TAKE THIS JOB: CREATIVE MANAGER

Our monthly look at the jobs you want—with tips from the guys who have them

ROGERS' DETAILS

Experience: 13 years in the game biz
Notable games: God of War; Max Payne; Ghosts of the Galaxy; Pac-Man World; SpongeBob SquarePants: Lights, Camera, Pants!: John Madden Football

Creative director job data
Salary range: $70,000 to $120,000
Recommended education: Originally, Rogers, who wanted to work in comic books, studied fine art in school, but he realized there were better job opportunities in film. So he upped his education quotient with a double major in fine art and film production. "Study things aside from games—math, science, archaeology—because you never know when you're going to use that information in building your game," he says.

Location of most jobs: At game-publisher headquarters on the West Coast
Current level of demand: It's quite a specialty job, so fairly low.

What's a creative manager?
Rogers is an idea man. He communicates game ideas to developers while telling licensors (like the SpongeBob people) what will make a great game. "I have more potential to come up with game ideas than if I were pretty much anywhere else in the industry," he says. "It was something I'd do once every couple of years when I was a lead designer. Now it's once a month. I get to steer the direction of the game, so if I can get one idea in there that's different, I've done my job."

Rogers' typical day
Lots of e-mails, meetings, traveling; playing early versions of games; writing feedback and documentation; reading magazines, generating game ideas; pitching games to licensors and/or THQ, meeting with the marketing department, and more. His art background comes in handy, too. "My ability to draw is what I bring to the table," says Rogers. "I can say I want a game that's like Asteroids but with a TIE fighter-looking ship with a green hand that crashes the asteroids... but drawing it out is much easier."

How'd he get the gig?
Out of school, Rogers worked for eight months at an animation studio—until they laid everyone off. "I was hanging out in a coffee shop," he says, "and a friend at a game company called Silicon & Synapse [which eventually went on to work on WarCraft] said, 'You know how to draw on a computer, right? We're looking for people.' From there, Rogers went to a company called Park Place Productions, where he worked drawing characters for various sports games, ranging from John Madden Football to NHL. Hockey Night. Then it was off to work Sony's San Diego studio. He eventually ended up at THQ.
—Evan Shooman

TOOLS OF HIS TRADE

His brain
"It's crammed full of all sorts of junk," he says, "and being able to pull that junk out at any moment's notice is pivotal. That's my job—keeping current with all that stuff."

Game-test stations
Possibly Rogers' most important tool: "I'm constantly playing builds of games we're working on," he says. "I must play builds of each game once every two to three weeks, and I always have to provide feedback. That's my port into the production team."

Photoshop
Rogers uses this art-manipulation program to mock up drawings, quickly coming up with design sketches so he can communicate ideas to developers. "Art comes in superhelpful when I'm doing what I do now," he says. "I used to draw football players and cowboy lizards; we're all game geeks and it helps having that visual vocabulary."

Passport
"Seems like I'm always traveling," he says. "We have developers in Budapest, New York City, Chile, the U.K., Canada, Florida, Japan. I'm thankful for this part of the job."