

New Company in Town

Helmed by industry veterans, Trion World Network, Inc. debuts at E3 Expo.



While the E3 Expo is an opportunity for the big video games companies to unveil their upcoming slates of triple-A titles, it is also an opportunity for smaller or new gaming companies to introduce themselves to the interactive entertainment community.

One company saying "Hi, nice to meet you," at this year's E3 Expo is Trion World Network, Inc., a relatively new developer and publisher focused on massively multiplayer online games for the PC. But while Trion itself is new, its staff is actually comprised of industry veterans who, collectively, have worked on more than a hundred games. Most recent additions to the team, for example, include Capcom and Electronic Arts alumnus Malcolm Dunne as Senior Vice President of Finance, and ex-LucasArts and NCSoft staffer Dorothy Ferguson as Trion's Vice President of Sales.

Trion currently has three games in the works, though only one has a name: Heroes of Telara (or, as they like to refer to it, HOT). HOT is a fantasy game along the lines of World

of Warcraft, Warhammer Online, and other Tolkien-esque MMOs, and Trion are promising "an unprecedented level of rich and dynamic gameplay, driven by recurring events, unexpected challenges, and limitless new content." The game is slated to be released next year.

Trion is also currently developing an as-yet-unnamed persistent world game in conjunction with the Sci Fi Channel, which itself is simultaneously developing a corresponding TV show. While details are limited (though forthcoming), Trion and Sci Fi have said that the game is a massively multiplayer online action role-playing game (MMOARPG) that is based on an original idea, not an existing IP such as a comic book, movie series, or television show. The two companies have also promised that the game and the show would be so intertwined and interconnected that events in the show will have an effect on the game, and vice versa.

Also on Trion's slate is a similarly unnamed massively multiplayer online real-time strategy game (MMORTS).

Unlike its other games, which are being developed internally, the MMORTS is being made by Las Vegas, Nevada-based developer Petroglyph Games, which has made such regular real-time strategy games as 2006's *Star Wars: Empire At War* and its expansion *Star Wars: Empire At War: Forces of Corruption* for LucasArts, and 2007's *Universe At War: Earth Assault* for Sega. Petroglyph is also currently developing the Greek myth themed Mytheon, a microtransaction-driven free-to-play MMO for True Games that is due out this fall, as well as an unannounced game for the Xbox 360.

A privately held company, Trion has raised funds from both top media companies and game industry venture capitalists, including such familiar names as Time Warner, NBC Universal, and Bertelsmann. The company is currently headquartered in Redwood City, California, but also has a development studio in San Diego, California, and a tech studio in Austin, Texas. And, it seems, some very big plans for the future.