

Multimedia Production Basics – The Team and the Process

By Phillip Kerman

Overview:

Anyone with a story to tell can produce a multimedia product—however, they should learn some basics about the process and team dynamics. Regardless of the size of your project, there are a series of steps which always occur. And no matter what your team’s experience level, you’ll always have people applying skills transferred from other industries. This presentation explores both the people and the process of multimedia.

Presentation Outline:

So you want to make a multimedia project?

The Team

Team Roles (see table on right).

- Funding: *Client, Sales person.*
- Design: *Writer, Instructional Designer, Producer.*
- Content Gathering: *Casting, Talent, Audio, Video.*
- Content Production: *Artist, Media Coordinator, Programmer, Manager.*
- Delivery: *Quality Assurance.*

Transferring from other industries.

- How to develop these skills.
- Success stories.

Building a team.

- Bare-bones production.
- A case for contractors.

The Process

Non-linear thinking.

- Why it isn’t linear.
- Scenario of linear projects.

Non-linear production.

- How this works.
- Case study (see *Benefits of non-linear production*, on other side).

Steps which do occur in order.

- The idea, determining value, and identify funding.
- Design, prototype, and write specifications.
- Approval and distribution.

Summary

Questions from audience

Skills Necessary:

All jobs require these skills, but to varying degrees.

	Data	People	Things
Client, Publisher			
Sales, Account Manager			
Writer, Script Writer, Copy Editor			
Instructional Design, Interface Designer			
Producer, Director, Creative/Art Director			
Casting			
Talent, Actors			
Audio, Sound FX, Sweetening			
Video, Photographers, Compressionists			
Artist (Graphic, Production)			
Media Coordinator			
Programmer, Author, Developer			
Manager (Production, Project)			
Quality Assurance, Bug Testing			

Benefits of non-linear production:

No one component can halt production. (*Rarely are steps contingent on a sequence of events occurring.*)

Content is modularized. (*When people work simultaneously, separation of content is required—this can help during future content updates.*)

Product cycles are short. (*Products can be delivered faster if all resources are applied concurrently. Product cycles are constantly being trimmed.*)

Localized versions (to other languages or cultures) can be delivered simultaneously. (*See “Product cycles are short” above.*)

Prototype versions can identify flaws early. (*Instead of waiting until all the graphics are finished, for example, a rapid prototype with temporary graphics will provide early visualization.*)

Job Descriptions:

Client— Remember this can include a “client” internal to your organization. Sometimes determined by who’s paying for the project, but can simply be a matter of hierarchy.

Sales— “Making the sale” can involve months of client relationship building. It’s important during a project that an *Account Manager* acts as liaison between client and production group. Sales is just as important for successful companies as for new companies.

Writer— On-screen text, the script a narrator reads, collateral material, song lyrics, and the “story” any project “tells” all require a writer. This role is often overlooked but adds value to a project.

Instructional Designer— More than just the graphic “look”, *Interface* and *Instructional* design involves how graphics function.

Producers— Includes *Director*, *Creative Director*, or *Art Director*... and involves communicating a vision to all the production people.

Casting— A job associated with film production, casting is probably the most overlooked role in multimedia.

Talent— Any person or group performing roles in the production (actors, voices, singers, or models). Remember, it’s “acting” even if just a still-image is used... and actors can always use good direction.

Audio— *Sound FX specialists* and *Audio sweeteners* will assure audio feels natural and is inconspicuous—you only notice the audio if it’s poor.

Video— Source video footage needs to be the best quality possible even if it’s ultimately viewed on a computer screen. Concern for a smaller viewing environment is important as well as file size compression.

Artists— Production artists are graphic artists who follow a style laid out by a *creative director*. As in any commercial art, a thick skin is helpful.

Media Coordinator— Often completely overlooked, this person coordinates all production media such as video audio, and graphics. They also assure media conforms to programmer requirements while retaining graphic integrity.

Programmer— Also called *Developer* or *Author* depending on their software tools. The best multimedia programmers understand designers’ wants and can communicate limits. Sometimes working quickly in prototype form is more valuable than pure “programming” ability (like writing algorithms or subroutines).

Managers— *Production managers* and *project managers* are skilled at multi-tasking. Although some projects are “over managed” (too many cooks...), it is critical.

Quality Assurance— Some people’s idea of *bug testing* is “pounding” on a project during the moments before FedEx arrives for a pick-up. It is, however, a statistical and scientific process which is less expensive when approached proactively.

Bibliography / Suggested Reading / Credits / Resources:

What Color is Your Parachute? by Richard Nelson Bolles, 10 Speed Press, 1970 ISBN:0-89815-758-7

The Oregon Multimedia Tour CDRom, Oregon Multimedia Alliance 1995, <http://www.oregon.org/>

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Attend my other seminar at New Media '98 tomorrow:

Session #317 Building Adaptable Templates for Large Projects – Rapid Prototyping 2:00 - 3:30PM Thursday, the 14th of May.

Session: Multimedia Production Basics – The Team and the Process

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