The "Killer Content" Workbook

*An Interactive Guide for Exploring Creativity,
Creative Development and Business Development Issues
for the Interactive Media Developer*

Version 1.0

The Killer Content Workbook

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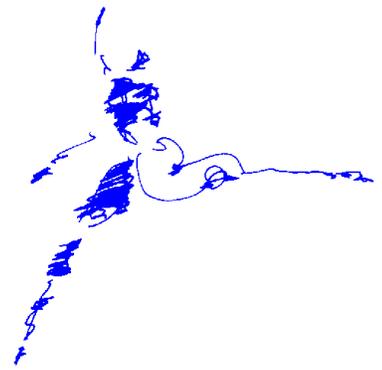
I owe a debt of gratitude to my family, friends and professional associates who helped me complete this interactive workbook. Especially my wife, Esther, who somehow managed to stick by my side through the laborious process of giving birth to this electronic guide.

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And finally, my appreciation to Jeff Rogers for allowing me to reprint his Web site design proposal, "U-Turn: A Moving Story," a project he created while a student of mine at UC Irvine Extension's "Writing for Multimedia" class. I would also like to thank Bob Thaves for allowing me to reprint three of his "Frank & Ernest" comic strips. Thanks Bob!

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How to Use This Workbook

The Killer Content Workbook is brought to you as an Adobe PDF document. To interact with this Workbook, you will need to use **Adobe Acrobat Reader 3.0** or higher.

Part One of the Workbook is subdivided into three key chapters: 1) creativity, 2) creative development, and 3) business development. You can jump directly to any of these content areas by calling up the Table of Contents and clicking on the disired subject.

Within the body of the work, you will encounter **blue** hypermedia icons that are "hot." Essentially, they will do something if you "click" them. Here are the hypermedia icons used in this Workbook, along with their meanings:

     = **SOUND ICON:** Activates a sound file when clicked.

     = **WORKSHEET ICON**: Links to an interactive worksheet PDF file.

     text links   = **HYPERLINKS**: Blue colored text links to Web sites or a sample documents.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: After clicking a hypermedia link and opening a worksheet or other PDF document, you may return to the main Workbook at any time by clicking on the **last page** icon which appears at the top of the Acrobat Reader screen (see below):

◀◀ LAST PAGE   NEXT PAGE ▶▶

While you explore the Workbook, you will discover that the PDF worksheets included in this guide are quite valuable tools for helping you organize your own killer content gameplan. You may want to make several copies of each worksheet before you begin typing in your answers so you can complete the exercises for each of your products, services or businesses. You may prefer instead to type directly onto the worksheet (each worksheet is its own PDF form) and print out your answers as you go. You can reset your worksheet at any time by clicking on the appropriate answer field, selecting the text, and deleting it.

Enjoy!

Table of Contents

Introduction

The Killer Content Workbook is sponsored by the Apple Computer Inc. Developer Relations Group for the Apple Media Program. The purpose of this workbook is to arm interactive media professionals with the power to create killer content and bring that content to market the best way possible. It will help you articulate your creative vision, formulate a business development strategy, create a marketing plan, and implement a distribution plan that maximize the effectiveness of your budget and time parameters. You'll investigate the essence of creativity, study leading-edge PR strategies, survey online partnerships, examine effective marketing techniques, and much more. What you'll end up with is a killer content plan that doubles as a course of action for your product and your business.

This workbook is made up of some of my personal mantras, combined with insightful conversations with individuals pushing the boundaries of the digital frontier––artists, designers, programmers, writers, producers––people just like you who are committed to breaking new ground, one stone at a time, through hard work and unbridled conviction.

Whether you are an up-in-coming interactive developer or a seasoned veteran, you need to master the creative and business strategies unique to this dynamic industry. This workbook is designed to promote developer growth by disseminating knowledge that is not readily available anywhere else. Specifically, to help developers conceptualize, visualize, organize and implement real-world strategies in five crucial areas: creativity, creative development, business development, marketing and distribution.

The Killer Content Workbook is divided into two installments. Part One of the two part document, covers the topics of creativity and business development and is divided into three categories:

a) Creativity Unleashed
b) Creative Development
c) Business Development

Enjoy the journey!

Section I:
Creativity Unleashed
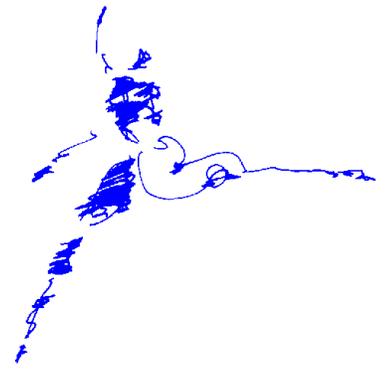
Are You Creative?

We are all creative beings. Yet, for most of us, our creative juices do not flow easily from brush to canvas, mouse to screen, or from thought to written word. Our creative abilities are much like the muscles of an athlete. With regular use, muscles become stretched and toned. When not exercised regularly, the they become flabby and weak. Similarly, when we are in touch with our creative talents and put them to use on a daily basis, our creativity flourishes. This is the challenge to interactive media developers. Discovering the creativity within and putting those talents to use.

"Anyone can look for fashion in a boutique or history in a museum. The creative person looks for history in a hardware story and fashion in an airport."

––Robert Wieder

What Makes You Tick?

As unique human beings, each of us brings to the creative table something fresh, new, and invigorating. We bring our memories, prejudices, habits, joys, sorrows, strengths, and weaknesses––the core elements that make us who we are. But who are we really? What is our agenda? What inspires us? What is our emotional make up? What makes us tick?

Deep introspection helps us flush out our personal wants, needs, desires, and shortcomings––the driving force behind our very being. Clues which can help us unlock our own personal dramas are all around us––in our movies, theater performances, classic novels––even the interpersonal soap operas which unfold around the water cooler at the office.

James L. Halperin's current best-selling novel, "The Truth Machine," provides us with a fine example of a character facing a powerful inner struggle. Randall Peterson Armstrong is the protagonist. He's rich and famous, possesses a near-

perfect photographic memory, and runs the worlds most powerful corporation. Yet he is flawed––just like you and me. He is tormented by the death of his younger brother, Leonard. And, he hides a terrible secret that could have a profound impact on the "new world social order." Randall's outward appearance rarely betrays his innermost secrets, wants, and needs. But when Randall comes face to face with what makes him tick––when his inner demons collide with his outer persona, Randall must redefine his goals and aspirations so that they mirror his "reborn" self.

It is in this period of "rediscovery" that readers uncover (along with Randall), exactly what makes him tick. This visceral bond between reader and protagonist is perhaps what so endears us to fictional characters we love. This is the power of deep introspection and self discovery.

Now it's time to discover what makes you tick. Click on the worksheet icon and you will be transported to the Personal Profiler Worksheet. Take a few moments to answer all the questions on the worksheet. You can type directly on the form or print the form and fill in the questionnaire by hand. When you're finished, pause and reflect on your answers. Then ask yourself:

- ◆ Are my goals superficial or deep and meaningful?
- ◆ Are my goals attainable or purposely out-of-reach?
- ◆ Am I proud of who I am and where I am going?

What Motivates You to Overcome Difficult Challenges?

Back when I was twelve years old and in 6th grade, I was fortunate to have won the ever-so-coveted title of "Best All Around Male Student" of Vallejo Mill Elementary School in Fremont, California. I remember my teacher, Mr. Potter, pulling me aside after the school assembly and telling me how proud he was of my accomplishments and how confident he was that I would succeed at anything I put my mind to. He fancied I would become a famous writer or perhaps even a Hollywood filmmaker. Mr. Potter was the first person in my life (other than my Mom and Dad) who expressed a belief in my abilities. His simple words of wisdom became my lifelong creative inspiration––words which would motivate me to overcome difficult challenges in my life, even to this day.

"In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, in the expert's mind there are few."

––Shunryu Suzuki
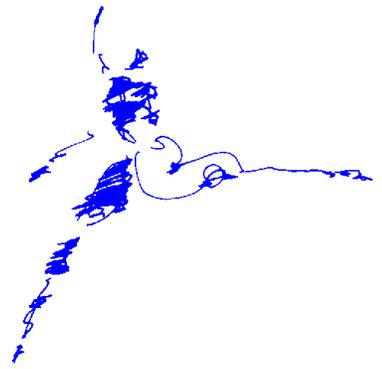
Take a few moments to reflect on events in your life that have served as your creative inspiration. Were you awarded an athletic scholarship? Did you receive words of praise from a thoughtful instructor? Perhaps you survived an automobile accident and the horror of that event has forever altered your purpose for living. When times get tough, what inspires you to carry on?

What is it about those memorable events that allows you to draw creative inspiration from them? Dainin Katagiri Roshi (a Zen teacher) once said that talent is like a water table under the earth. You tap it with your effort and it comes through you. Nobody owns it. Events which inspire our creativity have the uncanny ability of helping us channel our creative energies to the surface so we can can use them to better ourselves. Quite simply, these events tap into our creative souls.

Obstacles Can Also Stimulate Creativity

Recently, I had the good fortune of interviewing Bob Thaves, cartoonist and creator of Frank & Ernest, a popular strip syndicated by United Media in over 1,200 newspapers worldwide and read by 25 million fans daily.

In the early Seventies, Bob had plenty of syndicates interested in picking up Frank & Ernest. The problem was, they all wanted him to change his format. You see, Bob was pushing a new concept––the single panel strip. Traditionally, cartoonists created comics using single "panels" and rectangular "strips." Strips such as Dick Tracy consisted of multiple square panels strung together to form a rectangular box. Single panels comics such as Family Circle were fitted into a single square box. Frank and Ernest, on the other hand, broke all the rules by framing a single panel comic in a rectangular box. The single panel strip format was aesthetically pleasing and allowed Bob to mask his poor lettering skills (the extra space allowed him to use larger letters).

In an industry that did not welcome change, Bob was steadfast in his resolve to create Frank & Ernest as a strip. If he couldn't create his way, he simply wouldn't create the strip at all. In the end, NEA broke down and picked up the strip for syndication. Upon release, Frank & Ernest (and its unorthodox format) was accepted immediately. Nowadays, there are numerous successful single panel strips (Mister Boffo, Nonsequitor) gracing funny pages across America.

"When I was a child my mother said to me, "If you become a soldier you'll be a general. If you become a monk you'll end up as the pope." Instead I became a painter and wound up as Picasso."

––Pablo Picasso

For the 25 years that followed, Bob faced a new challenge––creating a humorous new strip each and every day. What could possibly motivate someone to create over 9,000 comic strips, you ask?

"The greatest spur is a deadline," offers Bob Thaves. "When I was creating strips for magazines, I was free to create as the spirit moved me. That's not the case with newspapers. Material needs to be delivered on time. There are times when you are simply not inspired. You've got to put something down on paper. At that point, it's not so much creation as it is production."

Why is Creativity Important?

In 1984, Apple Computer, Inc. ran its now legendary "1984" commercial during the fourth quarter of the Superbowl, which used as its theme, an oppressive society similar in tone and appearance to George Orwell's inflexible, overly paternalistic government of Oceania. In the commercial, life is a dreary agony. A projected image of Big Brother preaches to a room full of mindless, urban drones about the joys of uniformity. An athletic woman in red shorts bursts into the scene chased by storm troopers. She heaves a large hammer into the image of Big Brother, smashing the image and leaving a room full of stunned citizens.

The commercial ran only once as an advertisement and is considered one of the best advertising spots ever created. It is this author's opinion that the "1984" spot's purpose was two fold:

    1) to roll out the original Macintosh computer;
    2) to rally Apple users to fight against mediocrity and mindless uniformity

The commercial is an excellent example of creativity in action. The movie-like quality of the spot and the fact that it only ran once helped elevate the commercial to an event, rather than simply another 60 second ad.

Why did Apple Computer take such a bold gamble with this particular ad? Why was the message of creativity and freedom so important to the launch of the Macintosh? Perhaps the first reason is innovation. An innovative ad campaign laid the groundwork for an innovative new computer. Computer users now had a choice. Stick with their current systems, thereby embracing the familiar, or switch to a Macintosh and discover innovative new solutions. The Macintosh computer quickly became synonymous with cool, hip, and fun. By propagating new and creative ideas, Apple Computer, Inc. became innovators of change.

1. Out of clutter, find simplicity.
2. From discord, find harmony.
3. In the middle of difficulty, lies opportunity.

    ––Albert Einstein
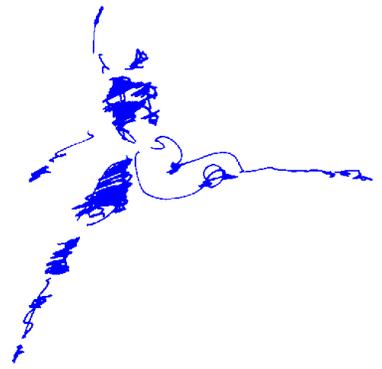
It should come as no surprise then, that Apple's new advertising campaign embraces the innovative slogan, "Think Different." The new campaign honors many of the creative geniuses who have changed the world in this century, including Pablo Picasso, Albert Einstein, Martin Luther King, John Lennon, Muhammed Ali and Amelia Earhart. To sample the ad campaign photography, go to: (http://product.info.apple.com/pr/photos/ads/adphotos.html).

The Think Different campaign was spearheaded by Apple Computer, Inc. interim CEO Steve Jobs and ad agency TBWA Chiat/Day (their previous collaboration produced the legendary "1984" spot). To see the QuickTime version of the ad, go to: (http://www.apple.com/thinkdifferent/ad1.html).

"Think Different celebrates the soul of the Apple brand—that creative people with passion can change the world for the better," said Steve Jobs. "Apple is dedicated to making the best tools in the world for creative individuals everywhere."

How Do We Become Innovators of Change?

So how do we become innovators of change? Quite simply, we must use our creativity to think of new ideas and bold new solutions. We must look at the same thing as everyone else and think of something different.

EXERCISE #1: Imagine that you're a contractor for a major builder. You've been hired to convert a dilapidated warehouse into office space. However, there is one problem. The previous owner of the building left behind 5 million unused cotton balls. Your assignment is to think of creative things to do with the cotton balls before the new office space is completed. List a few ideas.

EXERCISE #2: Suppose for a moment that you are a development executive at an interactive media publisher. One day, the head honcho ushers you into her office and proclaims that the company is dramatically shifting its development strategy. Due to a cash crunch, the firm will now develop innovative games based solely on properties in the public domain. Your responsibility is to come up with some test concepts for a new title based on the nursery rhyme, Jack and Jill. Harking back to your childhood, you recount the story: Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water. Jack fell down and broke his crown and Jill came tumbling after. Jot down a few variations of the story.

EXERCISE #3: You're a marketing assistant for a large manufacturer. You have been assigned a project that may help land you a promotion if completed to your employer's satisfaction. Your mission is to come up with a list of unique names for the following new consumer products in development:

- ◆ A hair brush that doubles as a portable telephone
- ◆ Auto body paint that changes color every few days
- ◆ An inflatable bicycle helmet

As you focus your creative energies on the various tasks outlined above, you may find one or more of the challenges difficult to complete. Don't give up! Remember to use your knowledge and experience to help stimulate extra-ordinary ideas. Use your wackiest thoughts and your strangest solutions to help break down the mental barriers that stand in your way. Go on. Have some fun!

So how did you do with the cotton balls in Exercise #1? What creative solutions did you come up with?

Here a few examples I came up with:

- ◆ Stuff the cotton balls into the walls of the building (in place of standard insulation)
- ◆ Dip the cotton balls in caramel and market them as exotic confections
- ◆ Sell the cotton balls to an aspirin manufacturer (and pocket the cash!)
- ◆ Make fashion accessories out of them

The cotton ball exercise demonstrates on interesting point. When cotton balls are taken out of their usual context, many more uses for the items become possible. I'm not predicting that carmel-covered cotton balls will become a candy craze anytime soon. However, when we place cotton balls in the food category, our minds can suddenly find all sorts of exotic new uses for cotton. Cotton candy anyone?

How did you do with the Jack and Jill exercise? As a development executive placed in an extraordinary situation, you have been pushed off your routine path and forced to "think of something different." When approaching the story of Jack and Jill, one might first pose a series of questions to help formulate a new approach to a familiar set of circumstances.

"Take an object. Do something to it. Do something else to it."

––Jasper Johns
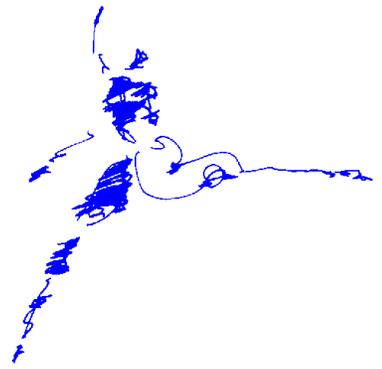
Questions such as:

- What caused Jack to fall down?
- Why was Jack wearing a crown?
- What caused Jill to come tumbling after?

Or perhaps alternative situations such as:

- What if Jack and Joe went up the hill?
- What if the hill was a pyramid instead of a hill?

By posing a few simple analytical questions and altering at least one key element familiar to our story, whole new creative ideas suddenly become possible. For example:

Jack and Jill climbed up a pyramid to fetch a golden amulet. Jill tripped Jack and he fell down. Jill snatched his crown, scooped up the amulet and was never seen in the city again.

With a little more tinkering, the concept could be expanded into a full-blown adventure game concept––a Jack and Jill meets Torin's Passage:

On a day that starts like any other, young Jack learns that the world he knows is about to change forever. A mysterious warlock, known only as Jillian, puts his parents under an evil spell and snatches his father's magic crown, then vanishes into the vast labyrinth of the black pyramid. Knowing only the sound of the Jillian's voice, Jack vows to find her, force her to relinquish his father's crown, and release his parents from bondage. Thus begins an exciting adventure that will take Jack to the five inner worlds of the black pyramid––a world filled with danger and fantasy. Use your wits to help Jack solve many challenging riddles, as he discovers more about himself than he could ever have imagined.

How did you make out with exercise #3? Given the task of having to create unique names for new products in development, how did you fare? Write down your ideas next to the brilliant ideas I came up with:

"The artist doesn't see things as they are, he sees things as he is."

––Robert Beverly Hale

A hair brush that doubles as portable telephone

- Telebrush Magic
- Hairphone

  _____ (your idea)
  _____ (your idea)

Auto body paint that changes color every few days

- Mood Paint
- Liquid Skin

  _____ (your idea)
  _____ (your idea)

An inflatable bicycle helmet

- Airhead
- BrainSafe

  _____ (your idea)
  _____ (your idea)

"Millions say the apple fell, but Newton was the one to ask why."

––Bernard M. Baruch

Alternative Viewpoints Stimulate New Ideas

Sometimes ideas and answers become stifled by our limited point-of-view. We've all heard people comment, "You're too close to the issue. You need an objective opinion." And they are right. The closer we are to a problem, the less likely we are to come up with a creative solution to the dilemma. That's why thousands of educated individuals submit questions to advice columns in newspapers or call talk radio programs to get answers to deeply personal problems––from a complete stranger, no less!

Let's take another example. A Harvard medical school graduate may, in fact, be a certified scientific genius. However, the scope of their life experience does not make them any more prepared to handle say, a flat tire, than you or me. In fact, the more we become an expert at any given area, the more likely we are to limit our creative minds to a finite number of possible ideas and answers. Why?

Sometimes we limit our solutions to obvious answers. That's called laziness. Other times our creative environment is filled with too many distractions such as deadlines, overly hot weather, or that cute new temp working the front desk. In order to free yourself from these creative limitations, it is essential that you occasionally change your point-of-view. By altering perspectives, we are able to
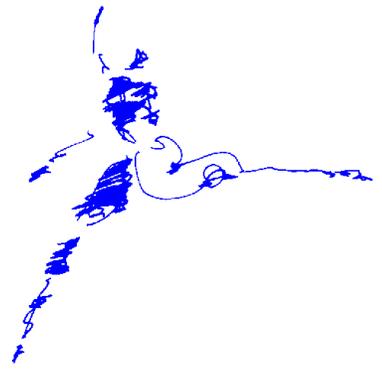
view something in a new light––the way others might see them. Complex problems suddenly seem incredibly simple to solve. Answers become obvious.

You may have heard of the following riddle:

> **Unfold a newspaper and place it on the floor. How can two people stand on the newspaper without being able to touch each another?**

Answers:

> **a) Place the newspaper in a doorway and close the door. The person outside the door stands on her portion of the paper and the person inside stands on her portion. The closed door prevents them from touching.**
>
> **b) Tear the newspaper into two piece. One person stands on the first piece of newspaper while the other person stands on another piece of paper (placed on the floor ten feet away).**

Here is another riddle that easily demonstrates the principle of alternate viewpoints (**NOTE:** this is a link to a screen shot from an actual CD-ROM application. The riddle screen shot is not interactive!).

Take few moments to complete the "Out-of-Body Visualization Techniques" worksheet by clicking on the icon to your left. Keep in mind that these exercises are designed to stimulate creative ideas from different points-of-view. Go for it!

Brainstorming Births Random Concepts and Uncensored Ideas

Another way to unleash your create energies is to map out your ideas as rapidly as they come into you mind. This type of brainstorming technique is also referred to as visual mapping. By following your natural intuition and freely associating seemingly random concepts, a patchwork of your uncensored ideas begins to develop.

The key here is to allow for the free flow of uncensored ideas. Many creative artists tend to get hung up on the fine details...editing their work as they go. This slows down the creative process to a snails pace and stifles the creative process. Don't be so hard on yourself. Unleash all of your ideas...the good and

"If you are an artist, you've got to prove it."

––Laurence Olivier

the bad. Who knows, you may just discover some rare "gems" amid your blizzard of chicken-scratch madness!

It is important that you start off by building a creative foundation––a brianstorming session where you list the project milestones, goals and limitations. What are your time constraints? What hardware and software will you create with? What is your budget? What is your design methodology? What are you getting out of this project?

Next, focus on the project itself. In just a few short minutes, you can easily create a visual cluster of ideas for any concept you are thinking of developing. With all the crucial elements laid out as visual clusters on a page, you can elaborate on the best ideas and delete the ideas that do not stimulate you at this time.

Don't forget to put yourself in the place of the user/audience. Build a cluster of ideas around the user's wants and needs. What elements are most important to them? Which elements will immediately stand out and why? Will audiences really be draw to your application? Can your audience get the same information in another form of media (books, television programs, training videos, etc.)?

If you are a creative developer working with a client, it is essential that the early stages of the creative process include the client. Sometimes clients enjoy participating in early idea sessions. This early involvement provides clients with an opportunity to express their creative vision to the creative development team. Developers who listen as well as they program will find client/developer brainstorming sessions crucial to identifying client needs and objectives.

When all your brainstorming sessions are complete, take a moment to look over all of the ideas that lay on the table before you. How do they relate to your project? Set aside all the bad elements and zero in on the good ones. Then ask yourself, "Why this content?"

"Some people have ideas. A few carry them into the world of action and make them happen. These are the innovators."

––Andrew Mercer

Section II:
Creative Development

Structuring Interactivity

In a medium with few limitations, it's up to the creative team to provide some type of framework in which to organize and build an interactive application. This structure can be very basic (flow charts scribbled on a napkin) or very complex (a written design document complete with a viewing matrix, storyboards, screen shots and flowcharts). When it comes right down to it, structure is the backbone of your application. It's what holds all your elements together.

But what is the definition of interactive structure itself? What are its major components? Why do so few understand the importance of solid structure?

To help clarify the many components of interactive structure, let's break it down into four unique sub-categories: 1) Design Structure, 2) Story/Message Structure, 3) Navigation Structure, and 4) Viewing Matrix.

Design structure defines the architectural framework, boundaries and/or universe of an application. Will the application's content be framed in a free world environment such as Myst or will traditional branching be utilized?

Story structure defines all the elements that make up a narrative story (characters, plot points, locations, dialogue, etc.). In an informational application, the design team must organize the message of the project rather than its story. Message structure is objective-based and its message must be carefully plotted out in stages.

"Sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

––Lewis Carroll

Navigation structure defines the path(s) a user may take between two or more nodes of information. It is sometimes referred to as the rules of interactivity within the framework of an application. Is the user able to navigate freely from one path, event, scene, node or location to another? Or must the user follow a critical path to get from point A to point B? Navigation structure spells these rules out in detail.

The viewing matrix is simply a graphical representation of the application's overall structure and design scheme. Maps, chapters, storyboards, sequencing and flowcharts are common graphic devices used in preparing the master viewing matrix for an interactive application.

Creative Documents: Are Written Proposals Really Necessary?

Writers, designers, programmers, content experts and even project managers may be involved in creating a written document that describes the application in detail. This document can take the form of a proposal, a more elaborate treatment, a complete design document and perhaps even a screenplay. This written document allows each member of the creative team to review the media, its underlying message, why the product will perform well in the market and review all of the project's interactive elements in advance of production.

Often times proposals are used to "pitch" interactive projects to third-party publishers or clients whereas design documents are more elaborate "blueprints" upon which all phases of production to follow are based. A written document may also serve to demonstrate your ability to produce a concept.

Here are the basic elements that make up an interactive document such as a proposal or design document:

- ◆ Premise / Truline
- ◆ Story Summary/Walkthrough
- ◆ Character descriptions
- ◆ Interactive structure
- ◆ Viewing matrix
- ◆ Technical highlights
- ◆ Marketing strategies
- ◆ Sample screenplay pages
- ◆ Creative team bios
- ◆ Budget / Production timetable

"Writers write about what obsesses them. You draw those cards. I lost my mother when I was 14. My daughter died at the age of 6. I lost faith as a Catholic. When I am writing, the darkness is always there. I go where the pain is."

––Anne Rice
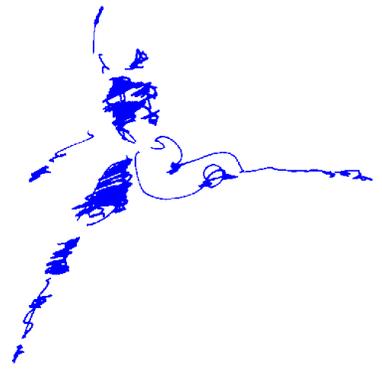
Since it's difficult to know how to put together a design proposal without actually seeing one up close, I've included a few sample proposals in this workbook. Both have been reprinted by permission of the authors.

"U-Turn: A Moving Story" is a proposal put together by Jeff Rogers, one of my former interactive writing students at UC Irvine Extension. The second example is a proposal for the "Mann Chinese Theatre Kiosk" created by Southern California developer, Media2Media. The design team assembled the entire project using the latest Macintosh hardware and tools. (FYI: The project is scheduled to be completed in December, 1997 and will be a permanent fixture at the legendary Mann's Chinese Theatre in Hollywood, CA).

If you already fancy yourself as an expert on the subject of interactive writing, test your knowledge with my Interactive Writing and Design Quiz.

While The Killer Content Workbook is not a primer for how to write interactive documents, we have included a few sample documents in this electronic workbook. For more information on writing for interactive media, you can visit your favorite bookstore (online or in the flesh) and pick up a copy of the Interactive Writer's Handbook by Darryl Wimberley and Jon Samsel (yes, you can call this a shameless plug).

"Writing is easy. All you do is sit staring at a blank sheet of paper until the drops of blood form on your forehead."

––Gene Fowler

Prototypes and Demos: Are They Worth the Time and Effort?

To show proof of concept, many developers painstakingly produce working prototypes or demos of their ideas. Sometimes this is done to secure financing, sometimes to demonstrate concepts or to showcase a new technology. But more often than not, creating a prototype is the final stage in biding on a job. Especially in the online arena. Online networks, publishers, even major corporate Web sites are now in the business of "shared risk," meaning they want to work with developers who understand that production and business model. Demos have become the test bed for sorting out the wanna-be's from the true contenders.

Paul Palumbo's insightful white paper, "Online Entertainment Co-Production, Partnering, and Site Syndication Strategies" (sponsored by Apple Computer's Apple Developer Relations Group for the Apple Media Program) sheds some light on this growing practice. Nearly all of the thirty online "players" profiled in his report indicated that a polished demo was a crucial component to any developer's hope of closing a deal for a major Web-related assignment.

The exact elements that make up a prototype or demo is open to interpretation. However, here's a rough comparison:

Prototype: An application made up of several key elements loosely thrown together to demonstrate a basic sense of the project's interactivity. The prototype can be as simple as a QuickTime movie with several screen shots, a musical score and narration. A prototype may also include sketches, maps, even interface designs "borrowed" from other projects for comparison. Total user contact-hour or play-life (the total length of an interactive application if all the material were accessed) is under five minutes.

Demo: A full design module come to life. It looks are feels much like a final product. The demo might include an opening interface, several sub-screens which illustrate basic navigation and interactive methodology, a music score, sound effects, and sample puzzles or other obstacles. Total user play-life is anywhere from five minutes to over an hour.

Beside the obvious benefits (landing a gig), prototypes and demos can also serve a myriad of functions for developers:

- ◆ They're an inexpensive way of conducting market research
- ◆ The laborious act of creating a demo or prototype serves as a crash course in multimedia production
- ◆ They can be used as a marketing tool for an upcoming product (giving away free demo copies at a trade show)
- ◆ They can function as shareware (introduce consumers to two or three levels of functionality in the hopes that many will "try-before-they-buy" and purchase the upgrade)
- ◆ They help developers "road test" new ideas before the final product is released

"If only we could pull out our brain and use only our eyes."

––Pablo Picasso
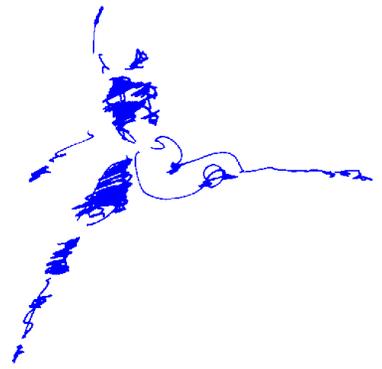
The Art and Business of the Pitch

Pitching is the art and business of taking your content idea (whether it's a work-for-hire project or an original idea) and convincing someone on the other side the desk to support it (usually by funding the project). Seems simple enough. In fact, many developers are great at pitching. However, for every one developer who can really work a room, there are probably ten others who are lousy at it. And that's unfortunate because poor presentation skills will loose you work in this highly competitive industry.

Before you even get the chance to present your ideas to an outside firm, you may be asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement. You may even want to present your non-disclosure agreement to the company you'll be meeting with.

What are non-disclosure agreements? NDA's are typically one page agreements whereby each signing party agrees to share proprietary or confidential information and each side agrees not to divulge that information to a third party. Why are NDA's used so often in the interactive media arena? It is not so much distrust as it is legal maneuvering by attorneys to protect a client's interests at all costs. Many companies have been sued because a game designer "pitched" them a project that was similar to something the company was already developing. Which side had the idea first? A dated NDA helps establish when the exchange of ideas occurred, a date which can be cross-checked by the copyright date on the original source material.

However, the main reason NDA's are used so often in the interactive media industry is to prevent people from talking about the other side's "intellectual property" in advance of public knowledge. Intellectual property may include storylines, characters, design structure, source code, authoring tools, interface methodology, graphic design elements, intelligent agents, walk-thru environments, and/or marketing strategies.

So how do you improve the art of the pitch? Perhaps the the hardest part about the pitch process is changing your mind set––remembering that a good pitch tells and sells a concept. Many developers can ramble on and on about their concept's underlying technology. They can even explain their project's story, objective, interface methodology and navigational tools. What they have trouble doing is selling that concept.

"Teachers open the door, but you must enter by yourself."

––Chinese Proverb

For example, let's say you are developing a new online entertainment Web site. The title of the project is "Avatar Park." Here's my first attempt at a pitch––notice how my summarization rambles on and on, loosing focus along the way:

> **Everybody knows that avatars are graphical representations of actual human beings. In today's online world, more and more users are creating custom avatars to represent who they are during their visit to online chat rooms. It's the ultimate blind date––the difference being that your companion might end up being anything from a beautiful nymph to a nasty troll. The online environment of Avatar Park takes this concept one step further. What if your avatar could take on a life of its own as soon as you logged off the Net? By utilizing our proprietary "Avatar Player Plug-in," you can eavesdrop on the online world of Avatar Park and see what's going on behind the scenes. Our plug-in is a Java-enabled tool set that took a team of twelve programmers two years to develop. Avatar Park is a multi player environment that is sure to dazzle you with state-of-the-art graphics, 3D worlds, online chat rooms, and weekly mysteries to solve.**

The sample pitch outlined above is really an ill-constructed story summary, rather than a streamlined selling tool. But is resembles what many create artists consider to be a "pitch." That may be due to the fact that so many creative people are the antithesis of salesman. They may be passionate about an idea or piece of technology, but they are not very good at selling it.

To be successful, interactive developers either need to change their mind set or team up with others who are masters of the pitching process.

Let's try to improve on your pitch. Create an opening teaser for "Avatar Park." Try to build passion and excitement into a few lines of copy. For my example, I have decided to weave two emotional elements into my teaser: curiosity and fear of technology. Let's take a look at my teaser:

> **What happens to your avatar when you log off the Net?**
> **Is it living, breathing, interacting with your friends?**
> **Pretending to be you?**
> **Wanna see?**

"My life was a risk — and I took it!"

––Robert Frost

Now it's you turn. Create a teaser for one of your own ideas. Hopefully, you'll create something much more robust and exciting than I did. When you're finished, pause and reflect on what you have created. Pretty cool, huh?

NOTE: By combining the teaser and oral pitch for "Avatar Park," a first draft design proposal can be created. It's a good idea to have this document prepared in advance of any meeting. Make sure it's copyrighted and ready to deliver to whoever you are pitching to. Never leave a pitch meeting without leaving something behind. And don't forget to place your contact information on the document!

The Pitch Meeting: Your Objective

Now that you have practiced your pitch and created a design proposal which spells out all of the project details, you are ready for your first pitch meeting. You have one objective: impress them enough to warrant another meeting.

Here's how you do it.

First, size up the room. How many people are there? If there are only one or two individuals, your job will be much easier. Create an intimate space. Make eye contact. Remember, they need to feel your passion. What are people wearing? The gals in suits tend to like statistics, facts, and demographics. The guys dressed in blue jeans and T-shirts with want the creative stuff. Adjust your pitch accordingly.

Second, beware of small talk. Sure, you'll need to be friendly so people in the room won't think you're a looser but watch out for the conversation traps! Many a developer has fallen into this seemingly innocent exchange of pleasantries. Allow me to demonstrate:

SUIT BEHIND THE DESK: "What do you think of our multi-player game, Rebel Conquest?"

Panic strikes. You've never even heard of the game, much less sampled it. You quickly improvise.

YOU: "It's great. Very state-of-the-art. Kids seem to really like it."
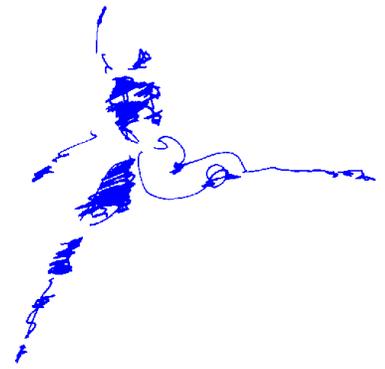
"Imagination is more important than knowledge."

––Albert Einstein

SUIT BEHIND THE DESK: "What I meant was, what's the buzz? The product doesn't roll out 'til March. Perhaps you're confusing our game with some other product."

OOOOPS! Somebody just put their foot in their mouth! Let's try that scenario again.

SUIT BEHIND THE DESK: "What do you think of our multi-player game, Rebel Conquest?"

Panic strikes. You've never even heard of the game, much less sampled it. You answer truthfully.

YOU: "If it's anything like your last online game, Crash Test Kids, I'm sure it'll be a winner. But to be honest with you, Mr. So-and-So, I don't know anything about Rebel Conquest."

SUIT BEHIND THE DESK: "We have high-hopes for the game. Multi-player experiences are the future of Super Duper Game Company. I'm anxious to see what you have to show us today."

Two rules of small talk: 1) If you don't know the answer, admit it. You won't look stupid telling the truth. You will look stupid if you get caught in a lie, 2) Keep pre-pitch conversation to a minimum. Restrain yourself from gabbing. Don't loose sight of your objective!

Third, blow them away with a passionate and solid pitch. This takes lots of practice. I repeat, lots of practice. Keep your presentation brief and to the point. Be animated when necessary (flap your arms, grit your teeth, bark like a dog). Use visuals sparingly (your oral pitch should stand on its own).

How do you deliver a passionate pitch that leads to another meeting? There is no secret formula for success, of course. But your integrity becomes evident when all elements fit together seemlessly.

"Don't be seduced into thinking that that which does not make a profit is without value."

––Arthur Miller
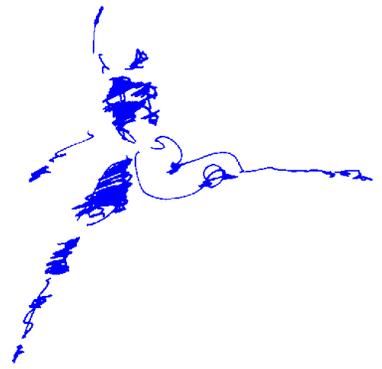
How to Improve Your Pitch

- ◆ Start off with a teaser (hook the audience, then reel them in)

- ◆ Emphasis elements that will keep audiences coming back for more

- ◆ Pitch with conviction and passion (your idea must be infectious...the design team must share your enthusiasm throughout the development cycle)

- ◆ Humor helps (just use it sparingly)

- ◆ Pitch from a common frame of reference (use of terminology)

- ◆ Show your ability to create hybrid entertainment that can be franchised to other mediums such as television or books

- ◆ Emphasis innovations that require the expertise of your design team

- ◆ Sell the sizzle, not the steak

- ◆ Concentrate on the most exciting aspects of your project, rather than all the minor details (long-winded, unfocused presentations kill a room)

- ◆ Never resort to reading notes (if you can't eat, sleep and breath the pitch, you're not ready to deliver it)

- ◆ Identify at least one emotional element that drives your idea forward

- ◆ Take command of the room (always deliver a pitch standing up...unless it's a small room, and don't invade the personal space of others)

David Greene is an interactive media producer who has experienced his share of pitch meetings with corporate suits. He was kind enough to let me reprint his Top Ten Pitching Tips for success.

"Those who dream by day
are cognizant of many
things which escape those
who dream only by night."

––Edgar Allen Poe

Intellectual Property

Intellectual property is all about ownership. Who will be the owner of the interactive application and its associated rights? Most major publishing deals are based on the idea that the developer is an independent contractor providing a service, whereby the end product is owned by the publisher.

The issues surrounding the intellectual property are central to any creative development agreement, especially the ownership of the final gold master. What follows are a number of additional intellectual property issues that may arise during negotiations:

- Who will own the copyright to the product and related intellectual property rights? Will this ownership be for all code or just characters and story line? Will the writer be able to retain design formats, software engines, and the like for use in other products not related to the first product?

- Has the content for the application been approved through a rights clearance process?

- What about merchandising rights? Who owns them and who controls them?

- Does the development team have the right of first refusal on future titles? Will the production have the first option to develop derivative and ported products?

- What about rights to repurchase the intellectual property through some buyout mechanism? (will the development team have the right to repurchase the application's intellectual property rights if sales fall below a set figure?)

- To what extent will each party receive a grant of licenses for use of trademarks of the other?

- Is this an exclusive production agreement? What are the terms of exclusivity?

Allen Melser, an attorney with the law firm of Reid & Priest, created an Intellectual Property Risk Assessment Test for developers of interactive media applications. Take a few moments to complete the True-False questionnaire. The answers are provided immediately following the test.

"Imagination rules the world."

––Napoleon Bonaparte

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY PITFALL RISK ASSESSMENT TEST

The content incorporated into a multimedia project is protected by intellectual property laws, namely copyright, patent and trademark law. A multimedia developer must know when it is necessary to obtain a license from the content owner before the content can be used in a project. Take the following test to determine how well you avoid common pitfalls.
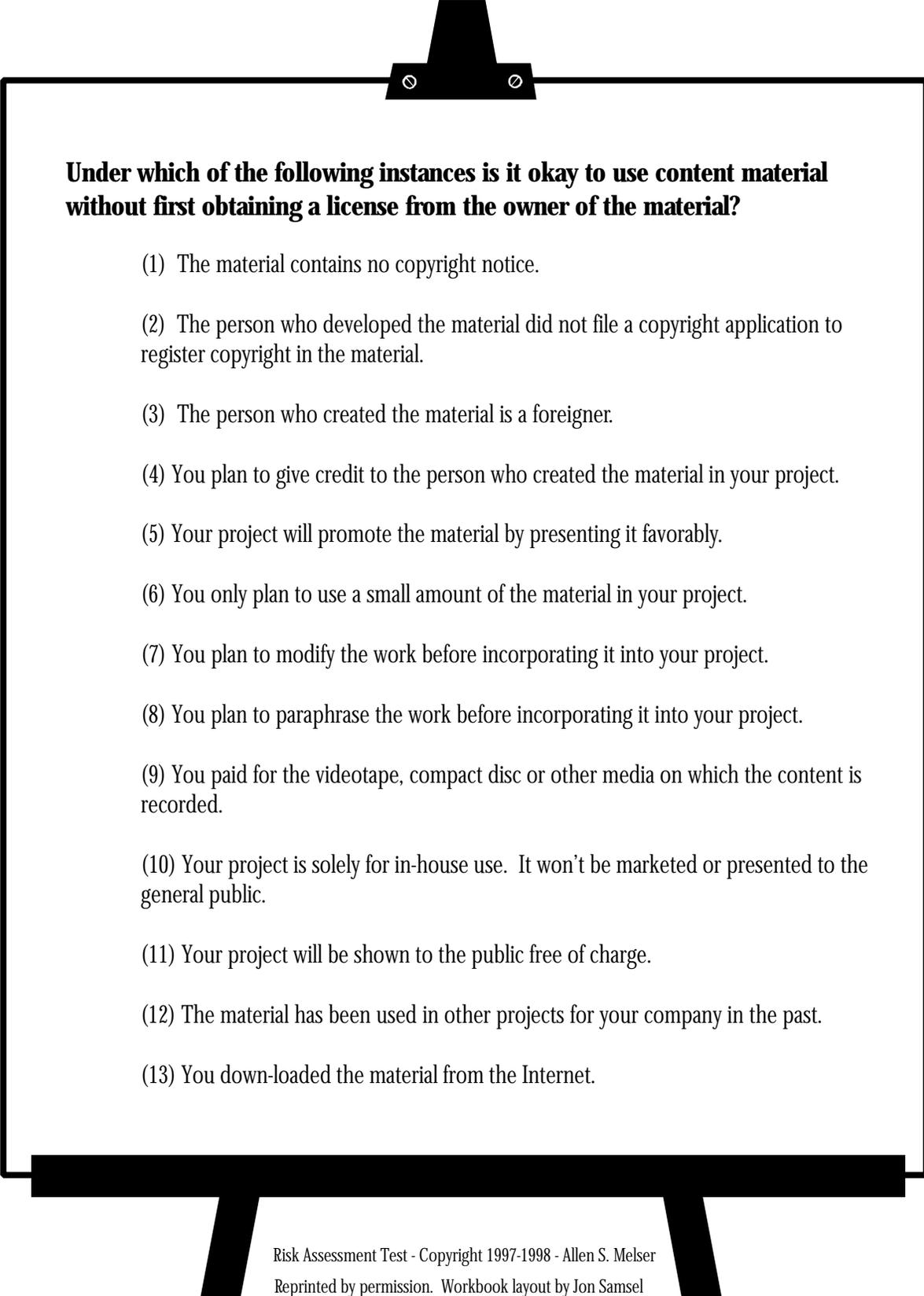
Under which of the following instances is it okay to use content material without first obtaining a license from the owner of the material?

(1) The material contains no copyright notice.

(2) The person who developed the material did not file a copyright application to register copyright in the material.

(3) The person who created the material is a foreigner.

(4) You plan to give credit to the person who created the material in your project.

(5) Your project will promote the material by presenting it favorably.

(6) You only plan to use a small amount of the material in your project.

(7) You plan to modify the work before incorporating it into your project.

(8) You plan to paraphrase the work before incorporating it into your project.

(9) You paid for the videotape, compact disc or other media on which the content is recorded.

(10) Your project is solely for in-house use. It won't be marketed or presented to the general public.

(11) Your project will be shown to the public free of charge.

(12) The material has been used in other projects for your company in the past.

(13) You down-loaded the material from the Internet.

ANSWERS TO EACH QUESTION, 1-13: NONE!

If you selected any of the circumstances, you may be infringing the intellectual property rights of the owner of the material.

ANSWER ANALYSIS

(1) For works published on or after March 1, 1989, use of a copyright notice is optional. Therefore, the material may be protected by copyright even if it does not contain a copyright notice.

(2) Copyright protection exists upon creation; registration with the U.S. Copyright Office is not required for the author to be protected under copyright law.

(3) The U.S. is party to international copyright treaties which afford copyright protection in the U.S. to works created by authors who are nationals of other member countries. Therefore, a work created by a foreigner may be protected under U.S. copyright law.

(4) Identifying the copyright owner of a work is not a defense to copyright infringement. You still need permission to use the material.

(5) You need permission to use copyrighted material whether or not your use will be advantageous to the owner. Never assume the owner will be happy to have his/her material used in your project - get permission.

(6) While de minimis use may be available as a defense to copyright infringement, there is no bright-line rule as to what amount will be considered de minimis to a court. Be safe - obtain permission from the owner.

(7) A copyright owner enjoys the exclusive right to modify his/her work. Therefore, modifying the material will violate the copyright owner's exclusive right to modify the material.

(8) Copyright protects the expression of an idea. Therefore, paraphrasing, as well as verbatim copying, may be considered copyright protection if it captures the author's expression.

"Computers are useless. They can only give you answers."

––Pablo Picasso
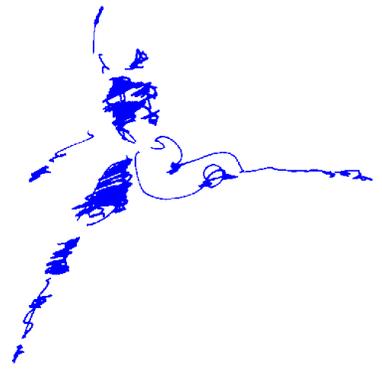
(9) Ownership of the media on which the material is stored does not provide permission to use the material in your project.

(10) Copying is copying, whether or not your project will be distributed to the public. In-house use may be considered copyright infringement by a court.

(11) Again, copying is copying, whether or not your project will be distributed to the public, and whether or not a fee is charged. Free presentation of your project to the public may be considered infringing by a court.

(12) Your company may not have cleared use of the material with the owner for its past uses, or may have obtained only limited permission that does not cover your use of the material. Don't assume it is safe to use the material - double check and make sure you have permission.

(13) Material published on the Internet may be protected under copyright and/or patent laws, even though it may be easy to obtain copies off the Internet. Examples include software, graphics, icons and text published over the Internet. Such material is likely protected, so get permission before using.

"One must never lose desires. They are mighty stimulants to creativeness, to love, and to long life."

––Alexander A. Bogomoletz

Localization: What Is It and Who Needs It?

Localization is the process of making an interactive application "local" to a specific geographic culture outside of the United States marketplace. For example, if you want to export an American product to France, you would need to alter text and graphics and replace the voice track, changing both the idioms, accent and language of the speaker (native french).

At first mention, most developers mistakingly assume that localization means simply to translate a property into another language. While translation is a key stage in the localization process, it is by no means the prevailing factor.

Interactive applications are made local in many ways:

- ◆ Translating the project (remastering the language of the program)
- ◆ A cultural adaptation (clarifying/enhancing the core content)
- ◆ Graphic modifications (to sinc up with the newly translated material)
- ◆ Modifying the literature (packaging, manuals, one sheets)
- ◆ Recording (audio tracks, voice-overs, dubbing)
- ◆ Subtitling (on-screen text in place of dubbing)
- ◆ Implementation and testing

The subject of localization is placed in the creative development section of this workbook for one simple reason––it belongs here! Many developers of English language multimedia applications make the all-to-common mistake of waiting until the project is finished before even thinking about producing a localized version of their application. However, the most cost-effective localization strategy is to integrate your localization efforts into the production process as early as possible.

For some further thoughts on translation and localization, check out the following article, "Translation and Localization: Managing the Language and Cross-Cultural Mix in Global Corporate Communications," by Jacques Boulanger, president of JBI Localization. I also recommend for you to read the Apple Guide to Producing Localized Multimedia , which can be downloaded from: (http://www.amp.apple.com/resources/guidebooks.html).

Establish Deliverables & Compensation

For creative relationships to prosper, developers need to establish clear and definitive delivery expectations for the creation of an interactive application. These expectations should be written down and signed by all involved parties.

Here are the major delivery issues that interactive artists should address:

- ◆ Agree to a budget (and stick to it)
- ◆ Establish a realistic development time schedules (milestones) with some back-up plans for delays
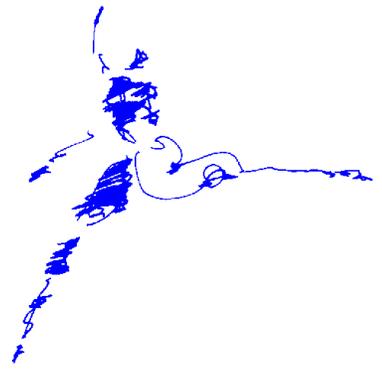
- ◆ Establish realistic payment schedules (with reasonable penalties for delays)

- ◆ Set reasonable credit requirements (where will your name appear in the application and what job title will you receive?)

- ◆ Create incentives to meet the schedule (in the form of milestone bonuses)

- ◆ Address the issue of change orders from the publisher, making sure not to penalize the production team unfairly for radical changes not foreseen

- ◆ Set a realistic approval process (comment period) that doesn't delay development yet ensures a quality product

- ◆ Establish reasonable boundaries for future content revisions (if necessary)

- ◆ Create a Drop Dead Clause (what happens if the publisher decides to terminate you from the project or terminate the project completely? Is the terminating party required to pay the other party some form of compensation?)

- ◆ Agree to a Goodies Clause (complimentary copies of the product, travel expenses, per diem, royalties)

- ◆ Provide for a resolution process in the event of disagreement (a mutually trusted third-party or arbitrator)

"Knowledge is the food of the soul."

––Plato

Section III:
Business Development

What Is It and Who Needs It?

Business development is a relationship-oriented strategy of expanding and growing a company or product line. Development managers implement a wide range of business tactics––everything from working the phones to licensing proprietary technology––to help achieve their goals.

Perhaps the most important factor to keep in mind is that business development is about developing new business. It is about building a relationship with individuals and other firms in the hopes that the affiliation will "bloom" over time. Most successful business development managers will tell you that these long-term relationships are built on trust. Trust, as opposed to fast and dirty tactics, must be earned. How you build a trusting relationship is open to interpretation. There are no firm rules of engagement. That's why business development is so exciting. Opportunity is plentiful.

Chicken Soup for the Enterprising Soul

As you learn more and more about the fundamentals of creating killer content, you will need to make sure that the "thinking habits" that are build into your brain are not themselves creating barriers to your success. The following tips will help you prioritize your business mind set to promote maximum productivity.

1. Arm Yourself With Knowledge

It is ridiculous to assume that you can do business in interactive media without having taken the time to understand the history, the technology and the products you will be helping to create and promote. Imagine marketing a
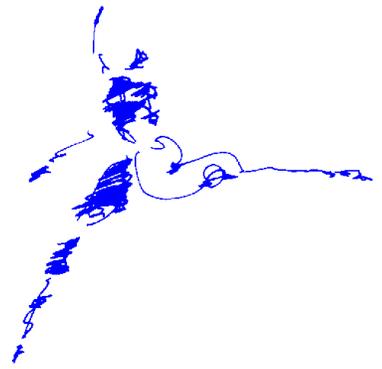
feature film without ever having watched a movie! The Japanese have a saying, "Ready, Fire, Aim," which describes how Westerners blindly create and market products without first discovering what consumers really need. Don't be such an eager beaver. Enroll in a creative writing course. Go to an arcade and play games for an entire day. Explore a Web site you'd normally never visit. Ask your friends to save all their junk mail for a week, then spend an afternoon studying the marketing messages. Visit a museum. Sit in on an investment seminar. Open up an old computer and examine its guts. Seek out knowledge.

2. Rid Yourself of Financial Baggage

It is impossible to think clearly when you are worried about financial concerns (such as paying the rent). Try to stabilize your financial situation before you attempt to become the next Graeme Devine or Larry Ellison. The hype surrounding interactive media may be compelling, but don't let it be your sole motivation. As an emerging new industry, you will probably make less money and do more work creating interactive media projects than should be allowed under the law. When you find ways to free your mind of financial headaches, you may just open yourself to new creative and business possibilities.

3. Don't Be Enamored by Technology

Technological advances have provided business people and artists with exciting new tools to help them tailor their craft. But technology alone is useless without human input and creativity. We are living in a time where the technology tail is wagging the creative dog. Interactive product can dazzle us with its 3D graphics, animated characters, photo-realistic environments and intelligent agents, but if the story or underlying message stink, the product will tank. It's that simple.

4. Take Elocution and Singing Lessons

Getting a project off the ground or implementing a new business strategy is not always rewarded to the person with the best idea. I am reminded by a phrase from Budd Shulberg's endearing novel, "What Makes Sammy Run?". When asked about the secret to achieving a successful career in Hollywood, one of the characters answers, "take elocution and singing lessons." The implication being that success is measured more by how you present yourself, rather than by any real talent you possess. I tend to think that one's success in the new technology industry owes a little bit to both––the quality of your idea and the way you express that idea to others.

"We do not remember days, we remember moments."

––Cesare Pavese

5. Hyperlink Socially

Whether you know it or not, every one of you lives six degrees away from somebody who can assist your career. Networking (join a new media organization, mingle with the crowd at a trade show event, join an online discussion group) are more than mere social exercises for meeting new business contacts. They are essential. And don't be afraid to utilize your friends and acquaintances to help you along the way. Just make sure that when you do, you're smart about it. Be prepared. Be gracious. Don't over stay your welcome. Send a thank you card.

6. Don't Lie, Cheat, or Sleep Your Way Up the Ladder of Success

The world is full of Sammy Glicks––guys and gals who are all too willing to derail someone else on their way to the land of sweet success. Honesty, integrity, talent and hard work are a developer's greatest assets. Never underestimate their importance.

7. Be Fearless in the Face of Overwhelming Odds

Whether you're a programmer, interactive writer, graphic artist, 3D modeling expert, producer, or a budding entrepreneur, you'll probably be unemployed at some point in your career. Don't take it as a personal affront. It's simply the nature of this business. Many companies staff up during production and lay off staff when the project is finished. The playing field is constantly being leveled and rebuilt from the ground up. For the first time in decades, there is are a wide range of new of opportunities: a) Companies regularly hire new employees right out of collage, b) An "expert" in this business has only four to five years experience under their belt, c) There are few barriers to entry, d) Age bias is virtually non-existent, and e) Nepotism hasn't yet gained a strong foothold in corporate circles.

Keep An Eye Out For False Prophets

As in any industry, the interactive media business has it share of blow-hards and con-artists. I've been to trade shows that are literally crawling with well-dressed charlatans who make iniquitous statements and pass them off as techno-gospel. Don't believe me?

The Top 10 Lies Told in the Interactive Media Business

 • I guarantee we can do it on time and under budget!

"I love criticism just so long as it's unqualified praise."

––Noel Coward
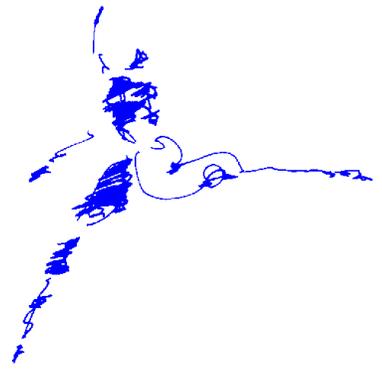
- ◆ I never read software reviews

- ◆ Your milestone bonus is in the mail

- ◆ Our click-through rate is the highest in the market!

- ◆ We don't mind dealing with agents

- ◆ I left the project team due to "creative differences"

- ◆ We'll deliver the gold master to you by June 15th at the latest!

- ◆ No other publisher has ever seen this proposal

- ◆ Sign an exclusive with us and your profits will soar

- ◆ I'll call you back tomorrow

Okay, you're smiling. Some of you have probably heard statements such as these...perhaps even made them yourselves! Taken out of context, these statements are harmless enough. But in the dark and treacherous world of SoftwareSpeak (the lexicon of digital deceit), these statements can take on profound new meanings. Especially if they directly effect someone else's business. Sometimes these statements are blatant lies. Sometimes there are mere half-truths. Whatever their intent, it's a statement's underlying meaning that counts.

"The years teach what the days never know."

––Ralph Waldo Emerson

What People Say vs. What They Really Mean

- ◆ They Say: Let me think about that. We'll talk next week.
- ◆ They Mean: I don't have the authority to make this decision.

- ◆ They Say: Now I can focus all my creative efforts on launching my own company.
- ◆ They Mean: I got fired.

- ◆ They Say: We're refocusing our development efforts on DVD.
- ◆ They Mean: This new medium better make us some money or the company is toast.

- ◆ They Say: The publisher didn't know how to market my last game.
- ◆ They Mean: The title sucked.

Now that you've received a "heads up" on some of the dangers involved in everyday business conversation, let's take a few moments to review some common sense ideology that may help you lay the groundwork for an honest and innovative business development strategy.

The Zen of Business Common Sense

- ◆ Differentiate yourself from your competitors (if you can't, you are only selling an alternative)

- ◆ Create viable products or solutions (passion for a product or service is instantly recognizable and highly contagious)

- ◆ Keep in touch with old friends and associates (don't burn bridges, you often meet the same people coming one direction as when you are traveling the other)

- ◆ Focus on target markets (niche markets are less saturated and are usually more open to new ideas)

- ◆ Join a business organization and network (what better way to bond with a stranger than to size them up and shake their hand?)

- ◆ Give something back to your community (good deeds are rewarded eventually)

- ◆ Fulfill your promises (some day you will move on but your reputation will follow you wherever you go)

Should You Form a Strategic Alliance?

When two or more companies leverage marketing or development expenditures in order to increase the reach of their message, product or service, this is known as a strategic alliance. Partnering companies often have common goals and want their message or service to reach a common audience. While many companies prefer to go it alone, many interactive media and technology firms have chosen instead to aggressively seek out strategic partners.

The resulting "partnerships" are more informal in nature than legal partnerships or mergers. They commonly involve bartering the creative, marketing and/or technology assets. The deal can range from a simple co-op mail campaign (i.e. both sides split the mailing costs to increase the scope of the campaign), to an actual bundling of assets to facilitate broader distribution.

"I want it said of me by those who knew me best, that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower where I thought a flower would grow."

––Abraham Lincoln
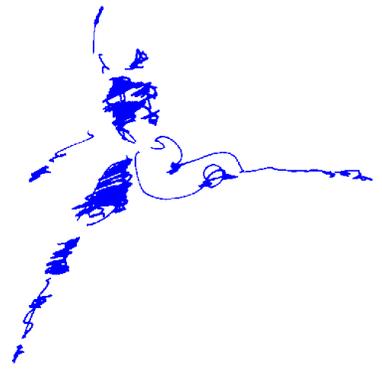
Strategic relationships should have a specific focus and objective. Areas of mutual interest may include marketing, access to content, finance, distribution, brand association and access to new technologies. Objectives may include driving innovation, decreasing marketing costs, expanding market awareness, increasing profits, growing globally, reducing development and production costs, and creating competitive barriers to entry.

One recent example is the Apple Computer-Microsoft alliance. The two firms affirmed their commitment to the following:

- ◆ Companies announce patent cross-license agreement.
- ◆ Microsoft announces Office 98 for Macintosh
- ◆ Apple announces Internet Explorer to be bundled with Mac OS
- ◆ Product commitment backed up with $150M Microsoft investment in Apple Computer

To read the original press release outlining the details of this alliance, go to: (http://product.info.apple.com/pr/press.releases/1997/q4/970806.pr.rel. microsoft.html).

For a strategic alliance to be successful, each partner must profit equitably with respect to their contributions to the venture. Otherwise, it makes no sense to continue the relationship. Furthermore, each party must trust the business practices and ethical standards of the other because one firm's follies could adversely effect the other partner. With that said, it is easy to see why so many strategic partnerships are entered into between firms with pre-established business relationships.

Strategic Alliances Come In Many Shapes and Colors

Sponsorships and Barter Arrangements

In this new-tech world, windows of opportunity open and close in the blink of an eye. Sponsorships and barters enable one firm to take advantage of another firm's growing influence in a particular market. It's a win-win relationship––one side gets exposure and the other side gets some form of compensation (either cash or barter).

"A committee is a cul-de-sac down which ideas are lured and then quietly strangled."

––Sir Barnett Cocks

For example, let's say I'm a manager organizing an "Online Commerce" conference. I need to accomplish several items:

- Exposure for the conference
- Cash to cover up-front conference expenses such as reserving floor space hotel rooms, equipment, personnel, etc)
- A stamp of legitimacy (by having a few companies come aboard as sponsors)

I might first go to a major technology magazine and try to set up a sponsorship/barter deal such as the following:

Conference Organizers Get
- Use of magazine's 75,000 name mailing list (up to two mailings)
- Full page ads in four consecutive magazine issues leading up to the conference

Magazine Gets
- Booth at conference
- Logo in conference brochures and on signage stating that magazine is a sponsor
- Ad in the conference brochure
- Subscription form in conference bags

I would then go to a technology company such as Apple Computer, Inc. to see if I could negotiate a deal such as:

Conference Organizers Get
- Cash to produce the event
- Great deals on leasing Apple equipment for the event
- Reciprocal Web links
- Leverage of Apple's customer and developer databases for direct mail campaigns

Apple Computer Gets
- Booth at conference
- Logo in conference brochures and on signage stating that Apple is a sponsor
- Reciprocal Web links
- Ad in the conference brochure
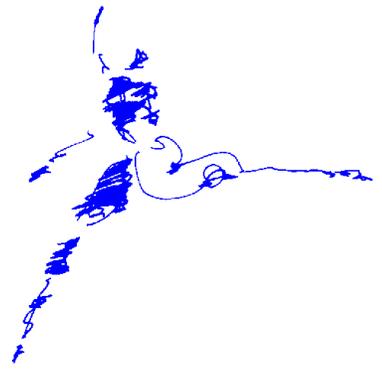
Sponsorships and barters act as a lubricant to stimulate business growth. If you're a small company, you have limited operating budgets for research, development and marketing. It's imperative that you swap, barter and trade for as many items as you can. You'll need your operating cash for a rainy day. If you are a large company, you're in the power position. Barters and sponsorships are a great way to get some real bang for your buck. Sponsorships also foster good will and are a great subject for PR departments to exploit.

For more information on sponsorships and other partnering strategies, I highly recommend reading the white paper, "Online Entertainment Co-Production, Partnering, and Site Syndication Strategies," sponsored by Apple Computer's Apple Developer Relations Group for the Apple Media Program. If you are an AMP member, go to: (http://www.amp.apple.com/private/membersonly.html).

Bundling

This is when two or more companies package their products together as a value-add for the customer. OEM bundling is a great what for a small software developer to establish must-needed brand identity in the market.

Under and OEM bundling deal between say a hardware company such as Hewlett Packard or Compaq and a game developer, a developer's game may be packaged with the new computer system. Hundreds of thousands of customers will purchase the new hardware and receive the game for "free." The hardware company pays the games developer say, $2.00 per unit sold, and everybody gains something.

- ◆ The hardware manufacturer has a marketing tool to help get more customers to buy its computer system

- ◆ The consumer gained a "free" software title

- ◆ The game developer gets a few bucks per unit, establishes its name in the market and solidifies a relationship with a much larger player in the market

You could also work with other small developers and offer "two-fors." Bundling your title with a competitor's title and offering the new bundle for sale at an lower overall retail price.

"You may have to fight a battle more than once to win it."

––Margaret Thatcher

This bundling strategy has several immediate benefits:

- ◆ It ensures that your product gets the shelf space it deserves (retailers love two-for bundles)
- ◆ It creates barriers to entry (other game developers have a hard time competing against the combined strength of your bundled title)
- ◆ It establishes a relationship with a competitor (when times get tough, make love not war)
- ◆ It reduces costs (you share costs of packaging, advertising, etc.)
- ◆ It creates exposure and credibility for your brand

You can also set up bundling deals with companies outside of your core market specialty. For example, you could arrange a deal with print publisher (bundling your breast cancer CD-ROM with a medical book) or negotiate a deal with a specialty store (bundling a wine CD-ROM into a gift basket) or swing a deal with a corporation (selling your interactive beer title at a bulk discount to a large brewery for them to bundle as a trade show giveaway).

Distribution

If you are a new development company, you might not have national (or international) distribution deals in place. Chances are, you have been forced to distribute your title to anyway you can. You self distribute your product to your target buyers (via direct mail, trade shows, your Web site, work-of-mouth). You form alliances with established players in other regional markets (they sell your product into their niche markets and you sell their title into your niche market). This form of networked distribution fosters positive collateral evangelism and is just plain good business.

For your reading enjoyment, here's a brief article on sales and distribution by noted consultant, Ben Tenn.

Cooperative Mailings and Cooperative Ads

Advertising and direct mail campaigns are a big expense, but that cost can be reduced substantially through the use of co-op mail campaigns and co-op advertising campaigns.

"The brain is a wonderful organ; it starts working the moment you get up in the morning and does not stop until you get into the office."

—Robert Frost

Cooperative advertising saves time, money and effort. It's a great way for both the manufacturer/retailer or the publishers/developer to reach their target markets more efficiently. How does it work? Each year, publishers and manufacturers budget millions of dollars for the specific purpose of cooperative advertising with their developers and retailers. Although co-op advertising policies differ from company to company, most will pay a portion of the advertising costs and supply the other co-op party with material to include in the ad, whether it is print, online, radio or television.

A co-op radio spot might simultaneously promoting a new film and a specific theater. It could be a television spot jointly promoting a new video game and a video game system. It could be a magazine ad featuring both a Web site and an online service provider.

Sometimes two or more companies share the cost of a mailing (co-op mailing). By bundling two pieces of literature (one from each firm) in the same envelope and mailing it to the same target audience, both sides are able to split the cost of the mailing. Another method is to create one piece of literature that promotes two symbiotic brands, products or services. This type of co-op mailing cuts down not only on the media cost, but the production and creative expenses as well.

Branding

The growth of the Internet has helped pushed the concept of branding to the forefront of business development strategies. A brand can be applied to a product, company or service. Basically, a brand is the sum of the subject's attributes (the way it is promoted, its features, its history, its price, its ad campaigns, etc.).

Branding establishes market identity. Once a brand is readily recognized, it makes sense to extend that brand into collateral markets or product lines not currently targeted by the parent company.

If a company decides to spin-off a new product from its core product line, it would be branding a new line. For example, Maxwell House might spin-off a new gourmet blend of coffee from its regular Maxwell House coffee brand. Or a company may "transfer" its logo or slogan to another service, permitting the new venture to resonate with the target audience at a deep level.

For example, the search engine Yahoo! might decide to extend its brand by "branding" a version of its search service to software giant Microsoft Corp.

"There's more to life than increasing its speed."

––Mahatma Gandhi

Microsoft might work with Yahoo! to create a completely new interface for the "new" search service. In reality, the underlying search engine is still the Yahoo! service, masked with a new Microsoft front-end. It's a win-win situation for both sides in a branding arrangement. The fictional Microsoft/Yahoo example outlined above might break down as follows:

Microsoft Gets
- ◆ Its very own search engine
- ◆ They get a new service up and running quickly
- ◆ They don't own it, but they didn't have to spend millions of dollars developing their own search engine

Yahoo! Gets
- ◆ To extend its brand into new markets (its search engine is now the preferred search service use by thousands of Microsoft customers)
- ◆ To raise advertising fees (Yahoo! now has more eyeballs and click-thru's)

Apple Computer's Masters of Media program showcases a fine example of cross-media "branding" via the BMW Branding initiative, which can be found at: (http://www.masters.media.apple.com/features/bmw/index.html).

Licenses

There are many ways to squeeze profit from a single piece of content. When you license certain content rights, you are essentially extending the reach of your product into markets you could never enter on your own. For example, if your an independent music artist and your content is a self-published Enhanced CD music title, you could license the music and multimedia rights to an overseas music publisher. They, in turn, will localize the title, duplicate it, package it, and sell it into their territory. If your content is an online directory of actors and directors, you might be able to license the print rights to a film magazine (such as Premiere) or to a book publisher.

Licensing can be quite a complex process and should never be attempted without first learning more about your legal rights and obligations. My advice is to examine one of several books on this subject, including, A Primer on Licensing by Jack Revoyr and Multimedia : Law and Business Handbook : A

"Genius is the power of lighting one's own fire."

––John Foster

Practical Guide for Developers and Publishers   by J. Dianne Brinson, Mark F. Radcliffe. I would also strongly advise that you consult with an attorney who is well-versed in this area of law.
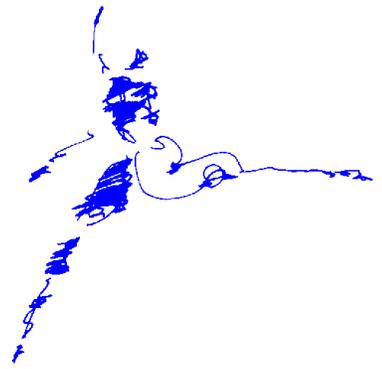
Alliances Alone are Not Enough

Now that you've increased your business savvy and learned about the importance of establishing strategic alliances, you are almost ready to dive in and make some deals. But wait! There are three more areas of business development that you should know more about: 1) Content Management Database, 2) Goals, and 3) Negotiations.

Content Management Database

Tracking your business contacts is perhaps the most important, yet least talked about business development strategy. People who use computers have a advantage over the computer illiterate. However, the advantage exists only if efficient computer systems are helping to guide them to the next level.

Managing business contacts and maintaining an accurate database is the heart of a successful database management system. A database can be built from scratch, one contact at a time, increasing in size over time and maintained by an individual. Other database systems are part of a firm's internal database infrastructure which is shared by numerous employees within the firm.

Regular access to an accurate contact management database can help you:

- ◆ Improve regular communication with clients
- ◆ Enhance sales efforts
- ◆ Aid in productivity
- ◆ Identify new prospects
- ◆ Evaluate past performance
- ◆ Forecast trends
- ◆ Track inquiries and follow up more efficiently

There are numerous commercial software programs that can help you manage your data: Filemaker Pro, ACT!, Claris Organizer   and InTouch are but a few. They all allow you do essentially the same thing––manage data. However, they have different built-in features and some are easier to use than others. Price is also a variable.

Once you've chosen the software program that best suits your needs, you'll need to customize your data fields. This entails identifying all the areas of interest that are most relevant to your business needs. Data fields will vary, but the basic fields you will need will include: name, address, phone, fax, email, general notes, date to follow-up, and last contacted.

The most important element to your content management database is the accuracy of the information. Once you have completed the laborious task of imputing all your current business contacts, you'll need to keep your database up-to-date. That means using the database daily and making changes to the data as you work.

What you do with your database is up to you. Some people regularly create mailing labels and send monthly brochures or newsletters to clients. Others send bulk email news and information. Still others use their data to create custom charts and graphs to forecast sales trends or best business prospects. The sky is the limit!

Goals and Quotas

Goals and quotas are evaluation systems with built-in deadlines and milestones. They are typically used to motivate and evaluate performance. Goals are usually generated by the individual while quotas are levied by an employer.

Goal setting is a familiar annual ritual for many of you. On New Years Day you stand in front of a mirror and ask yourself how you possibly managed to gain 20 pounds since Thanksgiving. You grimace, then establish a goal. You will join a health club and lose twenty pounds by Easter Sunday––at the latest. Some of you attain your goal (you lose the weight), while others stray from their goal (they don't lose the weight or even gain more weight). Regardless of the outcome, your goals serve as a road map for where you wanted to be one/three/six months from now.

The ritual of establishing goals has many benefits. Whether they are personal or professional, setting goals can help you:

- Focus on the issues and agendas most important to you
- Figure out what motivates you
- Budget your time
- Define who you are
- Take stock of the previous year's events
- Discard bad habits

"Let us never negotiate out of fear but let us never fear to negotiate."

––John F. Kennedy

Negotiation Practices

Negotiation is a process of settling differences or hammering out agreements between two or more sides that have both common and differing interests. Negotiation is something we all do, whether we are aware of it or not. Have you ever driven a car on a freeway? What happened when you first entered the onramp and attempted to merge into traffic? If the freeway was free of vehicles, you simply merged to your left and settled into the right hand lane. If the freeway was crowded, you had to negotiate with the other vehicles before you could enter the flow of traffic.

Almost every situation we encounter in life involves some degree of negotiation. Whether it's working out an employment contract, discussing wedding plans with your spouse-to-be or entering a crowded freeway, you will have to negotiate to achieve your objective.

One of the key points to remember about negotiations is that you are not always going to "win" every "point" you ask for. Negotiating involves both sides vacillating between what they want to achieve verses giving in to the other side's demands. This give and take or push-pull activity is the process of negotiation, with the ultimate goal being to come up with a solution that's agreeable to both parties.

Knowing your adversary is another important point in the negotiation process. The better informed you are, the easier the process will be. You will need to identify your opponent's needs and expectations. Then learn everything you can about their company, products and reputation. When you know what you are up against, you can be better prepared for battle.

Finally, you should put together a personal action plan that outlines such items as your objectives, assumptions, and walk-away point. You will be at a distinct disadvantage if your opponent suddenly calls you on the phone, armed and ready to start negotiations, and you have only a vague gameplan to work with. Take a few minutes to formulate your personal negotiation "action plan" by answering the following workbook questions.
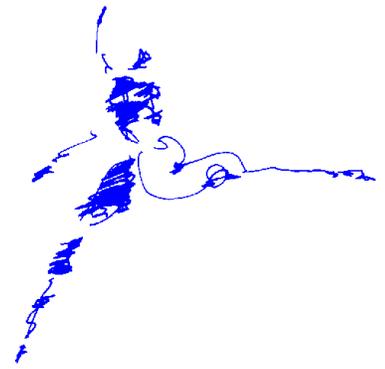
Conclusion

Congratulations! You have made it to the end of this Workbook and you now realize that you don't have to be a content expert or a business development guru to be successful at jumpstarting your killer ideas. You just need passion and a gameplan.

Hopefully, you've taken the time to read and explore main text of this Workbook, along with the hypermedia links to the worksheets and sample documents. If you did, I'm sure you'll agree that this guide contains some helpful resources for the interactive media developer. Especially those busy formulating creative and business strategies for their products and services.

So don't stop now. You've just scratched the surface. There's a whole lot more work ahead of you. You're pushing the boundaries of a new frontier, remember? Oh yeah, and don't forget to have some fun while you're at it!

If you'd like to share your killer content ideas, methodologies, tricks or personal mantras with like-minded developers, drop me a line at (samsel@gte.net). Or give the Apple Media Program a holler and let them know how you put this Workbook to use in your business. Who knows, maybe you'll be profiled in The Killer Content Workbook, Version 2.0!

About the Author

Jon Samsel hails from the frigid tundra of Syracuse, New York. As a child, he dreamed of becoming a big-time Hollywood director. Much to his dismay, he became a writer instead. As a poet and screenwriter, he toiled in the trenches of oblivion until his screenplay, "Sin City," was optioned by Bert Dragin (producer of the Roger Corman cult punk classic, "Suburbia"). Samsel had only one original screenplay produced as a movie––a low-budget erotic thriller titled "Carnal Crimes." He was later mortified to discover that his parents had stumbled upon the film (airing late one night on Showtime) and actually liked it.

Disillusioned, Samsel began looking into alternative pursuits such as dating actresses (casting director), babysitting actors (talent agent), stabbing himself with scissors (modeling agent) and counseling writers (literary agent). In 1993, seven weeks before his daughter was born, he traded in his 21st floor executive office, charged $3,000 to his credit card and opened a multimedia publishing venture that became known as Carronade Group. His wife still hasn't forgiven him.

In 1995, Samsel co-authored the Interactive Writers Handbook ––the first book of its kind to teach writers how to create the written documents or blueprints for creating an interactive media project. The publication is now used as a textbook at over 25 major colleges and universities throughout the US and Canada. Samsel has edited ten books and reports on new technology issues, including the Interactive Music Handbook ; Interactive Publishers Handbook ; and Silicon Valley to Hollywood: Top Ten Trends in Multi-Player Games and Online Entertainment . Despite his past work, he continues to land consulting and writing assignments for really cool companies such as Apple Computer, Inc., The Kushner-Locke Company, Lange Productions and Allworth Press.

Samsel resides in Silicon Beach (a fictional multimedia community located 45 minutes southeast of L.A.). He is an adjunct writing instructor at UCLA and UC Irvine Extension. But what he really enjoys most is getting his fingernails dirty (camping, gardening, Playdough) and cruising at 40 knots with the wind whiping through his hair (boating on Lake Arrowhead).

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