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Digital Domain hiring ahead of schedule, company adding another Port St. Lucie location

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PORT ST. LUCIE — Digital Domain Holdings is moving ahead to hire 500 employees by 2014 in exchange for getting nearly \$70 million worth of state and local incentives and is also expanding beyond expectations.

Digital Domain Holdings Chairman John Textor said the company has reached the 100-employee mark.

“Our target for year end is 61, so this puts us well ahead of that,” he said. “Our goal is to get to more than 500 people by the end of 2014. And at 100 employees and hiring very quickly, with a plan to hire an additional 200 by mid year (2011), we’re really going to blow away our projections.”

In exchange for city incentives, Digital Domain agreed to hire up to 500 people with an average annual salary of about \$65,000.

Textor said an “overwhelming” majority of the 100 employees are local hires. Dozens, including one of the city’s laid off police officers, are from Port St. Lucie. Others are from Treasure Coast counties.

“The company is growing beyond planned,” Textor said.

In addition to an approximate 130,000 square-foot studio the city is building for the company in Tradition, Digital Domain Holdings also is in the midst of leasing 65,000 square feet of space on the eastern side of the city along U.S. 1, Textor said.

The lease is expected to be formalized within days. The company also acquired 4 acres last week from Tradition developer Core Communities for future expansion. The 4 acres front the Tradition studio and tie into Village Parkway. The company now has 19 acres in Tradition.

Digital Domain Holdings also occupies temporary space at Tradition Station, formerly Core Communities headquarters, and in the Kight Center for Emerging Technologies at Indian River State College.

The company also plans to build the Digital Domain Institute in West Palm Beach, a four-year program in advanced digital media supported by the College of Motion Picture Arts at Florida State University.

Last month, Digital Domain Holdings conducted a Tech Job Fair at Digital Domain Park. As a result of the tech fair, which drew thousands of job seekers, the company has hired 50 additional employees.

“We’re hiring every day now,” Textor said. “We’re off to a good start. Our fingers are crossed.”

Work performed in the Tradition studio will be much like what consumers would see in a Pixar or Dreamworks animated film, Textor said. The Tradition studio also will produce simulation programs for the U.S. military.

Digital Domain’s eastern location will focus more on 3-D visual effects for live-action feature films, a field the company hadn’t planned on entering, Textor said.

“The studio at Tradition was always intended to basically support our original content animation business where we’re doing full length feature films for the family-focused market,” Textor said.

The company’s studios in Venice, Calif., and Vancouver, British Columbia, produce visual effects for live action feature films, television commercials and animation for feature films. Digital Domain Holdings also has a growing studio in the San Francisco area, which is involved in similar work, Textor said.

“This facility that we’re opening up on the eastern side of Port St. Lucie will be an additional resource for our team out in California and Vancouver to do work that is complementary for projects that are happening in those studios,” Textor said.



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