

# Animator's Guide to Creating an Online Presence

By Ron Doucet, Jan. 2011

Over these last few years, it has become essential for animation artists to look at how they present themselves to existing and potential clients, producers, directors and studio heads. As I've been teaching animation courses these past few years, I'm always stressing the importance of creating a web presence and the need to have that presence fully laid out and bursting with a variety of content by the time a student graduates. When I graduated animation college in 1999, a printed portfolio and a VHS cassette of your show reel was all you needed. You'd make 10 copies of each, and spend hours researching the mailing addresses for various studios in the country. Not all studios had a website back then, but you would go to the post office, bundle up your demo tape and your printed portfolio (the one you spent hours at Kinko's building so the print margins, colors, and coil-binding were just right), and send it out to the studios... and hope for the best.

A lot has changed in the last 10 years. It's no longer an option for an animator, storyboard artist, game designer, CG artist, special effects artist, or motion graphics designer to **NOT** have a website promoting themselves. All film / television and video game production companies have a web presence, and so should you!

Regardless of your creative or technical discipline, your website is the foundation of how you are perceived. Even if you are very good at what you do and your work is predominantly in print or as digital video files (pencil tests or movie renders), your online portfolio is usually the first stop of call for people looking to commission or hire you. Since directors and clients can sometimes be a bit nervous about hiring someone purely based upon your apparent skills displayed on some site, a studio head may contact you for a quick design test, an animation test, or a phone interview. Can you blame them? Thousands or millions of dollars are on the line. Sure, they may send you a layout test or a modeling test, but it's worth it, and time may be of the essence, so they usually want your test quickly so they can determine your level of quality, skill, and experience.

For positions as video game concept artists, the company may have you fly in for a one-on-one interview and a hands-on Photoshop painting test. Studios have you do tests to make certain you can do what you claim, as well as determining your speed and technique.

You need to put all your good stuff on an easy-to-see site for your employers to view and comb through. Something, clear, simple, direct, and easy to edit. Something you can customize. Something you can easily make different versions of (one focusing on design the other on animation). Tailor your e-mail based cover letter to have that web address handy and to make sure what you are about to give them is appropriate to the job you're gunning for.

Now this goes for standard 2D and 3D design or animation jobs. Everything here is relevant to any type of animation artist you happen to be. 3D modeling, rigging, special effects, and animation, as well as 2D traditional or Flash/Toonboom/Photoshop design, layout, character animation, BG line art/paint, compositing, etc.

If only there was a way for an animation artist to be able to freely and easily create a website with a resume, portfolio, and a high resolution video with your show reel on it, all contained in one fast and easy-to-build web address. AH HA! There is! But first you must register to some websites, it will only take 30 minutes, and it's worth it.

## - The three websites you MUST first register to -

**Vimeo | YouTube** – vimeo.com | youtube.com - Upload your animation demo reel here.

**Blogger** - blogger.com - Upload designs and sketches here and embed your demo reel from YouTube.

**Linked In** - linkedin.com - Build your full resume here, start making connections with friends and past employers to stay in contact with potential work, place a link of your profile to your blog.

Optional: Elance | Guru | Paypal – elance.com | guru.com | paypal.com – Create an account and register to elance and guru to get access to thousands of potential freelance jobs. display samples of your work by showing clients your blog which showcases your artwork, a link to your demo reel, and a link to your full resume. PayPal is the fastest and easiest way for a client to safely pay you directly to your banking account with just an e-mail address.

Go to each one and create a new account (if you haven't already). Try to keep the same e-mail, username, password for all of them, so do you don't forget how to log in later. I would suggest to create a new **Gmail account** (gmail.com) to make things easier. These are essential because you can link all of these to or from your blog website (made at blogger.com). This new online e-mail can be your "professional e-mail" from now on, only production and work-related stuff goes to and from this e-mail. Why choose blogger as your homebase? Because it's simple! Keep in mind you are not being hired for your web design skills, you are being hired for your visual storytelling skills, your layout/background design skills, your character acting/animation skills, your 3D modeling and rigging skills, or whatever it is you are specializing in. So a very simple website displaying your work is all you need. Your work must speak for itself, whether it's video or just design or storyboard work, keep it simple!

It literally will take you about a half hour to signup to all five of these websites. Once complete, you have to fill them with content, some will be repetitive, and potentially redundant, but trust me, it's worth it.

## - The Full Breakdown -

### **Vimeo - YouTube**

Put together a 1-3 minute showreel.

Here's the secret of how to put one together; Show you're best stuff FIRST, your second best stuff last, and everything else in-between. Place your name and e-mail at the start and end. Emphasize your strengths, make sure your demo reel is relevant to the job you

want. If you're applying as a character animator don't send your YouTube reel that has all your compositing work. Focus on your strengths, if you are not good at modeling, get stock models and concentrate on animation. If your strength is in 3D character design, don't show off your mediocre animation skills, show the stages and process of your sculpting/modeling skills. For character animation, show how you can do lip-sync and exaggerated character acting or subtle/sentimental acting.

Over the years I've had the pleasure of screening hundreds of demo reels. I've seen plenty of good ones and bad ones, but even though the format has changed from VHS (the standard demo reel format in the year 2000) to CD, then DVD, and now being entirely online, I had always noticed a similar pattern of errors in the editing and assembling of the reels themselves. So here's some suggestions (especially for those making their first) on how to construct a more successful demo reel.

Remember: The main purpose of your demo reel is to **SHOW OFF YOUR SKILLS**.

The key to getting a career in the animation industry (whether its video games, feature animation special effects, motion graphics or whatever) is to **MAKE YOUR SELF VALUABLE**.

That's the ultimate secret. If you appear valuable as an artist to an employer or studio head, you'll most likely get the job.

It doesn't matter what your specialties are; Flash animation, classical animation, Toonboom, 3D modeling/rigging. If you only have tests and exercises, and only traditional animation or only Maya, that's fine, as long as you show **ONLY** the best stuff. A one minute reel with good character acting is better than 4 minutes of all the stuff you've ever done. Show you can display emotions with subtle facial animation and strong acting principles ... it's all in the eyes. If you can, show diversity with different design styles. Remember, your employer sees a lot of demo reels, keep it moving, learn to trim and cut your shots tightly. Only do a slide show of artwork if you are tailoring a demo reel to showcase design and paint work for an employer. Fine art, BG color keys, character color models are fine, but a simple blog could showcase these images in a much better way.

YouTube isn't your only option, Vimeo.com and DailyMotion.com are all healthy alternatives.

**What is the purpose of an animation demo reel?** Whether it's focus is on special effects, character animation, background art, environment design, or motion graphics, 2D or 3D... it's goal is always the same; To showcase your skills and get you the job you're looking for.



**To start off, let's look at the formula you should follow.**

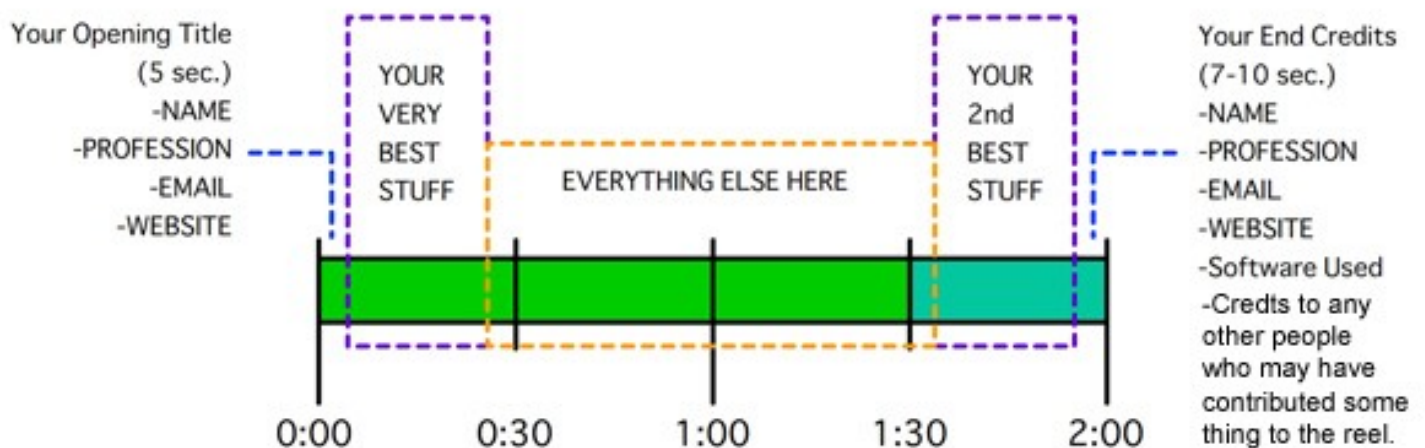
**A) Content Placement:** Put all your best stuff at the start, your second best stuff at the very end, and everything else scattered inbetween. Why? You want to give the viewer a strong impact at the very start to hold their interest and impress them from the very beginning. Then you end it all on a sweet note by finishing it with your 2nd best work.

**B) Time:** Keep the length of your reel between 1:30 and 2:30 in length. That's 90-150 seconds. Why? Anything over two minutes begins to feel like overkill. Whether you have 1 year of experience or 10, most employers don't want to sit through 3+ minutes of video clips that have no connecting story. 95% of the time the employer has decided within the first 30 seconds if you are a potential candidate or not. So keep your short films separate from the reel, provide a link to other longer works whether they are entirely your own creations or collaborations with others, and keep your demo reel short and sweet.

**C) Titles:** Name, Specialty and Contact Information at the head and tail of your reel, you'd be surprised how many reels I've seen that did not have this. Also, if possible, have this info as a semi-transparent image/text at the bottom of your screen during the whole reel. Clear and easily readable but not too big as to crop of any of your visuals. Title cards should be up for 3 to 4 seconds, except your final one at the tail end, that one can stay on for a while longer.

# THE DEMO REEL FORMULA

For a 2 minute animation reel



**When crafting your demo reel there's always four main things to consider.**

**1- Pacing:** How you edit and cut your reel together could mean the difference between a boring, slow-paced reel, or a nice, smooth and exciting reel. Never be afraid of your reel being too short, anything over 1 min. is fine, as long as it only shows your very best stuff. Filling up time with mediocre content only damages your chances of getting the job. Also, make sure you're not cutting and moving too fast, give a chance for the viewer to take in all the info. Always remember: Quality over Quantity.

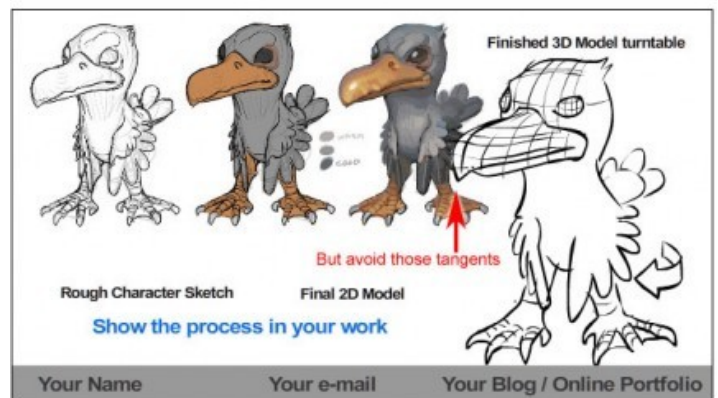
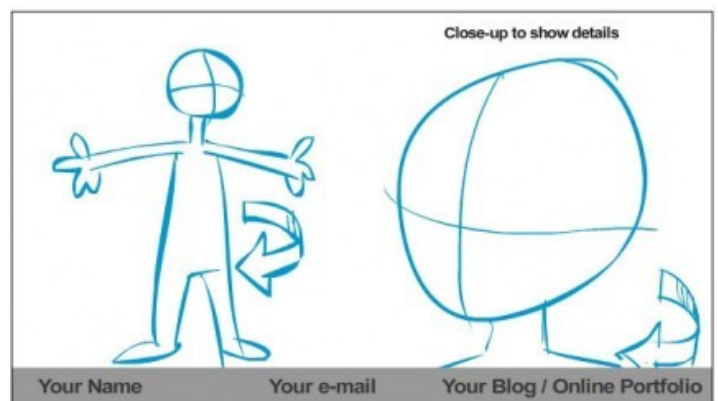
**2- Style:** Find one typeface to use and use only that one through out your reel for titles and contact info. When it comes to displaying 3D models don't go crazy with all kinds of different background textures that distract from the main centre of attention. Fonts, colors, backdrops, and soundtracks should be kept simple and consistent.

**3- Content:** This is what it's all about! Take a lot of time to narrow down only the very best clips you've completed to stack into your reel. Ask friends/co-workers/classmates to watch your shots and tests to determine which ones showcase your skills best in Story, Character, Physicality, Acting, and Entertainment Value. Content is what you'll spend the most time on, it is the most important part, THIS is what will show a client or employer that you have what it takes to be on the production.

**4- Music:** Keep it simple and non-abrasive, the soundtrack should never draw attention to itself. If your reel has lots of lip sync tests or cuts from shows/films you've worked on with dialogue, then leave out the music entirely. Unless of course you dedicate a portion of your reel to possibly just design or modeling, then a bit of jazz wouldn't hurt. Some directors and producers actually prefer no music at all, I tend to disagree as sometimes it can add a lot to the mood of the entire piece. Many directors turn off the sound entirely (unless there's lip sync/dialogue involved), so your choice of music doesn't matter much, as long as it is not at all distracting or abrasive to your visuals.

When it comes to your first reel (perhaps near the end of your college animation program) there are a couple things to consider:

- 1) If you have little to no production experience, you are a recent graduate seeking your first project in the industry, you must impress your potential employer, this is the whole purpose of your demo reel. Don't beat yourself over the fact your stuff isn't as good as the pros you admire online. Focus on your strengths and display only your strengths.



- 2) If you are a student about to graduate; professionalism, versatility, and resourcefulness are the qualities you want to show with the clips and images you're displaying. Most likely you only have classroom exercises and personal projects to showcase, stay confident, cut out any elements that may expose your weaknesses, and study the massive amounts of kick-ass reels online to get a sense of what works and what doesn't.

## **The "look" of your reel.**

Why should you be concerned over the overall layout and compositional design of your reel? It shows the employers your willingness to go the extra mile and treat this reel as a nice little movie with a start, middle and end with a clean and professional look to it. You can spend countless hours re-arranging your clips in an attempt to create a nice flow from one shot to the next, and that's a good thing, all the extra effort will show off in the end result. If your subject placement and your camera moves are even a bit distracting or over-done, then you instantly leave a bad impression. Work on making smooth and subtle camera moves that showcase your environments and set designs or background art. With human-like character you've got a tall vertical shape that's centered with lots of dead space on the sides, so avoid the middle! When you have a walk cycle looping on one side of the frame make sure to display the character rig on the other side.

For 2D stuff, generally you see blogs having samples of model sheets and poses for character design work. For 3DCG artists you display your character models on turntables, cross-fading the wireframe with the shaded versions, etc. With the advent of HD demo reels, having a wide screen format for your 3D reels often creates more wide open space around the characters you are displaying, whether its a run cycle or just a 360-turn-around, all this negative space can look unappealing. This creates an inefficient use of space by centering the often very vertical figure. To remedy this, always try to fill up some dead space with other views or elements of the subject. For 3D models, you can have the figure on the turntable while you display close-ups or the texture map on the other side of the frame.

When choosing your typeface don't ever go with a scripty, flamboyant, distressed or grungy font. Go with something simple, clear and **legible**. Arial Bold or Arial Rounded isn't a bad choice, or anything clean and easy to read like [this](#).

## **Let's take a look at some examples.**

Observe the Demo Reel of CG artist André Boudreau: <http://vimeo.com/9899376>  
3D Maya Generalist is what he is selling himself as, tracking, compositing, modeling, animation, texturing/shading, lighting, environments/sets and character designs are displayed. The speed, pacing, audio, camera work, editing, and framing is simple and smooth. Therefore his reel appears professional, versatile, and shows its maker is resourceful and knowledgeable for an entry-level position as a 3D-CG artist.

Take a look at Wes Kandel's Visual Effects Demo Reel: <http://vimeo.com/7159058>  
The music does not draw attention to itself, it does not distract, but rather it compliments the well paced out visuals. A high level of design is present in his style, he definitely focuses on nothing but his strengths.

Marvel at the work behind this film by Gobelins students: <http://www.le-building.com/makingof.htm>

This isn't a demo reel, but it has all the same properties. The Quicktimes presented here show a variety of design and animation processes both for the 2D and 3D elements of the short film. Displaying how the character and prop rigs operate and the layers of production placed in the film are a great inspiration of how you could lay out your own reel.

Rigger/Animator, Peter Driscoll, displays clear, simple and effective use of maximizing the space within the frame to show samples of his modeling skills and how the character rigs operate: <http://vimeo.com/11309843>

The character technical direction reel of Scott Peters includes examples of motion capture, procedural skeletal animation, procedural geometry construction and an advanced skeletal system intended to make posing and animating more intuitive and powerful: <http://vimeo.com/19683816>

Examine Mirco Chen's Demo Reel: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PD8IWu1kac8>  
This is a nice example of versatility in a show reel. A unique assortment of graphic styles, timing, velocity, pencil tests, symbols-based animation, traditional frame-by-frame Flash animation, some designs and FX displayed with a nice blend of humor, acting, and performances showcased.

Study the Character Animation Reel of Trevor Hsieh: <http://erikleeanimation.sslpowered.com/trevorhsieh/index.html>

Here's a clinic in simplicity. Only 6 clips totaling only an minute of footage, showcasing one thing; His skills in 3D character acting. Short, simple, and to the point.

Check out this nice 3D Modeling Reel by Ruben Matrinez: <http://vimeo.com/11797682>  
Artful, stylish, nice typography, good color sense, and lighting that compliments the main subject instead of distracting from it. Lots of attention to detail that makes it a very professional looking piece.

Jonathan Paine's 3D Character Modeling reel will blow you away: <http://vimeo.com/10763826>

Again, simple and effective display of his strongest skills. You know exactly what he's capable of, what his specialty is, and what level his design skills are at. He shows relevant clips of the production he worked on with the model he made for that production. As is the case with many animation artists, you work behind the scenes and so you must show the context in which your work was applied. The same goes for storyboarding and layout, show samples of the progression of your shots and what your part was in its construction.

Observe Matt Sheppard's Character Animation Reel: <http://vimeo.com/10986002>  
The brilliant part of this is that only 10 seconds of the 140 second reel is production work, with a dab of 3D to show how he's been teaching himself that aspect also, the rest is all **personal work**! Directors LOVE to see this. It shows self-motivation, creativity, initiative, and storytelling skills that many directors and studio heads are looking for.

<http://www.reelbarrow.com> is a website dedicated to finding the most inspiring animation showreels on the internet and featuring them in one easy to navigate website.

There's plenty more samples all over the internet, like [here](#).

Whether you are training to be a 3D or 2D animator, or even if you have a couple years of experience, you can absorb tons of inspiration through [11 second club](#). You can download past audio clips and animate your character to your favorite dialogue track. When you have the time, watch the eCritiques from big-name industry professionals, most of them have a lot of profound advice on timing, motion and acting for each month's winning entry. Many professional animators and animation students use this as a way to stay creative or as a great opportunity to practice and learn more about character acting. Even if you cannot meet the monthly deadlines, keep working at it and it can end up being a great demo reel piece.

When applying for a job as a character animator, your reel is your most important weapon. The resume and portfolio fall by the wayside as this mini-movie is truly your one biggest chance at getting that job.

If you are an animation generalist and haven't specialized in much of anything yet, then show some variety; Flash animation, classical animation, Toonboom, Photoshop-made concept art and/or 3D modeling clips. It's OK if you only have tests and exercises in traditional animation or Maya, but show ONLY the best stuff.

A one minute reel with good character acting is better than 4 minutes of all the stuff you've ever done. For character animation reels – show you can achieve emotions with subtle facial animation and strong acting principles ... it's all in the eyes. For 3D environment modeling reels – show the stages of the set being built, keep the camera moves soft and slow. The same goes for 3D and 2D character designs. Show multiple views/rotations and the stages in which you created the character and props. If possible – show diversity with different design styles, ie: very stylized/cartoonish vs. more realistic.

### **DOs and DON'Ts**

-Do make sure all the information on your title cards are correct, check for spelling mistakes and typos, and have friends double check them too.

-Do show your reel to many of your peers, classmates, co-workers before posting it online, get feedback from them, and do appropriate changes. Choose carefully the content of your reel, take your friends' advice into consideration if they find some parts too repetitive or certain clips unnecessary. Trimming down your reel to a shorter and higher quality piece could increase your chances.

-Don't do a chronological work history.

-Don't ask the employer for feedback.

-Don't include early tests, tutorials, or incomplete work.

-Don't have a slide-show of your life drawings (that's what your online portfolio blog is for).

-Don't include work in progress, you CAN show the multiple stages from concept to completion of a model, animated scene, ie: rough concept sketch > clean sketch > final color design > rough sculpt > final 3D model > textures/UV map > Lighting > final comp.

**More info on Demo Reels can be found all over cyberspace:**



[http://www.grafixjobs.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=36&Itemid=70](http://www.grafixjobs.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=36&Itemid=70)

<http://splinedoctors.blogspot.com/2006/01/demo-reel-tips.html>

<http://www.animationmentor.com/webinar/replay/20080709carlos/carlos1.html>

[http://www.pixarcanada.com/demo\\_reel.html](http://www.pixarcanada.com/demo_reel.html)

## **Update your reel every 6-12 months, or after each major contract.**

If you have a new project coming up right after, well, you don't need to update your reel, you're too busy getting ready for the next production. When you have some downtime or a lengthy break between gigs, take the time to update that reel. Always save all the original source files and project files that you used to construct your reel, so you won't have to go digging for some old clips all over again. Whether it's FinalCut Pro, Premiere, iMovie, or whatever the software you use, keep it clean and organized so it makes the process of removing old stuff and adding new stuff in relatively painless.

Remember, your employer sees a lot of demo reels, keep it moving, learn to trim and cut your shots tightly. Only do a slide show of artwork if you are tailoring a demo reel to showcase design and paint work for an employer. Fine art, BG color keys, character color models are fine, but a simple blog might showcase these images in a much better and more high-resolution format.

**Vimeo** and **YouTube** seem to be most popular high-resolution options for free online demo reel hosting, it's easy, fast, and high-definition compatible. Thanks to programs like Flash and Maya, you can always render at very high resolutions without any problems, and online video sharing sites can accept many types of sizes and formats.

**Best formats that YouTube accepts:** \* Video Format: H.264, MPEG-2 or MPEG-4 preferred \* Resolution: 640x360 or 853x480 or 1280x720 (16:9 aspect ratio) \* Quality: At least 4000 kb/s \* Audio Format: MP3 or AAC preferred \* Frames per second: 24 (or 23.97) \* Maximum file size: 1 GB

Free and easy-to-use software for assembling your show reel together:

VirtualDub - <http://virtualdub.sourceforge.net/> VirtualDub isn't available for Mac but the free program Avidemux has similar functionality - <http://fixounet.free.fr/avidemux/>

MPEG Streamclip - <http://www.squared5.com/>

Quicktime (Only needed if you don't already have the h.264 codec):  
<http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/>

iMovie comes free with any Mac computer, it takes a bit longer to learn it, but it's a powerful tool - <http://en.kioskea.net/telecharger/telecharger-1238-imovie-hd>

Depending on what Operating System you have, there are many different versions of iMovie - <http://www.versiontracker.com/dyn/moreinfo/macosx/10228>

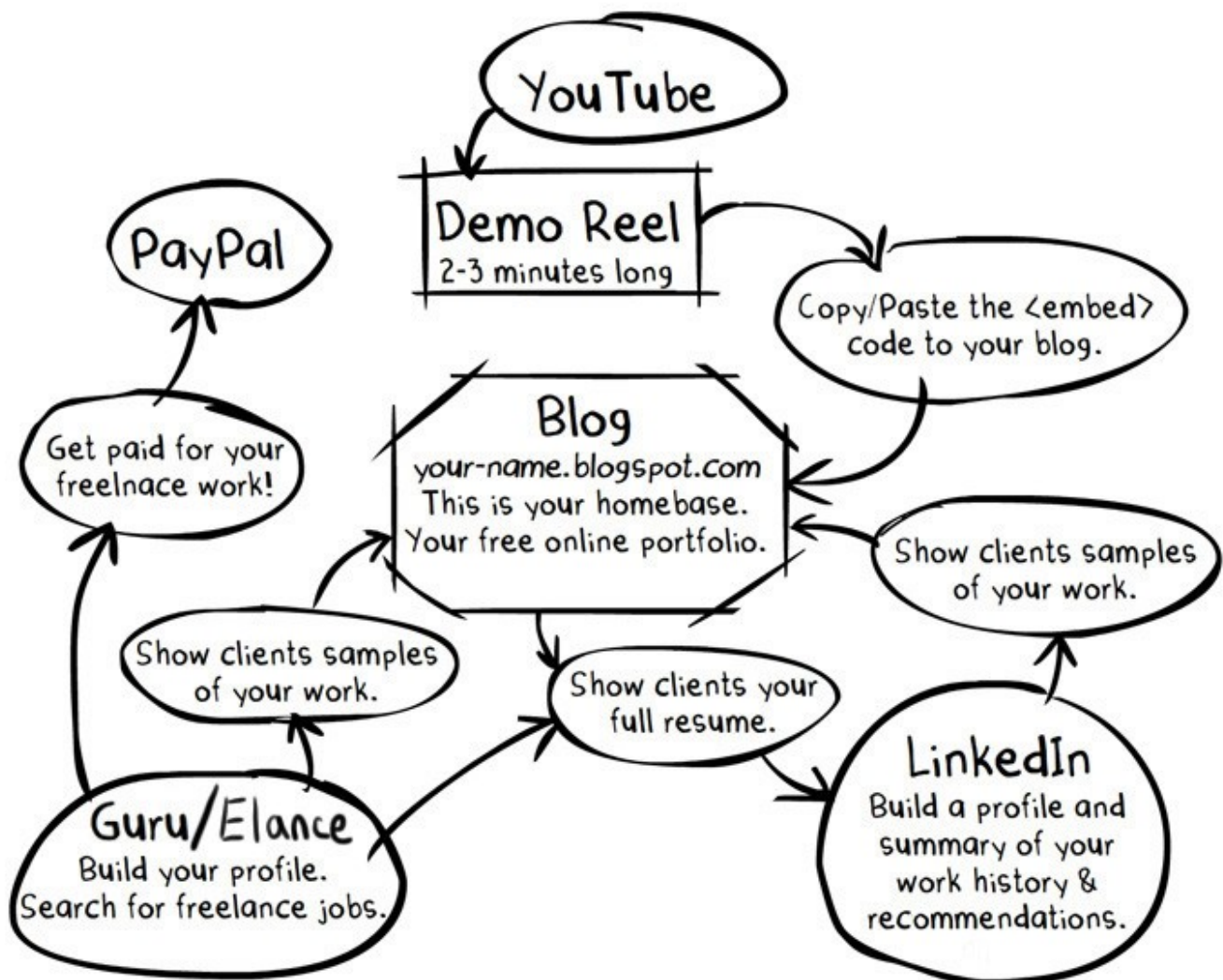
## **Blogger:**

THIS IS YOUR HOMEBASE! Start uploading your figure drawings, rough character designs, finished & colored character and background designs, rendered 3D designs / environments and any other images of your best sketches, paintings, prop designs, concept art, and illustrations. Categorize them, organize them, play with the settings and the style of your blog. This is the simplest and easiest way to show an employer your art style and design skills online. Add a link in the sidebar to your LinkedIn profile (showing your work history and specialties). Or, if you don't really have any connections or industry contacts yet, simply place a short and concise summary of your skills/experience in the sidebar with your name and e-mail! Now add in your YouTube demo reel as a post at the very top. Copy/paste the <embed> code into a new post and BAM! You Publish it and you're done. As an alternative you can sign up for these free accounts as well:

<http://hasaportfolio.com>

<http://tumblr.com>

Try them out, it may be more in line of what you're looking for, they have their own style and process, with the exact same principle, upload some content, organize it, and publish it online. ALL FOR FREE.



Now you are ready to e-mail a single link (<http://yourname.blogspot.com>) to any

employer via e-mail, and that site will have samples of your work, a point-and-click demo reel and a link to your resume.

Tips on customizing your blogspot blog - <http://bloggerfordummies.blogspot.com>

How to embed your YouTube Demo Reel into your blog:

<http://embedyoutube.blogspot.com/2007/11/how-to-embed-youtube.html>

## **LinkedIn:**

Fill out all the info on your profile, this is your new online, detailed resume, you can be as in-depth as you want, get past employers, co-workers or instructors to recommend you. Once you've signed up for this website, start joining all the relevant "Groups" – Flash Animators, 3D Animators, Graphic Artists, Designers, Illustrators, Video Game Developers, etc. It's like a small and simple version of Facebook but just for professionals and their work.

Registering to this site is a bit more beneficial for when you've completed your first couple jobs, having experience build up relevant to the career you're in helps to fill up your resume with more recommendations and references to increase your value to future employers. You can wait until you have some production work before logging on to this place, it will help you out more once your in the industry with at least a year of solid experience behind you. Most importantly, it helps you to stay connected, make new connections, and stay current with news and info by linking to various groups, so because of this I even recommend it for animation students.

**The importance of a short, simple, online resume.** In this day and age, it's not just graphic designers and programmers who really benefit from having a simple online portfolio/resume, it is anyone on a serious job-hunt, including 2D and 3D animators. What's great with today's online technology you don't have to know any HTML code or programming skills or anything (it helps to know a tiny bit) to develop your own simple-easy-to-navigate online portfolio/resume. I can't stress enough the importance of creating a simple, fast and efficient self-promoting and efficient website (such as a blog). Here's why:

1. It shows you go the extra mile.
2. It helps you keep yourself organized.
3. It makes you more findable on the web.
4. You can put it on your business card and in your e-mail message to the employer.

KEEP IT SIMPLE. Even if your website is a flashy light-on-dark web 2.0 grunge masterpiece, when it comes down to your actual resume page, you should keep it simple. The information on this page should be as absolutely readable and as accessible as possible and that means dark-on-white and normal sized web text. Remember that your LinkedIn account can have your detailed resume posted, with a list of software specialties, training, full work history, references and recommendations.

## **PayPal:**

Sign up for an account through PayPal, it sometimes takes a few days (or weeks) to register since the company must go through the process to authenticate and verify your information. Once it's complete and all setup, you can request getting paid directly through PayPal for any freelance job from any source, the client or employer need only to have your e-mail to deposit cash securely and directly into your bank account.

## **Eance and Guru:**

The top freelance animation/illustration sites, make a living searching for and bidding on projects or independent work during your spare time or as a full time job between contracts. There's many freelance-oriented websites for graphic designers, illustrators, CG artists and animation artists of all types out there, and Guru is just one of many. If you are a photographer or purely just a character designer; a **Flickr.com** account may be all you need to showcase samples of your work online. Guru is not for everyone, and to get the full advantage of this site, you should pay the annual fee, but to check it out first you can always browse through all the thousands of job posts to give you an idea whether this is for you or not. For Eance, search through jobs in the Design and Multimedia category, the registration process is free, however it is long and tedious, this is so that the Eance company can insure legitimate work through tested client and freelancer authenticity.

Search on Eance and Guru for work in your chosen field, comb through all the sub-categories and find clients that have jobs for the skills you have. Comic book coloring, e-cards, designs for an animated commercial, storyboards for a music video, logos for an advertising firm, Photoshop effects for some web graphics, 3D models for an online game, the list is endless. Once you have a few successful projects completed your 'Guru reputation' builds up as a reliable source of art or animation, similar to Ebay's positive feedback system.

Here's the tricky part, if you are very serious about cashing in on freelance work, Eance and Guru can be very beneficial during those times between contracts, thousands of illustrators out there can make \$30,000 per year just doing part-time Eance/Guru freelance work. But sort of like Ebay, there can be people out there who will take your stuff and not pay you for it. There's plenty of links on Guru on how to setup your account and how to not get screwed over.

Some clients will take your finished work and run (if you let them). So make sure to only hand in 'works in progress' (at low resolution) until you get your full amount and make sure you get at least half the money up front before you burn lots of precious time on a design or animation that will be handed over and not paid for. I've known many artists who e-mailed the final artwork or animation but never received the second half of the payment.

To get the full range of all the hundreds of job posts out there you need to pay the annual fees, about \$130 U.S. A small price to pay for the money you can make if you dedicate a lot of time to it. The full membership grants you full access to all the job posts in the fields you specialize in. Once registered you will get daily e-mails displaying recent job requests from new posts made in your chosen categories.

## One last piece of advice...

### SPECIALIZE!

By that I mean find one or two aspects of the industry you are trained (or training in) and focus on them. These one or two things should obviously be the parts of your field that you enjoy doing the most.

I'm not saying being a '**Jack of all trades, master of none**' is all bad, but most artists don't have the time to master ALL the software and different animation techniques out there, at least not until you've had a few years of experience. I'd like to stress the importance of focusing on one or two different aspects of the industry, because doing this will make the quality in your work get better, and therefore you will seem more valuable to any employer. Give yourself time to master all aspects, 5, 10, 15 years of steady work and constant dedication to the craft will naturally give you experience in all facets of animation production.

As a 3D-CG artist you can focus on modeling, animation, special effects, rigging, layout, texturing/shading, lighting, compositing/rendering, cloth/hair simulations, crowd simulations, and a multitude of other technical and creative aspects. As a 2D-traditional artist you can focus on character animation, FX animation, storyboards/layout, concept art/visual development, character design, color design, BG design. There's a long list for both fields. Choosing one or two to concentrate all your efforts on will allow you to get better at those specific elements of production, and therefore increase your chances of getting a job in the field.

Think about it. Why would a director or producer hire someone that is kinda-good at animating and designing and storyboarding? When they can hire someone who is specialized in just ONE of these disciplines. It's not likely that you'll be able to become a master at ALL the different aspect of animation within the 1, 2, 3 or even 4 years of college you may be attending, so why not focus on the one thing you love doing most? Animation is an industry where you must be constantly upgrading and improving yourself. There's absolutely nothing wrong with labeling yourself as a "3D Generalist". College gives you a wide spectrum of different elements to explore, after a while you should choose which is your favorite, which one are you most comfortable and passionate about exploring further.

### Conclusion

Update all three of your main accounts (Blogger, Vimeo, LinkedIn) as you finish contracts and projects. This keeps your demo reel up to date, keeps your resume current and can keep you busy while you find a more full-time & long-term job in a studio or through online clients/employers. Working on your own projects and updating your reel by removing old stuff and replacing it with newer/better stuff is a good way to pass the time between gigs.

Don't forget, the key to steady employment is to stay current and up to date on the latest trends and technologies, do not place hope in finding a "secret method", polish your skills through ceaseless self-training; that is the key to developing effective techniques.

Now that your web presence is established, simply send your URL to the potential employer, and that's all he or she will need to review and assess your skill set.

Sample e-mail:

*Subject: Employment*

*Dear Mr. Director*

*I am a CG artist with 3 years experience in the animation industry. I am proficient in Maya, Flash, and After Effects. Please review my portfolio:*

***<http://my-name.blogspot.com>***

*I look forward to hearing from you.*

*- My name*

Nice and simple. The web address is your blog, containing images of your best work and at the very top you have your latest demo reel, with a link on the side to your full resume.

It is now up to you to place relevant and quality content on the site and the demo reel.

May the Force be with you, always.

-Ron