CRC Press
Taylor & Francis Group

THIRD EDITION

Producing Animation

WRITTEN BY
Catherine Winder
Zahra Dowlatabadi

EDITED BY
Tracey Miller-Zarneke

Producing Animation

Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group
http://taylorandfrancis.com

Producing Animation

Third Edition

Written by
Catherine Winder and Zahra Dowlatabadi

Edited by
Tracey Miller-Zarneke

CRC Press
Taylor & Francis Group
Boca Raton London New York

CRC Press is an imprint of the
Taylor & Francis Group, an **informa** business

CRC Press
Taylor & Francis Group
6000 Broken Sound Parkway NW, Suite 300
Boca Raton, FL 33487-2742

© 2020 by Taylor & Francis Group, LLC
CRC Press is an imprint of Taylor & Francis Group, an Informa business

No claim to original U.S. Government works

Printed on acid-free paper

International Standard Book Number-13: 978-1-138-59128-8 (Hardback)
International Standard Book Number-13: 978-1-138-59126-4 (Paperback)

This book contains information obtained from authentic and highly regarded sources. Reasonable efforts have been made to publish reliable data and information, but the author and publisher cannot assume responsibility for the validity of all materials or the consequences of their use. The authors and publishers have attempted to trace the copyright holders of all material reproduced in this publication and apologize to copyright holders if permission to publish in this form has not been obtained. If any copyright material has not been acknowledged please write and let us know so we may rectify in any future reprint.

Except as permitted under U.S. Copyright Law, no part of this book may be reprinted, reproduced, transmitted, or utilized in any form by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying, microfilming, and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without written permission from the publishers.

For permission to photocopy or use material electronically from this work, please access www.copyright.com (http://www.copyright.com/) or contact the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc. (CCC), 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, 978-750-8400. CCC is a not-for-profit organization that provides licenses and registration for a variety of users. For organizations that have been granted a photocopy license by the CCC, a separate system of payment has been arranged.

Trademark Notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

Visit the Taylor & Francis Web site at
http://www.taylorandfrancis.com

and the CRC Press Web site at
http://www.crcpress.com

Contents

Foreword xiii

Acknowledgments xv

About the Authors and the Editor xvii

1 Introduction 1

Commonly Asked Questions About Producing Animation ... 4
Are All Artists Called "Animators"? What Exactly Is an Animator? ... 4
What Are Different Ways to Enter the Animation Industry? ... 5
Artists ... 5
Production Staff ... 6
Voice Talent ... 6
What Are the Main Similarities and Differences Between Producing a Game Versus a Series? ... 7
What Is Unique About the Process to Produce Online Educational Content? ... 8
What Are the Differences When Producing for Streaming Platforms Versus Traditional Broadcasters? ... 8
I Have a Project. Should I Set Up My Own Animation Studio or Find a Studio for Hire? ... 8
What Are the Unions or Guilds That Are Commonly Used on Productions That Are Either Fully or Partially Based in the US? ... 9
To SAG or Not to SAG: Should My Voice Track Be Union or Non-union? ... 10
What Does It Mean to Have to Bond a Film Project? ... 10
I Have What I Think Is the World's Best Idea, Where Do I Start? ... 11

2 The Animation Producer 13

What Is an Animation Producer? 13
Executive Producer 16
Producer 17
Line Producer or Co-Producer 17
Associate Producer 18
Lead Producer's Responsibilities 19
The Makings of the Ideal Producer 23
Leader 23
Communicator 23
Nurturer of Creativity 24
Innovator 24
Delegator 24
Energizer 25
Decision Maker 25
Ambassador 25
The Producer's Thinking Map 33

3 How to Identify and Sell Projects 39

Spotting the Idea 40
Defining the Format and Target Audience 44
Identifying the Buyer 45
Creative Executives 47
Production Executive 48
Developing Pitch Material 49
Pitching 50
Post Pitch 51
Hiring Representation 54
Entering Negotiations 55

4 The Core Team 59

An Overview of the Core Team 59
The Role of the Director 60
Director's Responsibilities 62
Visual Development Team 67
Production Support Team 67
Recruiting 68
IT/Technology Services 70
Systems Administration 71
Research and Development 71
Production Accounting 72
Legal and Business Affairs 73
Human Resources 82

5 The Development Process 85

Development Process Overview ... 85
The Role of the Producer During Development ... 86
The Writing Process ... 92
Writer's Deals ... 92
Series Bible ... 93
Script Stages ... 93
Premise (Series/Short Form) ... 95
Outline and Beat Board (Long Form and Short Form) ... 95
Treatment (Long Form) ... 95
Pilot Script ... 95
The Feature Film Script ... 100
Production Scripts ... 101
Numbered Script ... 101
Recording Script ... 101
Conformed Script ... 102
Automated Dialogue Replacement (ADR) Script ... 102
Final As-Aired/Released Script ... 102
Script Clearances ... 102
Visual Development ... 102
Conclusion ... 106

6 The Production Plan 127

Production Plan Overview ... 127
List of Assumptions ... 128
Delivery Date ... 129
Delivery Format and Platform ... 129
Schedule ... 129
Thinking in Frames ... 130
Quotas ... 130
Length and Technique ... 140
Length ... 140
Technique ... 143
Complexity Analysis ... 143
Script Breakdown and Content Analysis ... 143
Style/Art Direction and Design ... 146
Average Number of Characters per Shot ... 146
Production Methodology ... 147
Research and Development ... 147
Crew Plan ... 147
The Level of Talent ... 149
Roles of Key Personnel ... 149
Creative Checkpoints ... 151

Buyer's Responsibilities 151
Payment Schedule and Cash Flow 151
Physical Production Plan 152
Recruiting and Relocation 153
Reference and Research Material 153
Training 153
Travel 154
Digital Security and Archiving 154
Contingency 155
Building the Budget 158
Fringes 159
Legal Costs 159
Chart of Accounts 160
Cost Reports 160

7 The Production Team 165

The Role of the Producer in Structuring the Production Team 165
Artistic Department Supervisors/Leads 169
The Production Management Crew 173
The Production Manager 173
Production Supervisor 176
Production Coordinator or APM/PDM 177
Script Coordinator 179
Production Assistant (PA) 179
Sub-contractors 180
Identifying and Selecting a Sub-contractor 181
Negotiating the Deal 183
Overseas Supervisors 185
Material Packages/Shipments 186
Handing Out the Project 187
Monitoring the Progress of Production 187
Receiving Material from the Sub-contractor 187
Expect the Unexpected 188

8 Pre-production 189

The Role of the Producer During the Pre-production Phase 189
Design and Art Direction 192
The Visual Style Guide 194
Character Designs 194
Location Designs 195
Prop Designs 196
Effects Design 196
Color Script and Lighting Keys 196

Color Design ... 196
Model Pack ... 198
Asset Production ... 198
CG Asset Production ... 199
Research and Development ... 199
Modeling ... 199
Rigging/Articulation ... 200
Surfacing and Look Development ... 200
2D Asset Production ... 201
Design ... 201
Color/Texture ... 201
Build ... 202
Rigging ... 202
The Voice Track ... 202
Casting ... 202
Rehearsal ... 205
Session Preparation ... 206
Recording ... 207
Storyboarding ... 211
Getting Started ... 211
The Three Stages of Storyboarding ... 213
Thumbnails ... 213
Rough Pass ... 214
Cleanup Storyboard ... 215
Building the Story Reel/Animatic ... 216
Pre-visualization ... 220
Executive Screenings ... 221
Track Reading and Timing ... 222
Preparing a Shipment: Checking and Route Sheets ... 224
Songs ... 224
Title Sequence ... 226
Credits ... 227
9 Production 229
The Role of the Producer During the Production Phase ... 229
Buyer's Creative Checkpoints ... 232
Ancillary Groups ... 232
Production Processes and Procedures ... 233
Editorial ... 233
Complexity Analysis ... 234
Kick-Off ... 234
CG Production ... 235
Shot Setup/Layout ... 236

Animation ... 237
Character Finaling/Technical Animation ... 238
Crowd Animation ... 238
Final Layout/Set Dressing ... 238
Dailies ... 239
Effects ... 239
Matte Painting ... 240
Lighting and Compositing ... 240
2D Traditional Production ... 243
Rough Layout ... 244
Scene Planning ... 244
Layout Turnover ... 245
Animation ... 245
Cleanup Layout ... 247
Background Painting ... 247
Cleanup Animation ... 247
Effects ... 248
Animation Check ... 249
Color Styling and Ink and Paint ... 249
Compositing ... 250
2D Rigged Production ... 250
Layout ... 252
Scene Preparation ... 252
Background Painting ... 252
Animation ... 252
Effects ... 253
Compositing ... 253

10 Post-production 265

The Role of the Producer During the Post-production Phase ... 265
Working with the Post-production Supervisor ... 267
The Post-production Process ... 269
Credits (Main/Opening and End) ... 270
Locking Picture ... 270
Test Screenings ... 272
Music ... 273
Audio Post-production ... 280
Spotting Sessions ... 280
Sound Effects Design and Editing ... 281
Dialogue Editing and Automated Dialogue Replacement (ADR) ... 281
Foley Sessions ... 282
Pre-mix ... 282
Final Mix ... 283

Audio Deliverables 283
Printmasters and Stems 283
Music and Effects (M&E) 284
Picture Post-production 284
Conform 284
Color Grading/Color Timing 284
The Element Reel 285
Closed Captioning 286
Textless Versions 286
Final Picture Deliverables 286
General Final Delivery 287
Legal Documents 287
Archiving 288

11 Tracking Production 289

The Importance of Tracking 289
Master Schedule 291
Tracking Development 292
Tracking Software Development and Application 292
Macro and Micro Charts 293
Pre-production 293
Production 295
Tracking Sub-contractors 298
Tracking Retakes 301
Post-production 303
Artwork for Ancillary Groups 303
Archiving of Digital Content 303
Talking Beyond the Tracking 306

12 Building a Franchise: Distribution, Marketing, Licensing, and More 307

Franchise Roadmap 308
Distribution 309
Animation Festivals 315
Marketing 316
Website 316
Social Media 317
Teasers/Trailers 318
Prints and Advertising (P&A) 318
Publicity 318
Promotional Partnerships 320
Licensing/Merchandising 321
Soundtrack 323

Spin-Offs and Sequels 323
Happily Ever After 340

Appendix: Animation Resources 343

Index 349

Foreword

There is no storytelling medium that I love more than animation, so you can imagine how thrilled I was when Catherine and Zahra—both of whom I adore and respect more than I can possibly say—asked me to write the introduction to this book. It is such an honor to be even a tiny part of the legacy they have created and to help the next generation of producers on their journey to creating animation.

I love the way animation invites you to experience new characters and cultures and can create a deeper understanding of the world around us while also challenging us to let go of the reality of this world and dive deep into the unknown. I also love how animation has the ability to be truly universal; crossing borders and worlds and time periods with ease.

Not being an artist myself, I am endlessly fascinated by the creation of art and how the artistic brain works. No matter how taxing or frustrating a day you might have as a producer, walking into a room filled with art seems to erase all of that, just as it will for the audience. There is endless joy in this work of creating stories one frame at a time.

There is also endless work. The average day is filled with meetings about schedules where you review schedules about meetings. The average day is also filled with resolving problems from budget issues, to creative disputes, to helping an artist find jumper cables so they don't miss their girlfriend's birthday dinner. You see, over the course of making an animated project, you develop a family, and the team goes through all of the things a family does—the ups and the downs and the silly late nights giggling over something no one can remember the next day. But, what a family it is! Chock full of passionate artists and inspired managers, all working together to create something magnificent that will move an audience to laugh or to cry, to cheer or to boo when they are magically transported to the world that has been created and into the lives of the characters you have brought to life.

If you are reading this book, I assume it is because you want to produce animation—and I am thrilled for you. I am equally thrilled if you are a director or an artist or a coordinator or an investor that wants to learn more about how these things are made. In my opinion, every single person on an animated film is a producer in some way. Every tiny decision you make, whether you are the star animator or a PA just getting started, will have an impact on the film. That is not hyperbole; that is the truth. An animated project is an accumulation of a million tiny decisions.

So, if everyone is a producer, then what is the "producer" actually doing? I won't kid you, it's a complex job: part mind reader, part strategist, part caretaker, part juggler, part innovator, and a whole bunch of other parts that you will read about in the pages of this book. But, in a way, the job description is quite simple, *deliver the project on time and on budget, and make sure that the very best version of the director's vision is on the screen*.

The rules of the game change over time, but that basic job description does not. These days, the tools that allow you to animate are readily available in a way that is likely to give birth to a new generation of animation storytellers, but the job of a producer has not changed. The growth of streaming and other means of getting those shows to the audience have changed, creating more opportunity than ever, but the job of a producer has not changed.

As time passes and animation tools evolve, the director will still want to do more than is technically possible with the time, money, and technology available and the producer will have to help them make the smart choices that create the best version of their story. The crew will get tired and frustrated and the producer will have to pull them together and reassure them that the story they are making is worth telling, and then make sure that is actually true in the end. And, when the project is done, the producer will look that director in the eye and ask them if they have made the movie they wanted to make. And the producer will ask the studio if they are happy with how the project turned out. And the producer will ask three perfect strangers if they loved the project, and if all combined smile and say "yes," then the producer can finally exhale knowing it has been a job well done. And then that producer will find the next dragon to slay.

I wish you many wonderful dragons.

Melissa Cobb
Vice President of Kids and Family
Netflix

Acknowledgments

What began over two decades ago as a collection of our personal experience on how to produce animation—what to do and what not to do—certainly took a new direction for this edition of the book. With our industry entering new frontiers and becoming far more specialized in many areas with a much wider reach, and multiple approaches being available for similar end results, we reached out to many friends and colleagues who generously shared their expertise.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to Melissa Cobb for inspiring us to slay a dragon. Her unique experience stemming from being a former Director of Development, Senior VP of Production on features and television, a producer, a CCO and Head of Studio in China, and currently Vice President of Original Animation at Netflix places her at the epicenter of our industry, and therefore the perfect person to write the Foreword.

We are extremely thankful for the time and effort put forth by those who composed "Expert Insights" or "Sidebars" for this book, namely: Cheryl Bayer & Jamie Dixon, Debra Blanchard Knight, Lydia Bottegoni, Kevin Breen, Kevin Burke & Chris Wyatt, John Cohen, Danny Dimian, Karen Dufilho, Arthur Evrensel, Susan Hummel, Shin Ishikawa, Jann Moorhead, Lisa O'Brien, Nina Paley, Heitor Pereira, Collette Sunderman, Nora Twomey, and Brent Young. We are thrilled with the generous time and commitment that Louise Bagnall, Phil Chalk, and Wilson Tang gave in order to create their detailed "Case/Process Studies."

Another round of artistic applause goes to Wilbert Plijnaar for crafting what we consider the perfect design for the cover of our newest edition.

We extend a heartfelt thanks to our reviewers, who played a very significant part in shaping this book: Samila Ardalan, Robert H. Bagley, Theresa Bentz, Craig Berkey, Jeff Bradfield, Lisa Dennis, Steve Goldberg, Marcia Jones, Lori Korngiebel, Melissa Kurtz, Dejda Mishkovsky, David Okey, Aaron Perry, Lisa M. Poole, and Donna Smith. An extra special shout out goes to Michael Heard,

who was instrumental in guiding us in the writing of the distribution section of Chapter 12—his amazing knowledge is such a great addition to this book.

We would like to thank the following people for their invaluable input and help: Dina Benadon, Nuria G. Blanco, Jamie K. Bolio, Kate Crandall, Lauren Harrold, Dave Kerr, Fumi Kitahara-Otto, Melissa Sturm, and Drew Tolman. Special thanks go out to Anastasia Walker for her coordination of the *Summoners War* Case Study.

I, *Catherine*, would like to thank my husband Craig Berkey for his consistent and unwavering support—no matter how challenging the path I follow, he's there to help me find my way and cheer me on. I would also like to thank my children, Dylan and Sophie, who keep me inspired, grounded, and bring me constant joy. My deepest gratitude to Zahra and Tracey, who have carried the lion's share of this edition. You are the best partners I could have asked for.

I, *Zahra*, am profoundly grateful to my parents Hushang Dowlatabadi and Mahdokht Sanati who have always encouraged me to fly as high and as far as I wish. My deep gratitude is for my brother Hadi Dowlatabadi who has consistently been an anchor for me. I am beyond fortunate for my circle of friends and family whose love and laughter keep me afloat. I would like to acknowledge my sun and my moon, Jim and Emily Beihold, who make me exceptionally proud and inspire me to strive to be my best self. I am truly grateful for their direct contributions to this book in the form of Jim's help with creating flow charts and Emily's invaluable input during the copyediting phase. The idea for this book came from Catherine. All three editions have been a phenomenal adventure. I am thankful that you asked me to join you on this journey—it has been rewarding in countless ways. Tracey, I have no idea where to start. Our collaboration together has been an incredible gift. Your wise and patient ways have been instrumental in enabling this book to come together.

I, *Tracey*, am grateful to Don Hahn for suggesting I become part of this project way back on the second edition nearly a decade ago, and more importantly, for first opening the door into the world of animation for me. I am so pleased to have reunited with Zahra and Catherine on this newest edition, and to have their mentorship and friendship outside of our book adventures as well. I am deeply indebted to all the amazing talent I have worked with in this industry, for showing me what an incredible experience collaborative creativity can be. I am forever thankful for the support of my friends and family, especially my husband Mike and my boys, Josh and Ryan, without whose love and support none of this happy adventure would be possible.

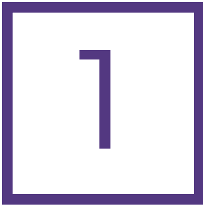
About the Authors and the Editor

Zahra Dowlatabadi is an award-winning animation producer with expertise in feature length and series production. With content created for Netflix, Disney, Warner Bros., and Comedy Central, Dowlatabadi has had extensive hands on experience producing at cutting edge studios such as Bento Box Entertainment and world-renowned boutique animation studio, Cartoon Saloon. By collaborating with extraordinary talent on independent projects as well as mainstream productions, Dowlatabadi offers unique insight into the creative realm of producing animation ranging from pre-school to adult and PG/family content.

Catherine Winder is the CEO/Executive Producer of Wind Sun Sky Entertainment, a multi-media production company focused on building global franchises by bringing creator-driven content to audiences through innovative storytelling in all mediums. She is also the CEO/Partner of Skybound North Entertainment in partnership with Skybound Entertainment. Managing studios in both Vancouver and L.A. and collaborating with partners in Europe and Asia, she has produced and is in production/development on a diverse slate of multi-platform media projects including *Invincible* (Amazon Prime), *Super Dinosaur* (SpinMaster/Skybound), *My Singing Monsters* (Big Blue Bubble/Wind Sun Sky), *Summoners War* (Com2Us/Skybound), and *The Angry Birds Movie*s 1 and 2 (Rovio/Sony). Prior roles include Lucasfilm Animation Executive Producer, where she set up studios in Singapore and Marin County to adapt and produce *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*; and Fox Feature Animation, Senior Vice President, where she oversaw the transition of Blue Sky Studios into a feature film pipeline and the production of *Ice Age*. She has also consulted, produced for and/or worked

with Illumination Entertainment, DisneyToons Animation, Hanna-Barbera/Turner Productions, HBO Original Programming, and MTV. She is a member of both the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences and the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences as well as a board member of both the Vancouver Economic Commission and the Canadian Media Producers Association.

Tracey Miller-Zarneke earned her animation production experience on the feature films *Chicken Little* and *The Emperor's New Groove* and has gained a unique perspective on the industry by having authored more than a dozen books on the history and art of animation, including the trio of DreamWorks' *Kung Fu Panda* film series, Sony's duo of *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*, and Disney's *Meet the Robinsons*. She put her insider knowledge to work on documentary films about the animation industry, including *The Sweatbox* and *Waking Sleeping Beauty*, and she has also served as a board member of the advocacy organization, Women in Animation.



Introduction

When we started the journey on the first edition of *Producing Animation* 20 years ago, we could never have predicted we would be writing a third edition in an environment where animation is accessible beyond television and movie-theater screens. We could never have imagined that audiences would “stream” animated content from anywhere around the world. It was beyond our wildest dreams to envision the daily usage of animation for interactive and immersive experiences. While the application of animation is at an all-time high, digital connectivity has also enabled us to produce content on a global level at an unprecedented scale while collaborating with creative talent regardless of the time zone, language, or location differences.

The first edition of our book focused on hand-drawn 2D animation for features and episodic TV, while the second outlined a completely new process that had taken over in the form of computer generated imagery (CGI) production. In that decade, what once was a paper-driven industry became nearly all digitized. For our first book, almost every feature film in theaters was made in 2D, and by the time the second was published, 2D was no longer in vogue and 3D CGI was all the rave. In fact, what started out as an updating of the content turned into a 90% rewrite for the second edition.

And now, almost another decade later, our industry has once again transformed with how animation can be experienced in new environments such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and at live events, in a theme park or on the red carpet. While animated content has provided entertainment for over a century, it is now a commonly used form in new spheres such as health services, military training, shopping, and tourism. With over 6 billion mobile phone users in the world as of this printing, the largest majority of consumers are likely to view animation on their own tiny personal screens, and interact with it via apps. Additionally, media service providers have completely upended the previously established means of distributing and exhibition. It used to be that the primary funding for animated series came from advertising money or subscriptions as shows aired on broadcast and cable channels, but this is no longer the case. Now the tabulation of views, downloads, followership, "likes," and the different ways a project may have multi-platform applications can be the reason for its funding. Added to this is the power of social media and its potential affect—positive or negative—on a property's release, making it even more critical for the producer to be aware and strategic in what, when, and how they share the information about their projects. What is exciting about all of this change are the many opportunities this diverse content landscape is providing for our global animation community.

Our goal for each edition has been to create material that is written in as timeless a way as possible. Given the state of the industry and rapid innovations in technology, this has been a truly challenging task. The available options for production processes and distribution of content are seemingly endless. A project can now be produced by one person in a basement, or by hundreds of artists at a single location or in multiple locations with multiple time zones, cultures, and languages. It can be marketed, sold, and distributed in any length, at all types of budget ranges, from hundreds of millions of dollars for a feature to just a few thousands for a short film made with off-the-shelf hardware and software. The quality ranges are equally as extreme, from stick figures, to hybrid (live action/animation), to fully fleshed-out characters that seem to live and breathe. Projects can now be distributed by an individual through the Internet or by a major studio theatrically—in both cases, reaching millions of viewers. Content can be viewed on a screen that takes up a 90-ft wall, or on one the size of a watch, or anything in between those extremes.

The first edition of our book emanated from lack of available resources that provided guidance for individuals interested in this highly creative and complex business. Every studio we started working at was eager to re-invent the wheel to do it "better than x studio;" however, this approach was almost always costly and inefficient. Where we landed in writing it was the philosophy of documenting what we believed to be the "best practices" approach, based on first-hand experience and evaluation of what works and what doesn't work to produce a project.

Given that the wide range of formats (and therefore the many potential "best practices") to pursue and document thoroughly for our readers was not a realistic

endeavor (since many are so new that their optimization are still to be defined), it became apparent that the best way forward was to focus on the reality that *as much as everything has changed, the fundamentals have not*. When it comes to being a successful producer for animated content, valuable teaching points such as expertise in pre-planning; hiring, and working with great talent; and over-communicating are important, no matter the format. Although animation is truly collaborative and no one person is responsible for getting a project done, a great producer is instrumental in creating an environment that leads to a positive experience for all individuals involved. Everyone has the same end goal to produce a product they can be proud of; projects that fail are typically missing the leadership of a strong producer with proactive strategic abilities and an in-depth understanding of the process.

Although the change in the industry over the past 20 years or so has been significant, the information pertaining to the role of the producer from the original book has remained the same. The integral concept—that producing animation is based on the ability to think logically, proactively, and creatively—still holds. It is a cerebral act that combines a technical knowledge of the animation process with individual style, experience, and gut instinct. Ultimately, producing is a creative process. The constantly shifting landscape defies order and the best producers know how to rearrange their resources to support the artistic vision while also meeting delivery expectations and keeping everyone engaged in the end product.

Producing Animation is a culmination of our joint experiences over the past three decades. Our combined experience in the animation industry has been quite varied. Both of us progressed up through the ranks, and between the two of us, we have worked in almost all production capacities at both major and boutique studios in the Far East, Europe, and North America. Our combined job titles have included coordinator, production manager, overseas production manager, associate producer, line producer, co-producer, producer, supervising producer, executive producer, production executive, senior vice president of production, and company president/CEO. We have been involved in many different kinds of projects, including feature films, direct-to-video releases, television series, television specials, games, apps, and short films.

We are exceptionally fortunate to have Tracey Miller-Zarneke join us again for the third edition. In the capacity of a technical editor, Tracey remains a formidable force and has played a fundamental role in helping us pull all of the aspects of this book together. Tracey has a background in animation production and an avid interest in the art itself, having written numerous books about the development and making of feature film projects. In a few words, we simply couldn't have done it without her and appreciate her optimism and support on every level.

We are grateful that in this third edition of the book, we have the space to again showcase bonus experience in the industry via "Expert Insights" from all corners of the business. Information shared includes common grounds between producing VR and traditional mediums; the key ingredients to creating a timeless character; and the challenges when you are both the producer and the director,

to name a few topics. Also, we have added substantial legal perspective to this book, offering "Sidebars" that contain many critical details and strategic tools with which the producer must consider and plan for in all phases of developing an idea through final delivery. We are thrilled to be sharing case studies from the artist's point of view: Wilson Tang's insight on the thoughtful process needed to successfully adapt the online game *Summoners War* into an animated short; and the path following Louise Bagnall's Oscar®-nominated short film, *Late Afternoon* from original concept through development, funding, pre-production, production, post-production, and the festivals and awards circuit. We are also excited to provide a deeper look into stop motion production, as guided by Phil Chalk.

The process of writing these books is always a far greater undertaking than originally anticipated—but isn't that the reality of any creative project? The stress of all the work it took quickly dissipates thanks to the positive feedback received from our many readers over the years. The fact that *Producing Animation* is being used around the world is incredibly rewarding and exciting to both of us. With that in mind, we want to thank all of our readers and let you know we appreciate your feedback, especially hearing about your successful projects.

We sincerely hope that by sharing our experiences, as well as those of others, we can help pave an easier path for future animation producers. Additionally, it is our goal that the information in this book will entice new producers to enter the industry, and along with professionals already in the business, together they will continue to push the frontiers of animation to more exciting and unforeseen territories.

Welcome to the wonderfully creative, consistently unpredictable, and always exciting world of animation production. After reading this book, we hope you feel better prepared for its unexpected and expected challenges. In reflecting over the extraordinary technological innovations over the past two decades, it is impossible to predict what the future holds, however what does remain consistent is that there is nothing more satisfying than seeing the results of your hard work moving on the screen (no matter the size) and watching the audience respond to it in a positive way.

Commonly Asked Questions About Producing Animation

Are All Artists Called "Animators"? What Exactly Is an Animator?

It seems logical to call all artists working on an animated project "animators," but it is not accurate. An animator specifically takes the design of a character or an object and brings it to life through creating its movement and action. The animator's role can best be likened to that of an actor. Just like any other performer, whether it is in the theater, the opera, or the ballet, s/he takes center stage. But it is through the combined efforts of many talented individuals—such as visual development artists, storyboard artists, modelers and riggers, editorial staff, layout artists, technical directors, and many other staff members—that a show gets completed and presented to the public.

What Are Different Ways to Enter the Animation Industry?

The most common areas of opportunity include roles as an artist, production staff, or voice talent.

As a starting point, there are many animation schools across the globe with outstanding programs that enable students to get a taste of what it is like to be in this creative field. Make sure their program aligns with your area of interest: if you already know that you want to be a concept artist or an animator, research where the school's graduates have consistently landed. That information allows you to gain insight into the studios' relationship with the school that has been built over the years. Many animation programs provide annual showcase events and invite studio leads to attend because there is always a need to recruit fresh talent. If you hope to be a generalist or don't know which area interests you, find a program that offers a broad curriculum so that you can investigate your options and discover what best matches your skill set.

For those looking to be artists, production, and/or technical staff, applying for internships at a studio is also an excellent way to start exploring your strengths and weaknesses by working alongside professionals who are eager to groom talent.

Artists

The most important tool artists can have is a *portfolio*, or a sampling of their best work typically on a personal website. By posting current personal creations, you enable colleagues and recruiters to be aware of your artistic abilities. If the artwork is from a project, it is important to respect all confidentiality agreements, especially on those that are yet to be released—you certainly don't want your potential new employer to see that you are irresponsible with your nondisclosure contract. Often an artist's website can cover different artwork ranging from visual development to figure drawing. Showing your aptitude for different styles can be a good thing. However, if you are exceptionally good in just one style, there is no reason to include a variety that might not be as strong, just for the sake of showing diverse content. If you have many years of accumulated artwork, it is always wise to get help from fellow artists to select your strongest work. You should also research the show for which you are applying to make sure that your portfolio includes artwork that is suitable for the project.

Demo reels/links should be no longer than two minutes in length, unless otherwise designated in the submission instructions. Be sure to provide information outlining each shot on your reel and what work you did for the shot (modeling, animation, etc.). It is handy to provide a thumbnail of the shot on the breakdown summary to allow a reviewer to quickly identify the work.

Every studio has its own specific requirements based on the status of its projects in production and pre-production. Job postings can be found on studio's websites, search engines devoted to job listings, and industry websites. Follow the guidelines closely. Depending on your skill set (for example, whether you are an animator or a modeler), the requirements for your portfolio pieces will vary. You only get one chance to make a first impression, so make sure you answer all

questions diligently and upload material as requested. It better be error-free! In some studios, you may also be asked to take a test, for example when applying for a story artist position. A standardized test is often a fair gauge of judging an artist's aptitude for the project.

Some studios have weekly or monthly artist application reviews and will continue to accept updated portfolios even if there are no current openings. Despite everyone's best intentions, the volume of applicants sometimes makes it impossible for recruiting departments to get back to everyone in a timely manner. All recruiters would love to be able to acknowledge each candidate personally but often it's just not possible, so don't get discouraged if you don't hear back. On a positive note, a well-organized studio will keep reels and résumés on file to review as new positions open up beyond an immediate project's needs.

Production Staff

There are several ways to get into production. Whereas a portfolio is an artist's calling card, a résumé or curriculum vitae (CV) should be used when applying for a production staff position. Make sure to have a strong résumé that emphasizes your abilities to organize, work with artists, communicate, and multitask. It is important that your résumé is easy to read and can be understood at a glance. Keep it to two pages or less. If you have listed individuals as references, it is wise to speak with them in advance to prepare them for a possible call. By doing so, you give your contacts a chance to review your work experience, and hopefully, they will give you a glowing referral when the time comes.

If you have little or no production administration in your background, consider applying as an intern, production assistant, or a producer's assistant. If you attend a college, you may be able to enroll in a class in which you can get school credit in exchange for doing an internship at a studio. Strong computer skills are a requirement: having a working knowledge of programs such as Microsoft Office, Google Docs, Adobe Suite, Final Draft, Final Cut, Avid, and tracking software such as Shotgun can give you the winning edge by setting you apart from other candidates applying for the same position.

Voice Talent

Most voice actors have agents who serve as their representative. They submit their work and send their clients to auditions. When hired, the agent negotiates the deal and helps the actor with all of the contractual paperwork. S/he is usually paid 10% of the actor's negotiated fee. If you are new to voice work, it is important that you assemble a sample of your work that demonstrates your voice range and talent in order to get an agent. This sample can be made available through a personal website, public video/audio-posting websites such as youtube.com, or a number of online voice talent banks where you can upload files of your work for casting agents and producers to access directly. Whichever approach you choose, be sure that your recording quality is professional.

Cultivating studio contacts and researching opportunities online can serve as an entry point since some casting directors and producers post casting calls, especially for non-union projects, on sites like voices.com, castingnetworks.com, and others. As a rule, it is a good idea to take voice-over acting classes, as doing so will help you hone your skills and make potential contacts. Many of the voice coaches are professional voice directors who are looking for fresh talent (for more information on auditions and casting, see Chapter 8, "Pre-production").

What Are the Main Similarities and Differences Between Producing a Game Versus a Series?

Speaking in very broad terms, initial ideas for both can start as an elevator pitch and a one-sheet showcasing the idea visually (see Chapter 3, "How to Identify and Sell Projects," for more on the elevator pitch). Conceptually, the core team needed for creating an animated game and a series are also very similar. They both require designers to generate artwork for characters, props, and the environments. Artists skilled in modeling, animation, visual effects, cinematography, and lighting are used in both formats. However, when putting a game team together, programmers need to be hired alongside artists right from the start. The types of programmers can include technical artists, coders, and engineers who are responsible for mathematically figuring out the formulas and algorithms to replicate the conceptual art, enable the assets to interact and withstand usage, and generate new iterations.

Unlike a series where the first step begins with a script, in many games, the proof is in creating a prototype that is tested and re-tested in order to assess its strengths and weaknesses. The story is, in fact, tacked on at the end as most games are not narratively driven. The goal of game production is to create systems that work together so that the game itself can withstand the user's range of actions. Game producers rely on their Quality Assurance Department whose purpose is to try to "break the game" in order to be able to deliver a product that can fully engage the user.

Another big difference between producing games versus a series is what happens after delivery. On a show, after the post-production phase has been completed and the episodes delivered, the job of the producer is done. For the mobile game producer, in some ways their job is just beginning once the project is delivered. When in market, s/he closely monitors data and focuses on audience retention in order to continue to produce more targeted content. To do this, the producer works with analytic teams to collect data and metrics on how the users are playing; where they are getting stuck; when they are falling off; if the interactivity and "fun" aspects of the game are working as intended. They also research what is being said about the game and look for patterns of consistent responses. If a game feature does well, they may build upon it, and if a feature is not popular, they eliminate it. With a general expectancy of a 1-year life span of a game, pending the metrics, the producer will be responsible for delivering upgrades and sequels, or deciding if the game should be terminated.

What Is Unique About the Process to Produce Online Educational Content?

Short online animated programs are created for use on mobile devices, tablets, or computers in order to teach children aged 2–8 subjects such as math, history, science, and language arts. Similar to educational series on television, the show is developed with specific building blocks to teach a subject to a target audience. All proceeding steps are very similar to television production from writing to design, to storyboarding and outsourcing animation, and post-production steps. However, while television shows are created for viewing, online educational content is set up to be interactive. Programmers are hired to create algorithms designed to respond to the user. For example, if a child is a visual learner, s/he will exhibit a specific pattern indicating their preferred way of learning and the content is re-configured to better match his/her specific abilities. When comparing passive viewing of television shows versus online interactive content that is specifically tailored for the user, the latter is considered to be a more effective educational tool.

What Are the Differences When Producing for Streaming Platforms Versus Traditional Broadcasters?

The main difference between the two can be found in their format and number of episodes per show. For traditional broadcasters, content is usually ordered in a standardized duration such as 11- or 22-min long episodes due to the need to fulfill specific timeslots. The timing is also more rigid because of specific breaks in the programming to allow time for advertising which pays for the content. Animated shows created for the children's block have to undergo rigorous reviews by Broadcast Standard and Practices (BS&P) so as to eliminate any content that might be in violation of moral, ethical, and legal parameters.

In contrast, animated shows for streaming platforms can be an order of 6–26 episodes. A half-hour episode's length can be anywhere between 22 and 28 min. There are also no breaks for commercials, so overall there is more flexibility for a producer when selling to media service providers.

I Have a Project. Should I Set Up My Own Animation Studio or Find a Studio for Hire?

The short answer is it depends on your specific expertise, content, and the scale of your project. The thinking behind this approach is that all available resources for the project will go directly towards the making of the product rather than towards the sub-contracting studio's producer fees and overhead that may seem extraneous to the actual production costs. Ostensibly, setting up your own production company can provide you with direct control of how the funds are spent; the creative freedom to explore various artistic choices; and finally, the ability to hire your own staff.

Yet what this approach does not take into consideration is that running a studio is an entirely different business than producing a film. Setting up a studio from scratch requires a substantial investment: initial startup funding, finding space, office/furniture/equipment rental/hardware/software leasing, pipeline development, hiring of artistic talent and production staff, etc. As a studio owner, your primary focus will have to shift from how to make your project to how the studio will be run day-to-day and how to sustain it. If you are not experienced at this type of business—or even if you are—there are always going to be surprise costs that cannot be anticipated. Ultimately, the project will probably cost more money than you budgeted, as building a studio is an expensive proposition.

Unless you have a way to monetize the studio and/or have investors who are willing and able to fund your projects from a long-term standpoint, your resources are probably better utilized by exploring the plethora of existing studios whose expertise will enable you to see a myriad of different stylistic approaches towards your project, which will let you hone in on the best configuration of available talent and creative direction. Instead of learning by trial and error and wasting a substantial amount of time and money learning how to run a studio and create a functional production pipeline, you can focus your efforts on how to successfully produce your project. By hiring a sub-contracting studio, you benefit from the expertise of seasoned artistic talent, a tested and functioning pipeline and production processes, and staff members who can execute your project expeditiously and cost effectively (see Chapter 7, “The Production Team,” on how to select the right studio for your project).

What Are the Unions or Guilds That Are Commonly Used on Productions That Are Either Fully or Partially Based in the US?

All major content exhibitors in the US may have contractual agreements to use talent from one or all of the following organizations:

- **The Animation Guild, IATSE Local 839:** a professional guild covering animation artists, writers, and technicians
- **The Writers Guild of America (WGA):** the joint organization of two different US labor unions representing series and feature writers
- **The Motion Picture Editors Guild, IATSE Local 700:** includes freelance and staff feature and series editors, plus other post-production professionals and story analysts throughout the Unites States
- **The Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA):** an American labor union covering actors performing in projects ranging from shorts to student projects, series and theatrical features, journalists, radio personalities, recording artists, singers, voice actors, and other media professionals worldwide

To SAG or Not to SAG: Should My Voice Track Be Union or Non-union?

Given how global the animation industry is, most producers around the world will face this question as they plan for distribution in the United States and English-speaking territories. SAG-AFTRA (Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists) is the union that almost all voice actors work through in the United States. This union sets yearly base pay rates for all formats from series, to games to movies. The union ensures that actors are paid fairly and that they receive lifetime residuals on their work whenever used.

When an actor's work is dubbed in another language, their performance is replaced so the original actor is not paid residuals in that particular territory since it is no longer their voice that is being used. For a non-union project, the rates a producer pays are based on whatever they can afford and no residuals are due as the deal made is almost always a one-time buyout fee. Getting top talent to record non-union is not really possible in the US: typically only up-and-coming talent will agree to this way of working as they are looking to get experience and credits in order to help them become SAG members. From a marketing perspective, most studios and producers look for name talent/celebrities to help sell their show in English territories. If this is the case, it will be necessary to produce as a signatory under the SAG-AFTRA union.

When working union, the upside is that unless you are hiring celebrities, the rates paid are pre-determined, which makes budgeting easy (note that scale rates change yearly, so it is best to contact SAG-AFTRA directly to get the latest fee breakdown). The downside is that if a producer's budget is limited, s/he may not be able to afford these pre-determined rates. The other consideration is that royalties must be paid to all actors whose voices are used in signatory covered territories and the management of these residuals is an ongoing obligation.

What Does It Mean to Have to Bond a Film Project?

Due to the fact that a considerable sum of money is required to produce a theatrical feature film, when an independent film is produced outside of the established mainstream studio, its financiers/investors often require a form of insurance that guarantees the project will be completed and delivered by the producer in accordance per their agreed-upon terms. This insurance is called a *completion bond* or a *completion guarantee* and is offered by a bonding company for a fee, typically a percentage of the overall budget.

When applying for a completion bond, the producer must provide the following types of materials: script, budget, schedule, cash flow, credits of the key talent, and information on the project's investors and their financial commitment to the film. The bonding company in return will evaluate the risk factors involved in the proposed scenario. For example, if the producer and director team have already completed projects of a similar caliber and have a consistent track record of delivering shows on time and on schedule, they present a minimal production risk.

If this is not the case, it will be assumed that the risk of delivery is higher and the bonding fees charged will reflect this assessment. Once the film is approved for consideration, the bonding company typically sets up meetings with the production's principals in order to further evaluate the project's viability. After the initial assessment has been made, it is not uncommon for the bonding company to request adjustments to the budget and schedule.

Based on the assessments of the core members of the production team and the final plan, the bonding company will determine whether the film can indeed be completed and delivered to the distribution company as proposed by the producer. If accepted, the bonding company will draw up the agreement and the producer can access funding. Once production commences, the bonding company will monitor the project's progress. If there is a concern that the project will not be delivered on budget or schedule, the worst-case scenario solution would involve the bonding company taking over the project and moving in to manage it themselves, ensuring that their client's investment is protected.

I Have What I Think Is the World's Best Idea, Where Do I Start?

Your adventure starts with diving into this book, developing a grounded understanding of just how challenging it can be to bring your concept to reality, and recognizing if there is a strong-enough interest that merits further exploration. With thoughtful development, well-executed research into the marketplace, a hearty gathering of talent, savvy networking, and a committed belief in your vision, anything is possible!

Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group
http://taylorandfrancis.com

2

The Animation Producer

What Is an Animation Producer?

Since writing the last edition, the potential areas of focus for an animation producer have expanded beyond the formats of feature length theatrical film, television series, webisodes, visual effects, gaming, and short films. It now includes new realms such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), 4D, and 5D content for theme parks. While the overall artistic and technical expertise needed has basic similarities, each has its own unique workflow process that can vary considerably from one format to the next. Our goal in this chapter is to establish the basic shared attributes for the animation producer in all of the above forms of content/format.

To begin, the Producers Guild of America (PGA) defines the role of the producer at the time of writing as:

> The "Produced by" credit for a fully Animated Production is given to the person(s) most completely responsible for an animated production's full life cycle, requiring significant decision-making authority over a majority of the producing functions across the four phases of an animated production's life-cycle: Development, Pre-Production, Production, and Post-Production/Marketing. The following

considerations would be taken into account in determining "Produced by" credit in a fully animated production:

Within the development process, the "Produced by" will typically conceive of the underlying premise of the production, or select the material, as is best suited to the particular media platform(s) on which the animated production will be exhibited. S/he also will select the project's writer(s), secure the necessary rights and initial financing, and supervise the development process.

In pre-production, the "Produced by" will typically select the key members of the creative team, including the animation director, cinematographer/technical director, co-producer, animation supervisor, production manager, production designer including backgrounds and characters and associated department leads, and principal cast of voice talent. The "Produced by" also will participate in vendor selection, and approve the final production script, boards and animatics, production schedule, and budget. The "Produced by" will also participate in media platform(s), and technology selections, and guidance.

During production, the "Produced by" will supervise the day-to-day operations of the producing team, providing continuous, personal, and usually "on-set" or "in-studio" consultation with the director and other key creative personnel. S/he also will approve weekly cost reports, and continue to serve as the primary point of contact for financial and distribution entities.

For the last phase, post-production and marketing, the "Produced by" is expected to consult personally with post-production personnel, including the editor, composer, and media platform specialists. S/he is expected to consult with all creative and financial personnel on the answer print or edited master, and usually is involved in a meaningful fashion with the financial and distribution entities concerning the marketing and distribution plans for the animated production on the particular destined media platform(s) in both domestic and foreign markets.

With today's productions often being hybrids of live-action, animation, and visual effects, it is rare to find one individual who exercises personal decision-making authority across all four phases of animation production. However, the PGA requires that in order to earn the credit of "Produced by," one must have taken responsibility for at least a majority of the functions performed and decisions made over the span of the animated component of the four phases.

https://www.producersguild.org/page/coc_nm#animation

The scope of a lead animation producer's responsibility varies based on the individual's area of expertise and place of employment. At the major studios, most lead producers are "employee producers". Under this production structure, the studio's core executive group usually sets up and oversees all projects in collaboration and support of the lead producer. They may even hire or assign a producer after a project has been developed and budgeted, and is ready to go into production. In the case of an independent scenario, the producer will inevitably play a hands-on role in: securing the rights and financing; arranging distribution; setting up the production, etc., as they will not have all of the various departments and infrastructure to cover these realms. No matter the structure underlying a production, the lead producer on an animated projected is ultimately responsible for overseeing

it from commencement to delivery. Thus, this book teaches from the definition that the person credited as the lead producer should have the skill set required to handle all the areas of responsibility outlined by the PGA, no matter if the project is produced through a large, medium, or very small infrastructure.

With that teaching perspective in mind, a typical animation producer's role is to fully investigate, to guide, and to oversee the key aspects of all four phases of production, and to determine the fundamental strategy for the content to be produced. Assuming that the main intent is to reach a wide audience and make a profit, once an intellectual property (IP) is identified, the first question a producer must answer is *where is the optimal business opportunity/market for the IP?* This starts with deciding what format is best suited for the content/characters and the story to be told. *Would it be best conceived as an immersive virtual reality experience? Or, would it do better as a webisode to start and then perhaps go into a longer format once it has a following?* There are many paths to creating animation, so taking the time to research this most basic yet critical decision is fundamental to ensure that there is genuine market and audience potential upside.

Once the market and upside have been targeted, the next step for the producer is to identify how the content is to be viewed: on a mobile device, or a 90-ft screen in a theme park, or both? If the project is not with one of the major studios already, the distribution method and potential partners for financing and creative input should be identified so that the project can be taken to market and sold in a successful manner. The approach to animation is also a critical decision to be made and is typically done in parallel with the above decisions, as both commercial opportunities and distribution methods play a key role in determining the approach to animation, be it 2D, CG, stop-motion, or a hybrid.

Depending on the size and scope of an animated project, there are "producers" in all sorts of roles with various areas and levels of responsibilities. Before we take a deep dive into the many details and nuances related to the wide variety of producer titles and tasks, here is the starting platform for what we consider to be the *three basic producer categories—the deal-maker, the creative, and the facilitator.*

The *deal-maker producer* spearheads identifying, gathering, and negotiating the financial resources and key players including talent and/or a production studio for a project. This producer generally has little or no creative input. Deal-maker producers are usually non-exclusive, meaning that they can work for multiple studios and have multiple projects in progress. It is highly unlikely that they would focus all their time on a single production. Instead, deal-maker producers hire a lead or line producer to handle the actual production of a show.

The *creative producer* plays the visionary role. This producer may have the ability to design or animate and/or write, and will have an in-depth knowledge of the story overall. S/he would lead or would be heavily involved in the creative decision-making process from both a visual and written perspective. Although creative producers do have responsibility for the budget and the schedule, their focus is creative. In this configuration, a line producer often handles time and money management to complement the creative leadership of this producer.

The *facilitator producer* pulls the entire production together, managing the day-to-day needs and overseeing that funds are best allocated to the creative needs of the project. This producer generally does not lead the creative processes but has a comprehensive understanding of the artistry, technology, and storytelling required to achieve the intended business and creative goals of the final content. These producers are typically very hands-on during production. Their involvement in the level of production detail often depends on whom they have working for them, and the size and scope of the production. To sum it up, their main focus tends to be the budget and the schedule, with an eye on best supporting the creative demands of the project.

There are multiple titles associated with the producer credit. For the outside world it can be confusing as to what all of these credits actually mean. The most commonly used ones are: executive producer, producer, co-producer, line producer, and associate producer. Of course, there are many variations beyond this list, including creative producer, consulting producer, supervising producer, and assistant producer, to name a few. Theoretically, titles are based on an individual's background and experience level. In some cases, however, they are based on what an agent or a representative is able to negotiate for his/her clients, wholly independent of their actual ability. The most commonly used producer job titles and their areas of responsibilities follow.

Executive Producer

Almost more than any other producer, the title and role of an *executive producer* can range widely depending on the format of the project, the person, and his/her skill set. Executive producers typically play a macro role and do not get into the day-to-day details. They are almost always involved in the financing and distribution of a project and, in many cases, will oversee the entire project from start to finish as a facilitator producer should. Executive producers have a say in the hiring of key creative staff, i.e., producers, director(s), and writer(s). They are also involved in all key creative decisions such as script development and determining the visual style of a project. Additionally, they give notes and input throughout the course of production at key milestones. They usually are asked to approve the project's production plan, including the budget and the schedule.

On feature films, an executive producer tends to fall into the deal-maker category. This type of producer is probably not exclusive to the project, but would have input in key business and creative decisions including the marketing strategy. On episodic television, the executive producer is usually considered the "showrunner" or creative visionary behind a production and would fall into the creative producer category. This executive producer is leading development, including the creation of the series bible (i.e., the approach to writing, the design of main characters, and the overall art direction; see Chapter 5, "The Development Process," for more information on this topic).

Once production begins, everything crosses the executive producer's desk ensuring that the project remains in line with the overall vision. The executive

producer gives input on pre-production elements such as all phases of the script, artwork, and storyboards (see Chapter 8, "Pre-production," for more information); production materials, including animation tests and color (see Chapter 9, "Production," for more information); and post-production, where they are involved in editing as well as sound and picture sessions (see Chapter 10, "Post-production").

As the main point persons for the buyer (who is either funding the production or is representing the individual/entity who is providing the funds), executive producers are often the individuals who receive creative and legal notes to be implemented. They usually have input on marketing, release planning, and viewing order. Executive producers are ultimately responsible for delivering the project on schedule at the agreed-upon level of quality and digital specifications.

Producer

The most common type of animation producer best fits under the category of the "facilitator." This job entails strategizing and implementing the production plan including the budget, schedules, as well as hiring the production crew and/or sub-contracting studios and post-production team. S/he is very involved in identifying and negotiating deals for and working with key creative talent such as writers, directors, and composers. The objective of this producer is to plan and structure the number of staff needed, hire the staff, and determine their start and finish date, modifying them as the project ebbs and flows. This producer has some creative input in each phase of production in collaboration with the director to ensure that the project is tracking creatively to the resources available. His/her main goal is to shepherd the project from its conception to pre-production through production, and then to its final delivery and marketed release, on budget and on schedule: as defined by PGA, the credit received should be "Produced by" since this person has acted as the primary lead and decision-maker over the four phases of the animated project.

At some larger studios, this type of producer may also fall into the "creative producer" category, whereby s/he would play the dual role of producer and director. In this case, the studio's executives would be much more hands-on in helping to monitor and support the producer with the implementation of production's budget and schedule, and in doing deals with sub-contractors, talent, crew, and outside facilities.

Line Producer or Co-Producer

The chief responsibility of the *line producer* or *co-producer* (hereafter referred to as the line producer) is establishing and managing the production budget and schedule. Line producer is a title more often used in the television realm, while co-producer is a title more commonly assigned on features. The line producer's role is very similar to that of the facilitator producer, but the line producer has very little or no creative input on production. Often this individual is hired when the production is either recently green-lit or is close to approval. Line producers

are held accountable for making sure that the production goals are met within the budget and timeline.

It should be noted that the title of co-producer is at times given to a person who is simply attached to the project and may be involved only in the conceptual or initial deal-making phases.

Associate Producer

The role of *associate producer* is one step above the production manager. Associate producers tend to have a more in-depth production background than production managers, yet they do not have the level of experience to be given the title of line producer. Commonly, the associate producer's duties start with pre-production and continue through the delivery of the final color images. S/he typically has little or no involvement in either the development or post-production phases.

Similar to the role of the line producer, this job involves administrative and logistical skills. Using the budget and the schedule as a guideline, the associate producer works closely with the production manager in coordinating, scheduling, and tracking the flow of artwork and materials from one department to the next during pre-production. When sub-contractors are used on a production, the associate producer is often in charge of overseeing the on-time delivery of material to them as well as the return of notes and feedback as per the agreed-upon schedule. The associate producer may or may not be involved in post-production. Operating as a facilitator, the associate producer's degree of control and decision-making is contingent on the structure of the studio and/or production. Generally, associate producers are not in a position to make deals with outside facilities or sub-contractors on their own. They would, however, probably be able to hire members of the production and artistic team based on the producer's input and guidance.

On a feature, the associate producer is a critical and big role as it can be managing the efforts of potentially 250 or more crewmembers. In order to keep the project on schedule and avoid unexpected overages, the associate producer will judiciously gauge the complexity level of every shot throughout the production. Constructing an efficient production pipeline starts with an approved script. However, on a feature production, the script is never final as it is developed and improved upon through most of the production, so the only way to proceed is to peel away one sequence at a time.

As each sequence is completed through the storyboarding and/or pre-visualization process, the associate producer guides the evaluation of its complexity analysis in order to lock it for production. Through close collaboration with staff members such as the director, the visual effects supervisor, and the production accountant, the associate producer estimates the number of hours or the cost of each sequence. If the dollar amount is in line with the projected parameters, the sequence can go into production. When it exceeds the allotted budget, the associate producer's edict is to come up with alternative cost-cutting options.

Lead Producer's Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the producer at each studio depend on a number of factors:

- Format/length of the project
- Technique and/or process of animation
- Organization of the studio
- Producer's experience and expertise

Based on these criteria, the producer may take on all or a combination of the areas listed here. Please note that when it is indicated that the producer needs to "obtain approval" on specific line items, this phrase refers to getting the final approval from the individual(s) responsible for overseeing and/or funding the project, such as the buyer or studio executive.

1. Manage creative vision and oversight of the project.
2. Create and obtain approval of a production plan including budget, schedule, and list of assumptions.
3. Finalize the script for production.
4. Identify and select the director(s).
5. Establish creative checkpoints with buyer/executive (see Chapter 9, "Production," for a detailed list).
6. Cast and hire the artistic team (see Chapter 7, "The Production Team," for more information).
7. Cast and hire the administration and production staff, including the line producer, co-producer, associate producer, and production manager, if applicable.
8. Identify and select sub-contract production studios, if applicable (see Chapter 7, "The Production Team," for more information).
9. Negotiate deals with sub-contract studios and outside facilities (see Chapter 7, "The Production Team," for more information).
10. Cast the composer.
11. Oversee the creation of and attain approval on the key pre-production artwork (see Chapter 8, "Pre-Production," for more information).
12. Conduct an ongoing evaluation of production output and department quotas.
13. Supervise staff and monitor the day-to-day progress of production.
14. Communicate the overall production priorities to crewmembers.
15. Establish and maintain relationships with all pertinent ancillary groups including marketing, licensing and merchandising, digital media, publicity, distribution, and promotions.
16. Resolve disputes and conflicts within the production unit and all outside services.

17. View and approve all animation (see Chapter 9, "Production," for more information).
18. Approve retakes and revisions.
19. View and approve the director's cut.
20. Attain and approve the final cut.
21. Supervise the "spotting" of sound effects and music with the director.
22. Supervise and approve automated dialogue replacement (ADR) and additional sound effects with the director.
23. Supervise the music recording session with the director.
24. Supervise the final mix session with the director.
25. Obtain approval of the content of the opening titles and end credits, as well as title design.
26. Obtain approval of the final output.
27. Deliver the final product in the format requested by the buyer/executive.
28. Support the marketing efforts of the distributor.
29. Ensure that all materials are archived.
30. Provide financier with all final deliverables including executive contracts, all paperwork, final cost report, etc.

Self-Producing: Be Your Own Boss!

By Nina Paley

Creator/Director/Producer/Everything for Seder-Masochism, Sita Sings the Blues *and other projects*

I had the good fortune to be self-taught—I didn't know "Producer" was a separate job, since doing everything myself to make a film happen was just part of making my own films from the start. When you don't know how something is supposed to be done, you just figure out what works and get it done.

I made my first animated film on Super-8 at the age of 13: *Godzilla vs. Rubik's Cube*. I checked out "the animation book" from the library, got some Plasticine clay and clamp lights, and moved things around while clicking off one frame at a time on the neighbor's Super-8 camera. My dad sent the film cartridge in to be developed, and a week later I saw the resulting mini-reel on our home projector. It was pure magic for the first few seconds, until it went dark due to a shutter malfunction. After crying for a day, I started over and remade the entire film. Just a few seconds of seeing my art move hooked me.

Today I am mostly using a computer and quality animation software. It's all more abstract and further from the hands-on reality of film, but