

Interview With Ben Joseph P. Banta, Founder Of Ranida Games

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Abstract

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Q1: What is Ranida Games? When was it founded/created, and by whom? Why did you choose this name (and does it has a specific meaning)? Why or for what purpose?

Founded in March 2015, Ranida Games is an indie game development company based in San Pedro Laguna, Philippines. The studio is founded by Ben Banta, CEO/Head of Games, and Walter Manalo, Head of Business Development. Ben has been in the game industry since 2008 and has produced massive hits and popular online flash game franchises such as *Sniper Assassin*, *Potty Racers* and *Dragon Slayers*. The team is made up of industry experts who have been working in the Philippine game industry for more than half a decade. The team is made of former Gonzo Games employees who were also responsible for the design and development of *Q*Bert: Rebooted* for the PC and PlayStation and *Sniper Assassin* for mobile. Our company also develops advergames for branding & product marketing as well as "gamification" of tools that target companies for employee training, productivity, engagement, and retention.

The studio name came about as an inside joke between the founding members. A poll was created to determine the name of the new studio and one of the original employees has an irrational fear of frogs – Ranidaphobia. Ranida Phobic Studios won the poll and this also became the inspiration for the logo of the company. Later on, the “Phobic” was dropped from the official name and Ranida Games became the official name for the studio.

Ranida Games was founded because the founders and original employees loved playing games just as much as they love making them. It is this passion that they have for all things gaming that drives them to develop quality games that they – and other people – can enjoy.



Figure 1. The Ranida team.

Q2: What are the objectives, aims or concepts you want to share with the world? What is unique in Raninda Games, and in what way is it innovative?

We at Ranida Games love gaming more than anything. We love games and we believe that it is a medium that is not being fully utilized right now. As with other medium, gaming can be used to convey an idea, thought, emotion, or experience and it is this potential that is still not being maximized to its fullest. The biggest difference between traditional media and games is that games are much more interactive. Players can decide what they want to do and how they want to do it. This allows us to give them a first-hand experience as they are the ones creating their journey and we are merely guiding them through it. This is the reason why we do not just make games that are fun to play; we create high quality games that create impact. Whether it is the newest viral craze, revitalizing a brand, expressing our country’s culture, or even as a learning and evaluation tool; we try to create quality games that express a certain idea or fill a certain niche.

Another thing that we at Ranida Games try to accomplish is to market the Filipino brand. We believe that the local scene of game development in the country is still young but has a lot of potential. We also believe that our country has a lot more to offer which is why we do not shy away from making Filipino-centric games. We feel that our culture and taste can cater to the international audience as well just as much as other countries and we strive to make the Filipino brand worldwide.



Figure 2. The Ranida logo.

Q3: To date, what have been the most important achievements of Raninda Games? How did they come about? Do tell us about your most important game(s) please!

Right now, our biggest achievement and most successful endeavor is *PBA Philippine Slam!* The Philippine Basketball Association is one of the biggest household names in the country. As the Philippines is primarily a basketball-centric country, this is the biggest basketball league locally. We made this game because we wanted a quality Filipino basketball game in the mobile space. PBA is easily the most recognizable local basketball league and we wanted to revitalize its branding so as to tap the younger generations who are tech-savvy. With an astonishing 8 million total downloads to date, we believe that we were able to meet our goals. To date, it is still our most successful game that still has a lot of following even after 3 years since it was initially launched.



Figure 3. PBA Philippine Slam!

Right now, our current project is our biggest and most ambitious. *BAYANI: KANINO KA KAKAMPI?* (transl. Hero: Who Will You Ally With?) is a fighting game that reimagines our country’s national heroes as fighting game characters. The project started as a means to educate and pique the interest of the younger generations. Though it may not be a historically accurate depiction, it is heavily inspired by the country’s history and culture. We are hoping that through this game, the Filipino youth will become more interested in our history and culture. The game is currently being developed in collaboration with 2D Creatives. We are also hoping that by creating a quality PC fighting game, we can get our country’s heroes and culture more renowned and recognition.



Figure 4. BAYANI: KANINO KA KAKAMPI?

Q4: In what way do you decide on new endeavors, e.g., do you follow an established process regarding how you formulate your projects?

We choose our projects based on the IP or brand that we think the Filipino market will like. Ranging from very obscure and simple viral songs to large household brands to games with cultural and historical significance, we choose our projects based on what we think the Filipino market wants or needs. In fact, nearly all of our games – both published and client work – cater to a specific Filipino niche that we wish to fill. We may not hit the marks every time but we simply want to make games that we and our fellow countrymen will enjoy. Of course, this does not mean that we will alienate the international market; we are simply confident that what works locally – when done at high quality – will also suit the tastes of the international audience.

Q5: If it is possible for you to share this information: what is your next project about, and when and where can we look out for it?

Our current big project in the works is our fighting game *BAYANI: KANINO KA KAKAMPI?* It is scheduled for a Steam Early Access soon.

Aside from that, we are still updating *PBA Philippine Slam!* regularly to include roster changes, quality of life improvements, and even more feature enhancements. It is available on both iOS and Android and is FREE.

Apple Store: <https://itunes.apple.com/ph/app/philippine-slam-basketball/id967594376?mt=8>

Play Store: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.ranida.phslam&hl=en>