Zitro: Combining science and art to achieve gaming synergy

As the varied sectors of the global gaming industry prepare to meet at this year's ICE London, the world leading developer, Zitro Gaming highlights the importance of creative content experiences and teamwork regardless of whether its for land-based, online or social verticals. Talking ahead of the company's showcase on Stand: N6-160 in London, Johnny Ortiz, founder of Zitro, explores the relationship between technology and ideas, the power of passion and why being one big family continues to drive Zitro's success…

Zitro is a long term supporter of ICE London – how do you use the event to gain maximum benefit and what products are you bringing to the show?
Without a doubt ICE London is one of the most important events in our industry, and for us in particular, to show our current and future customers our full range of proven products as well as brand new releases. Visitors can see first-hand how well designed and executed our offering is and how it stands out compared to our competition, even to the most established suppliers. ICE also allows us to reiterate to the industry a compromise of delivering first-class service, adapted to our constant growing offering.

You have interests in both land-based and online – do you have separate creative teams for each sector or do they overlap and share ideas?
At Zitro we create gaming experiences. We then distribute the content through the various possible channels to reach the maximum amount of players, whether it's land-based, online or social - the essence is the same, we just need to make the necessary adjustment required for each channel. For example, the gamification varies between social and land-based and we have people who create the experiences and then we have experts that adapt them to the channels. I don't like to talk about different creative teams, as we are all one team. Zitro is one big family and we are all in the same boat rowing towards the same objective of becoming a global gaming leader.

How do you recruit the right talent to the various teams and where do you recruit from?
Despite the technical capacities of the personnel we recruit, we like to identify if a future employee shares our core values: Passion, Compromise, Team Spirit, Quality and Innovation. If a person has these values in their DNA, his or her adaptation to our organization will be much easier. In terms of how and where we recruit, it obviously

depends on the country and the position we are trying to cover. Our experienced HR team figures out the best solution based on each vacancy we want to fill.

Can you describe a 'normal' day for the people working at Zitro?
The international growth means each and every one of us wakes up in the morning knowing about the progress that our colleagues have made on the other side of the oceans, allowing us to prioritize better and help each other. It provides true satisfaction to see how teamwork and compromise helped us to accomplish, in just a few years, what other companies took decades.

What's more important technology or ideas?
This is a very interesting question, although not easy to respond to. A gaming experience is created based on science and art. Two components that can't work without each other. Now, if you want to measure for every single game which one is more important, that is where it becomes very tricky. Experiences are based on emotional connections to human beings and this is where the limits between science and art become blurry. Now clearly, between ideas and technology one can't work without the other, you first need an idea… without that, even the best technology can't help. However, if you have a good idea and combine it with cutting edge technology, this is when you convert them into something great and this is where we put our focus at Zitro.

On a personal level where do you get your inspiration from – which personalities outside of the gaming sector would you describe as being inspirational and why?
During my career I had the privilege to get to know a lot of people that have inspired me along my journey, and who have motivated me in a way or another, but aren't necessarily famous. To name a person that everybody can refer to due to his popularity worldwide and who has deeply affected me as a business person, I would name Steve Jobs. Two of our core values are also values that have marked his life: Passion and Innovation. His story is truly amazing, the way that he believed in and pushed innovation, even when others would call him crazy, has taken his companies to incredible levels of success. However, everything he has done, the things which went extremely well, as well as the ones that didn't as much, he did with passion. He truly believed and felt the things he was doing and has fought for them, even when things were extremely complicated. I believe his passion acted as the engine of his success and is the real reason for it. I relate to him in this sense very much.

How has the industry changed over the years – are their fewer big personalities? Is it more or less entrepreneurial in its outlook?

The leading suppliers of this industry have changed during the last decades, however we can identify a pattern that repeats itself: a dynamic company with solid leadership can be very successful until it is absorbed by a big corporation, as this is when the company's culture and leadership gets diluted. At Zitro our challenge is to maintain a firm and clearly defined path, with a solid leadership that allows us to keep growing without the distortion that a lot of companies, victims of a consolidation, are suffering.

The gaming industry is the second fastest adopter of new technology, how do you keep ahead of the curve in terms of the advances that are being made and that are available?
As a manufacturer it is part of our obligation to be always on top of the latest and identify the best to make our products stand out from the rest. That includes technology of course. Nothing however can replace the science or the art I mentioned earlier to create a great game. However, a great game can be an extraordinary experience thanks to the technology we have available nowadays.

Would you say that delivering choice and variety represent the cornerstones of your game development strategy and if so what are the key demographics that you design for?
Offering a variety of options provides our customers the certainty that his or her investment is secure. But more than the variety, what really matters is the quality and if the products and that the content is adapted to the end user, or player, if you will. For example, whether it's a product for a local player or for casinos with a higher component of occasional visitors.

How difficult is it to engage with Generation Z?
The casinos face the challenge of being accepted by Generation Z as an attractive option for entertainment and not to be considered only a place for mature people. We as manufacturers have the obligation to help the casinos during this transformation by designing products that connect emotionally with the younger generations. At Zitro this is something that we always have in mind when creating products.

You put a lot of emphasis on customer service and attention – how does a growing international company deliver this on a consistent basis?
For an international company to be successful it needs to work as a local company in each country where it is present. This doesn't mean necessarily that a physical office is needed in each country, but that you connect on a cultural level with your customers and speak their language. In addition, putting the necessary technical and human resource available to be able to attend the needs of the customers.