



RAYMOND PIROUZ YOUR GUIDE TO MODERN LIVING™

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REQUIRED READING



Center Column Content

Lights, Camera, Animation!

A reader asks: *My friends and I have been working on a concept to produce an animated series on the Internet. We have the scripts written and the characters fleshed out. How would you recommend we move forward on producing our series and getting them online?*

Raymond Pirouz answers: There are four key issues to consider when setting out to produce an online animated series: technology platform, bandwidth limitations, animation/sound production and presentation/promotion venue. When you have carefully considered and developed approaches to dealing with these issues, you will be ready to move forward with your project.



The technology platform of choice for the dissemination of online animated entertainment is [Macromedia Flash](#), which requires the [Macromedia Flash Player](#) plug-in that—according to the [Macromedia](#) web site—is already in use by over 474 million people. Therefore, you would not be taking a large risk in choosing to distribute your animated series as Flash files.



You should know that there are two sides to the technology platform decision—a production side and a distribution side. We have already established that you will be distributing Flash files. However, you may not be aware that there is more than one development platform for creating Flash content. The most popular tools for doing so are Macromedia's own Flash, [Adobe LiveMotion](#) and [Toon Boom Studio](#).

Of the three packages, Toon Boom Studio is the only one that is specifically designed by animation experts for animation experts. If you are a traditional animator, Toon Boom Studio may present you with a more intuitive work environment. However, if you are interested in creating more advanced animations that incorporate high-end interactivity and even scripted actions, you may want to go with Macromedia Flash, or a combination of Toon Boom Studio for animation and Flash for scripting. Adobe's product, while impressive in its own right, is not as robust a solution for the animator/cartoonist.

When you have determined your technology platform, you will have to face the bandwidth reality. While broadband subscriptions are on the rise, a majority of the population still relies on modem access to the Internet, greatly hindering your ability to create overly complex projects with large file sizes. Given this reality, you will have to either become an expert—or seek expert assistance—in learning how to produce Flash content that streams seamlessly (or creates the impression of streaming seamlessly) for users with slow connections. Such expertise requires an intimate understanding of Flash file format quirks as well as best practices for organizing, refining and streamlining the use of graphic elements and sound files in each scene, cutting unnecessary elements in order to maximize efficiency and minimize load-times.

When you have your storyboards mocked up and are ready to go into production, you should not take the issue of sound engineering lightly. Even though compression technology will reduce the overall quality of your audio, the end result will be less than desirable if you do not begin with the cleanest possible recordings. If you do not have a properly insulated sound recording booth in your studio, you may need to rent time in a professional studio to ensure that you capture perfect audio recordings. From an animation production standpoint, your team will obviously have to be well-versed in the Macromedia Flash or Toon Boom application. If you do not have any experience with the software, you may want to give yourself three to four weeks of focused study in order to get up to speed with the tools.



When you have developed an engaging story, produced pristine audio recordings, developed attention-grabbing animations while keeping file sizes under control, your greatest challenge will be upon you—to post your work on a web site, build an audience and establish a distribution or syndication deal with a venue such as [AtomFilms](#).

Do you have a question you'd like to ask Raymond? [Please do](#).

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