

10

ways to MAXIMIZE your animation budget.

Animation is a labour of love, and a labour of love takes time.

Maximising your budget means minimising your time, and there are lots of ways you can do this without compromising on quality.

One of the significant differences between film and animation is that film allows you to shoot a whole bunch of footage and edit it lots of different ways, swapping and cutting shots as the video progresses. You may start out with a solid plan, but often there is still scope for flexibility without too much hassle.

Animation however is much better served by meticulous planning before production. Better planning at the start can prevent more expensive iterations later on.

We could write much more on all this, but for now here are 10 ways to maximise your animation budget. Remember almost anything is possible with animation - we're purely speaking from a budget maximising perspective.

1. If it doesn't need to be said, don't say it.

Work out exactly what you want to say in as little time as needed. If you can say what you need to say in 2 minutes rather than 5, your budget can be put towards improving the quality of those 2 minutes.

A good studio will be able to help you with this if you don't feel confident. They will also be able to help you write something that lends itself better to animation, for example, using visually descriptive language and creating a flow that will play out better on screen.

2. How many characters are necessary?

Think carefully about how many characters you need because the more you have, the more time that shot will take to animate. Being smart about composition will also help you to reduce the amount of time multiple characters are together on screen.

3. Sign-off the voiceover before production.

By locking down the final voiceover before you begin animating will save surprising amounts of time later on. Timing out animation to hit specific parts of a script at the perfect moment is part of the art of what an animator does. Nuances in both the tone and intonation of a voiceover can dictate how the animation flows. Therefore changing it during production can waste budget in retiming the work to fit the new voiceover.

4. Use animation to enhance an already good script.

Relying heavily on animation to communicate what you want to say can take more time to get right. Instead, use animation to engage people and enhance an already clear message. If someone were to only listen to your video, would they understand the message?

5. Repurpose your assets.

With animation it's pretty easy to isolate assets and repurpose them for other things - social media posts for example.

There may be a small charge from the studio to do this, but you'll end up getting more out of it in the long run.

Keep these things in mind during your planning stage and talk to the studio about it. Having an idea at the start means you can purposefully build in assets that can be repurposed later on.

6. Faces take time.

Look for ways to limit facial expressions, especially speaking, which can take a long time to sync well with the audio. This means creating a design that doesn't need a detailed face and letting the body language of a character sell the emotion. For example, an angry character might stomp their foot or an excited character might jump up and down.

Also make sure your script links up well to the animation so it's clear to everyone watching what is supposed to be happening.

7. Choose an interesting style.

If you're on a tight budget, sometimes focussing on good illustration is better than pushing for bad animation. Create something that is visually pleasing and then use simple animation to keep everything looking alive. An example of this could be a woodland scene where you have a beautiful image with light bursting through the trees. Then animate a very simple rustling of leaves, or a bug moving up a branch to keep things moving.

8. Sell it with sound.

Using sound to your advantage can be a way to bring life to a scene without having to animate it. A few noises off-screen can be enough and your studio will be able to advise you on appropriate places to make use of this.

9. Lots of simple moves can be effective.

Sometimes having lots of 'big' moves can keep things interesting without needing to do detailed animation. So for example, if you had a building-site with lots of people and machinery - instead of a slow zoom into a detailed scene with lots of different things going on (all of which need to be animated), how about animating all the individual assets to assemble together all at once to form the scene. It's still interesting, but much more simple.

10. Lower the frame rate.

Animation is generally produced at 24 frames per second and produces smooth looking motion. However animating at 12 frames per second saves time for the animator because there are less frames to deal with.

This doesn't necessarily compromise on quality, particularly for 2D animation because it can add more character and style. In fact, much of 'Spider-man: Into the Spider-verse' was animated using a lower frame rate in order to enhance the comic-book style of the movie.

Bonus. Stay on point.

Once those creative juices start flowing it's tempting to get distracted by creativity for the sake of creativity. Remember that at-the-end-of-day this animation is being used to serve a purpose. Make sure you stay on point throughout production to ensure you don't get bogged down with creative rabbit trails that don't serve the main goal....or budget!

Get in touch at info@jonnyhallstudios.com to talk about your next animated project.