

## Interview

Usually, the step that throws most people is the interview. Sometimes, our producers are just asked, How much does a thirty second commercial cost? We get this question a lot, or at least some variant (i.e. how much does a web site cost, how much does a character cost?) Our answer will always be: We don't know. What do you want? Imagine going to a car dealership, walking in and just shouting into the air, Hey! How much is a car? Pretty vague and you will probably get something you don't want.

It is okay if you don't know about animation. The very first thing our producers will ask, is what do you want it do for you? Be as specific as possible. Do you have a budget and expectations? Is there something you have seen that you like? Maybe you can only answer one of these questions, or maybe all of them. The more information we have, the more accurate a proposal can be made, and probably, the more successful your overall project after it leaves our studio.

## Proposal

Costs are dependent on four factors that we call: story, quality, format, and distribution. Story includes such factors as script (do you have one?), length, number of characters and environments, etc. In spite of this being only one of four groups, this has the biggest influence on price. Usually, the first minute of any new character or any new environment is the most costly. The more time spent with the same character or same environment is not as costly as creating new characters and new environments.

Quality depends on the level of detail you want, including the type of animation (2D, 3D, flash), and the style of animation (clean, sketchy, etc.). This affects the time for development, and rendering.

Format includes whether it is high definition, television, or interactive. Are you using multiple formats, and if the same animation is on television as in theater, do we use letterbox, or pan & scan? Also, when coordinating with the sound studio, you need to worry about the type of sound. Another point, albeit minor, is the media for delivery (film, data over the web, digibeta, D1, D5, etc.)?

Distribution also includes such factors as the format, but also the number of people viewing it, the geographic region, the size of the audience, the timeframe for distribution (oh, you want it next week??), packaging issues (do you need art for that), extras (should we film the making of it?), direct-to-video, etc. This does affect the quality, as each type of audience has different expectations, and certain artists will only work on certain types of projects. Also, in some areas, the costs change drastically for your talent. SAG which controls the costs of actors, has different levels, depending on the type of presentation. We can provide advice on how to control both your above-the-line as well as below-the-line costs.

With at least some of that information, we will put together a proposal. Our proposal will break down the problem; propose a solution and implementation plan. We also include your business investment (costs and other resources) and terms, and tell you about our studio. If it's a complex project, there will be a separate contract to initiate service; otherwise, we attach a simple acknowledgement letter for you to sign.

Payment terms are always negotiable depending on the project, but expect an initial investment by your company for our studio to start.

## Make

This is pretty obvious: Now, we make your project. Traditionally, this is broken down into three phases:

The pre-production phase of a project is where we solidify the basic concept, and complete all preparations and planning for production. This includes key design, storyboards, software and modeling development, and rigging and surfaces for 3D. A successful pre-production phase means that project is in a good shape to proceed to the production phase.

The production phase is where the bulk of the service is completed. By using the elements completed in the pre-production phase, we are able to complete a project on time and on budget. This includes creating a workbook, animation, compositing and film output, and for 3D: lighting, effects, and rendering.

The post-production phase is where we put finishing touches on a project (including special effects), add sound (timing), and output it to a specific media format (film, digital, internet, etc). We also follow up with those involved in the project to insure satisfaction.

One of the big differences in our studio is the emphasis on the storyline animatic. This is a combination of a storyboard and workbook. We spend more time in preproduction, transforming a storyboard into an animatic. This confines restarts and new ideas to the preproduction phase. This translates to less time in production, transforming the animatic into a workbook, and then into a final form. Ultimately, you get the product you want, on time and on budget.

or more specific information about how our process can work for you, please feel free to contact us.