

Messages from Modern Inventors to the Next Generation

Season 2

5. *Dragon Quest Monsters: Battle Road Victory*

- Mr. Ryutaro Ichimura, Producer, Square Enix Co., Ltd.



“Dragon Quest” first entered the market as a home video game 20 years ago. The love for this video game series extends beyond the generation gap and the genre of video games.

The reasons for the success of “Dragon Quest” include not only the interesting features of the game but also the efforts to increase new users of the product.

Above all, the success of the game is due to the passion, added to the idea and awareness of the actual condition, of Mr. Ichimura, who created “Dragon Quest” to delight players.

Introduction of the product/technology

Dragon Quest was originally an arcade card game in which players competed against enemy monsters by using cards with pictures of a variety of characters and monsters on them. The characters and monsters appeared in the “Dragon Quest” series, which first went on sale in 1986 as a home video game. The originally popular series of combat system was simplified in the way that enabled players to use only two buttons to engage in combat. The strategic aspect of the game along with the simple combat system enabled players to quickly obtain a high degree of satisfaction. It is now possible to enjoy new dynamic game features, which include the “*yuki* (lit. courage) *gage*” and the movement of a “sword.”.



“Dragon Quest Monsters Battle Road II”

What inspired you to invent or develop the product/technology?

Around the time that I was planning to create this product, I was concerned that young generation players were not entering the market while Dragon Quest users were growing older.

Just around the time that I was thinking about how “DoraQue” could be presented to children, I saw children crowding around kids card games like “Mushiking(ムシキング)(*)”. I was envious and at the same time deeply impressed that so many children were absorbed in such an utterly new game genre. At that moment, I made up my mind to use this new genre to make Dragon Quest attractive to many children.

I believe that “envy” is a “strong emotion” and can be a major driving force when planning and developing games. My envy ignited my passion to create the product.

* “ムシキング” is a registered trademark of SEGA Corporation.

What specific ideas and difficulties have you faced in inventing or developing the product?

At that time, there were many types of games in the genre of “kids card games.” We needed to establish specific game development concepts that would enable us to compete effectively in the market. The concepts include that a game should have an “overwhelming impact” and be “simple but profound.” You can see a drawing of a game machine below, which was based on my own images of a “sword” thrust downward into the center of the game machine.

I intended for the game machine to have a strong impact so that players desired to “touch the game machine” when they saw it. I have therefore pursued the profound nature of games, which enables small children and Dragon Quest fan adults to enjoy playing the game by handling only two buttons.

One of the most difficult challenges was to create a mechanism in which the sword rises during a certain phase of the game and is thrust downward back into the game machine. Initially, the person in charge of creating this mechanism considered it an almost impossible achievement in consideration of the situation; i.e., safety, durability and other aspects. Creating the mechanism was however considered as a hurdle which had to be crossed to achieve “overwhelming impact,” and all development members made every effort to bring the idea to fruition by trial and error. As a result, this sword mechanism came to be considered the game’s greatest feature and regarded as a synonym for the game itself.



*Drawing by Mr. Ichimura and Photo of “Dragon Quest Monsters Battle Road”

What message would you like to convey to the next generation?

One cannot create an invention by merely wishing to invent something. An invention is created for the sake of achieving a certain purpose.

In my case, as the result of having racked my brains in order to discover ways to “entertain people,” I managed to succeed in creating the invention. The important thing is, as I mentioned above, is to “think deeply.” It is also important to have “friends who can be relied upon” and with whom one’s thoughts can be shared in order to continue moving in the right direction.

When you have achieved your goal, you will receive wonderful rewards. These include the following words and phrases uttered by many people: “How interesting!” “How fortunate we are that we can play with such a wonderful game!” and “Thank you.” These words and phrases gave me tremendous satisfaction. I felt even happier when my staff expressed their gratitude to me for letting them participate in the project. Their kind words, “We are extremely happy that we have been included in the project team for this game,” brought tears to my eyes. I suppose that it is only in this kind of business that all of the people concerned can be happy and completely satisfied with their achievement.

Now, you are highly expected to become involved in creative activities for the happiness of many people which result in something wonderful, “inventions”!