

HBO Animation

(a Time Warner Entertainment company)

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As HBO ventures into animation, it is trying to establish itself as a risk taker and innovator. It also believes that there is a niche market, yet to be developed, for the ideas and creative characters that explore mature themes and intelligent story lines. Of course, these subjects will include violence, jeopardy, heroism, nudity and coarse language. But do not under estimate the captive nature of this type of strategy. It has worked in the film industry for years. Why not animation?

The new half-hour, twelve-episode animated series "Spawn" premiered May 16, 1996. HBO optioned this series from Todd McFarlane. He created the characters and has been hired by HBO as the series' executive producer.

One overriding factor influencing the HBO Animation organization is its small size – just 30 employees. Though this small-team approach it is not uncommon in the industry, it is uncommon within such a large organization. This group structure is one which gives HBO uniqueness and adaptability.

Management

Suggestions for animation characters and episodes are conceived by the creative staff. The corporation allocates a fixed budget to the department for conceptual development. The ideas are typically brought to life through pilot animatics. Scripts are written concurrently with visual development of characters, backgrounds and storyboards. Executive management reviews the animatic and decides which characters and themes should be developed into full episodes. The development process is usually conducted over many months.

Management critiques quality animation through both ratings and industry awards. The ultimate award would be for a series to win an Emmy.