

# Case Study: Computer Animator - John

## What do you do?

I'm an animator for an internet company. I actually do three types of animation. There's the pure graphical animation, there's industrial animation, and there's the basic illustrative animation of words for the internet.

The graphical animation is character-based, the industrial animation involves animating to a company's literature or their logos, and the illustrative animation is general word-based information.



## What is your background?

I've been doing this job for three years. I've been in this industry for four to five years.

I got into web design first, then it was a natural progression to take on the animation side of things. That's expanded a little, and the way the business went, the animation became a more lucrative and a more specific area for us to concentrate on.

## What characteristics do you need to be successful in your job?

I think you predominantly need to be 'arty'. But there's a lot of technology involved nowadays, so you probably need to learn quite a lot of design packages, certainly in the type of animation that I do, anyway. So I would say that you need a decent balance between those two things.

You need to have a fairly enquiring mind. And you also need to be able to do constructive research, particularly on the internet.

## What other jobs could you do using the skills from this job?

I think that doing this kind of artwork could transfer into several spheres. You could certainly do print art work, a lot of the skills overlap. You could also go into traditional animation, but I would say that you would need an extra set of skills to do that.

You could also be an illustrator; anything where you are producing original artwork, really.

## What changes will there be in the future?

I think that the main changes over recent history, and I don't see them not continuing, is the accessibility. There is quite a lot of technology involved in this area, and it's getting more accessible now.

A lot of recent history, and recent moves within the media, have been towards creating the kinds of technology that will automate animation. That's all filtering down to the desktop now. You can quite easily access video to create animation from, if you need to do the gaits of characters, for example.

## What are the biggest challenges in your job?

The challenging aspects are two-fold. The first being the business constraints upon artwork; the two areas don't always sit well together. You want to be creating the best things that you possibly can in an artistic field. But, obviously this is constrained by time and money.

Secondly, working with customers can be challenging, in a positive way. In my job you have to work to a brief and bring to fruition people's imagination. And people can't always express what they are actually thinking; and that works both ways!

Sometimes it's difficult to make an artwork out of an ethereal idea. But, as I said, it's a positive challenge, not a negative one!

## Are there many opportunities to enter this career?

I think it's easy to get on the first rung of the ladder. There are plenty of opportunities in the multimedia and web sphere of design, which is an ever-expanding market.

It depends on the size of the organisation. Some will have full time animators, or it might be a subsection of the job. But certainly you can get some sort of experience to move on into the area full time, if you wish to do so.

## What do you like about your job?

I like the creative side of it. I like the fact that you can have ideas and make them come to fruition.

I also like working with customers. Perhaps, in an artistic area, you are doing something that either they don't have time to do, or people can't actually do themselves. When things are going right, it's nice to see people's enthusiasm and people actually being pleased with the things that you do.

The creativity side of it: being able to sit down and have a blank page or screen one morning, and have something finished...in the next week or so!

## What do you dislike about your job?

I think sometimes the constraints on your 'art'; the business constraints work against you a little bit. Sometimes you're asked to create or finish things in quite a lot less time than you actually would like to spend. I suppose that it is all a compromise anyway, but that's a main dislike.

If I could sit and just do art all the time, or animate and just do whatever I thought was funny, that would make it a perfect job, but obviously you don't do exactly what you want. It's the same with any job really, I suppose.

## What are your ambitions?

I would like to do several things. I enjoy creation; I like to create things.

I think I would probably like to move into media-type animation. I think I'd get quite a lot of joy out of creating a character from scratch. If I made it come alive and developed a programme of sorts, something that would make me and my friends laugh first. If I can make something else out of it then so much the better.

I'd quite like to write as well; write a book. See if I've got a novel in me!

That's it really. Creation is the main word. If I can make something from scratch, that would probably make me happy. And even happier if I could make a living out of it.

## What advice would you give to someone interested in your career?

I would say create a style of your own. Decide what you want to do first. If you want to work for other people and you can't necessarily create from scratch, then you might have to seek another company to go and work for.

You can actually go out on your own and develop a style. If you want to specifically go into cartoon animation, I would say start off with a doodle, something that makes you laugh and gives you enthusiasm, and take it from there.

There are plenty of books that you can buy on the subject. And there's plenty of research you can do to see what other people do. But I would say dive in, have a laugh, and see if you can make a career out of it.

## A day in the life

It is likely that I would take all day (for many days) on some of the following tasks. But I've broken the tasks up over a day, to show some variety.

8:30 am - 8:40 am

The first job is to check and reply to emails and messages.

8:40 am - 10:00 am

Storyboard an animation for a promotional internet campaign from a previously agreed design brief. Ideas come more freely when you are half awake.

10.00 am - 10:20 am

Coffee and eye rub.

10.20 am - 12:30 pm

Begin an animation for a promotional CD. The characters have already been designed and now it's time for the interesting bit - making them move and interact (time moves quickly here).

12.30 pm - 1.30 pm

Lunch.

1.30 pm - 2.30 pm

Research. It's good to look at as many samples of the craft as possible. Looking at websites and books for both inspiration and technical knowledge.

2.30 pm - 3.00 pm

Create/find/research a few sounds for the animation. (Twangs and crashes can keep you awake in the mid afternoon lull).

3.00 pm - 3.20 pm

Cup of tea.

3.20 pm - 4.20 pm

Begin to add sound to the animation.

4.20 pm - 5.20 pm

Make a small website and upload an animation to it, so an international client can view an animated banner advert. Email or phone to discuss the artwork. Record feedback and make notes for amendments.

5.20 pm - 5.45 pm

Boring paperwork.

Later

Sometimes think about the interesting or difficult bits of work (keeping a pen and paper handy). Sometimes doodle.