

Considering animation for your client? ... don't forget the storyboard!

By **BRUCE MCFARLAN**



Ever been to an auto dealership and overheard a customer asking, “How much does a car cost?” Or perhaps heard someone asking a travel agent, “How much does a flight cost?” Neither have I, but these scenarios are akin to a question animators commonly get from clients inquiring about the cost to produce a piece of animation. Of course the answer to each of these questions is *it depends* – how fancy is the car you’re looking to purchase? Where would you like to fly to?

Like purchasing a car or booking a flight, there are a number of considerations that affect the cost of an animated production. Here are a few:

- **Running length of the animation**
- **Number of scenes**
- **Complexity of the character design**
- **Number of characters**
- **Number of characters onscreen at the same time, and what their actions are**
- **Are the characters speaking (lip-sync animation)?**

For this reason, when approaching a studio for a cost estimate, it’s beneficial to have a rough storyboard, or even a rough script. Without either of these, the production company will likely need to estimate costs within a wide-range, which may be of questionable value as you try to nail down costs for your project.

With even a rudimentary storyboard as a reference, the animation studio can more accurately determine the production time required for

your piece, thereby providing you with a more *zeroed-in* estimate of cost.

So, while you're clearing space on the mantle for that Clio, as a first step, don't forget the storyboard!

Bruce McFarlan is a veteran commercial animator and lead Director/Animator of Rowboat Animation, Inc., a commercial animation company located in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

www.rowboatanimation.com