

# Sony Online Entertainment

## 1) Can you give the readers some background on Sony Online Entertainment?

Sony Online Entertainment LLC (SOE) is a recognized worldwide leader in massively multiplayer online games (MMOs), with millions of gamers around the globe having enjoyed the company's products over the years. SOE creates, develops and provides compelling entertainment for the personal computer, online, game console and wireless markets. Known for its blockbuster franchises and hit titles including *EverQuest®*, *EverQuest® II*, *Champions of Norrath®*, *Untold Legends™*, and *PlanetSide®*, as well as for developing *Star Wars Galaxies™*, SOE continues to redefine the business of online gaming and the creation of active player communities while introducing new genres on various entertainment platforms. Headquartered in San Diego, CA, with additional development studios in Austin, TX, Seattle, WA, Denver, CO, Los Angeles, CA and Taiwan, SOE also has an array of cutting-edge games in development such as *DC Universe™ Online*, *Free Realms™* and *The Agency™*.

## 2) What does Sony Online Entertainment specialize in, and what sets you apart in the marketplace?

SOE specializes in persistent interactive entertainment. Our key market differentiator is that our games aren't static box products; they're evolving online worlds that grow and change to reflect customer expectations with content and technology updates. SOE is constantly striving to redefine the online game entertainment experience. We're about to release a product called *Station Launcher™* that's going to be great for the social experience in and around our live games. It has integrated voice and chat services so players can stay in touch with their friends whether they're playing or not. For our games that are in development, we're working on a host of community and customer tools to improve and extend the gaming experience beyond the desktop and the console.

## 3) How do you typically use market research, and what value does it provide?

Our number one market research priority is customer data. We have an enthusiastic customer base, and we actively solicit feedback from them at every opportunity. In house, we use a robust database system to manage quantitative trend analysis. This lets us react quickly and appropriately to any changes in customer behavior.

## 4) How has iModerate helped you?

iModerate has helped us to integrate qualitative feedback mechanisms that shape our business decisions. Sometimes we need an extra level of qualitative detail from our players so we can make sure

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that what we're offering them is exactly what they want. iModerate's chat sessions have helped us acquire valuable insight into customer preferences that would have been difficult to obtain using traditional survey instruments.

## **5) What do you see as the next “big thing” in your industry?**

For the MMO videogame segment, business models are going through a significant transition right now. Most Western market MMOs use a monthly subscription model to generate the majority of their revenue. As development costs for new products increase, however, game developers and publishers have started to explore alternate business models to drive adoption and increase revenue. Direct digital distribution (of primary content and add-on content) is growing more popular, and pre-paid retail game cards that contain special product keys for downloading game clients are also gaining popularity. Emerging revenue models within the games themselves include micro-transactions (small one-time payments for additional content) and VIP access (regular payments for additional content or privileges).

## **6) What can we look forward to from Sony Online Entertainment in the next few months?**

Our latest game, *Free Realms*, is poised to make a huge impact on the \$1.5 billion worldwide casual online games market! Do what you want to do, when you want to do it, in a 3D world of lush landscapes and fun wildlife. Teach your virtual pet new tricks or grow vegetables and flowers in a relaxed environment; or if adventuring is more your style then become a wizard, search for lost treasure and duel other players in a great mix of real-world experiences and fantasy adventure. With weekly and monthly content updates, regular special events, and even user-created parties, it's almost time to join tons of other players and discover the delights of *Free Realms*! Keep a lookout for *Free Realms* Beta in the Fall.