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Opportunity Assessment: Return of the King

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he goal from the outset with Return of the King, says Kim, was to turn it into a perennial business. The "X" for Two Towers was "play the movie," but Return of the King was "live the movie." The development was brought in-house. Fan feedback was incorporated. The game was done in 16 languages for X-Box, Playstation2, GameBoy Advance, Nintendo GameCube, and the PC.

Transcript

And so now, fast-forward again to what Return of the King was. And so after Two Towers, we're like, "OK, we did it. That was basically a turnaround story. Now, what we need to do is to take Return of the King and turn it into a perennial business for EA." So the board was set for the Return of the King. Last year, our X was "play the movie." This year, our X was "live the movie." We want to surround you in that movie world. Our goal for Return of the King -- and this is why all of you, guys, have to go out and buy the game -- is to be the Top 5 game of 2003. That's a mistake. Capitalize on that final trilogy moment. We're never going to get to the point where it's the last -- it's like The Return of the Jedi -- moment of the trilogy. And everybody is going to be in a Lord of the Rings frenzy up until to Christmas.

We brought the development from that third-party developer in-house so that we can actually have an EA team with an EA culture set already intact. And we're also going to build internal technology that we are going to be able to use for the studio and use for Return of the King and the rest of the Lord of the Rings for our grandchildren. We want to create a $250-million business for the Return of the King and the creative imperative was set as well. The other great thing about this, and I'll talk about this a little bit later, was that core team of five, we were still on the project. So we had that latent experience together and we also had sort of an idea of what that vision is going to be. When we thought about Return of the King, we said, "Let's not make a game." Let's make entertainment. Let's refine our craft. Let's push the medium to see what we can do. Let's make the best movie game in the history of gaming. Let's listen to our fans." At this point, we actually have feedback from our fans that said, "But you didn't have this.

You didn't have co-op. It's the Fellowship of the Ring." So we listened to that. We brought on co-op. If Two Towers was considered Golden Ax which was a module that we're speaking about last year, we wanted Return of the King to be Gauntlet. Gauntlet is the classic video game, sort of co-op mode. And then we also added an online as a feature as well for the PlayStation 2. In Two Towers, there was no environment interaction. The environment kind of scrolled behind you. In Return of the King, you can actually pick up the pen and throw it at somebody and stuff like that. Also, make more Fellowship playable.

What about the hobbit? What about Gandalf? Everybody wants to be a wizard. So that was sort of our creative imperative. And then the delivery, I can tell you so many stories about the delivery of the Return of the King. Not only do we have to do it in 16 languages across the Xbox, PlayStation 2, Gameboy Advanced, the Game Cube and the PC. This was, sort of for myself, the largest, most complicated game that I have ever worked on and probably within the history of EA.