

Animation Industry Doing-Business Briefs

When pitching a new idea to a large firm, attempt to align a lead animator with a producer who believes in the concept. This team approach is a very effective tool for minimizing the "sales pitch" to the remaining management. The reason is that, so often, there is typically more than one producer involved in a project. Sometimes producers feel alienated when not properly solicited.

To make a project run smoothly, insist on direct access to the project director. This person is often the one with approval power. This issue is of critical importance when working with a post-production house which works for a client. The relationship between the director's wishes and the costs of the production must be balanced. In addition, the visual effects supervisor and the director should also have a common vision.

The first draft of a script typically provides a guideline for the special effects budget. The script signals the type of technology required for each effect. If the technology may be used iteratively from scene to scene, such as in feature films, costs are more likely to be controlled. However, one should realize that there is no "average cost" for special effects per episode for a television series.

Technology not only influences the operations, but how management makes decisions. With the high data transfer rates (ie., T-1 or D-1 line) several of the most progressive special effects producers have installed this technology in their private studios. This has allowed viewing of work in real-time.

Animation merchandising is no longer strictly the focus of large studios. An animated character that stands the best chance to yield financial rewards is one that is unique, has strong character identity and has a well developed story line. In fact, these types of characters possess the best chance of being cross-promoted. Such marketing techniques help to build an audience prior to product launch.

Excerpts from an interview with Mr. Richard Edlund, founder Boss Film Studios – Los Angeles Times – Monday, October 20, 1997, p. D3:

- a) "For Hollywood, around 1989, with "The Abyss" and the column of water that turned into a face, was when digital technology really took off as an affordable alternative. After 1993, when Boss turned completely digital,