic Guy for Anarchy Arts.