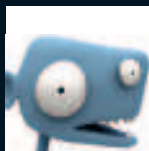


MeNTaL RoY

Outsourcing: are we scared yet? Someone else can do your job better and cheaper, and they won't moan about the coffee machine. While our feature writer went off to do some proper research on the subject, **Mental Roy** came up with these characteristically cheery thoughts



It's the big question. How can you, as an indie studio, compete with vast teams of eager, polite and efficient animators, probably based overseas and being paid the equivalent of £3.75 for a 16-hour day? (For our American friends, that's around \$7.50 in 'real' money.) Well, you can't, obviously - but you *can* make your company more attractive as an outsourcing facility by following these simple rules.

1. Pretend you're in a different timezone. If a client calls during normal hours, keep the answering machine on with a message saying you'll get back to them as soon as you're in the office. Then at 11pm, after the pub, give them a ring at home and enquire how you can help. Clients love this thrillingly international touch. Similarly, send email updates at 4.30 in the morning, requesting that they get back to you urgently (of course, it'll be 11pm the next night before you actually reply). You can set up an auto emailer for this - no need to interrupt your own sleep, after all.
2. Don't sweat the small stuff when it comes to working on the project. You already know your client will do pretty much anything to cut costs, and they're not expecting great things from you as an outsource. In fact, they'll probably be a little disappointed if your work is too competent. It spoils the magic of outsourcing when everything comes back exactly as they asked for, with no animation errors, bizarre facial expressions, or stock textures slapped haphazardly onto objects by someone who hasn't slept for two days. Do them a favour and do the minimum required.
3. Charge ridiculously low rates. This is the trickiest one, and may seem counter-intuitive at first, but don't worry: there are a variety of interesting ways you can recoup your losses by sneaking in a few extras on top of the actual fee. Unspecified administration charges are always a good one - someone has to pay for all those 'international' phone calls, after all. You could try bunging in some sort of local sales tax to see if they'll fall for that, too.

On the other hand, perhaps you're a middle manager at a large facility, and the thought of outsourcing some dronework is starting to look tempting. Perhaps you could cut costs, deliver on time, and gain kudos with the higher-ups by hiving off a crapload of stuff to India. If so, try these excuses when you tell the team.

1. It gives 'them' work. Don't specify who the 'them' in question are too closely; just imply that if your own team did the job, they would be literally taking food from the mouths of some struggling-but-noble Eastern European with ten kids to feed. Try to evoke the spirit of Ken Loach when explaining this.
2. It's actually a *good* thing for the team, creatively. By focusing on the more creative aspects of the project, they will feel more

DON'T TRY TOO HARD ON OUTSOURCED JOBS. IT SPOILS THE MAGIC IF EVERYTHING COMES BACK AS YOU ASKED

vibrant, refreshed and raring to go - especially the two people you're secretly planning on firing anyway.

3. You're the boss and if they don't like it, they know where the door is. This is something of a last resort, admittedly, and can easily backfire when your line manager uses the same tactic.

Incidentally, you may be interested to know that this column has been outsourced. Your usual Roy is booked in for another session at The Priory (for our American friends, learn to use Google) to work through some 'creative' issues, so I'm actually a chartered surveyor and *Star Trek* fan from Leeds. Live long and prosper!

Record mocap on your mobile

SOFTWARE 'No use for full-body capture yet' concedes inventor

Developer Tea Vui Huang has taken advantage of Nokia's latest motion-sensor technology to create *Mocap Phone*, a software package that enables users to record the motion of their next-generation mobiles in standard mocap file formats, including FBX, C3D and AMC.

The phones' motion sensors are similar in function to those of the Wii console's wireless controllers, capturing pitch, roll and direction data for three-axis motion capture.

Although *Mocap Phone* can be used to control simple 3D objects, it is limited by its single capture point. "It certainly can't be used for full-body capture," concedes Vui Huang. Simplicity has its own benefits, however. "Unlike typical optical/infrared mocap, there's no clean-up required before you can use [the data]"

Huang hopes that the software will help mocap enthusiasts to explore the technology without having to buy a large set-up.

"I'd say this would be a wonderful learning tool: something that smashes the barrier of entry to the world of mocap, albeit in a small way."

Mocap Phone can be downloaded free from Vui Huang's site, along with earlier apps for creating *Maya* models or HDRi files on your mobile. <http://teavuihuang.com/mocap>



● *Mocap Phone* makes use of new features on some of the latest-generation Nokia mobiles to capture motion data, albeit in a limited way

PLUGGED IN

DUMA ON TEST

Russian software developer Cinesoft has released a new production-ready renderfarm-management system. *Duma* uses scripts compatible with Pixar's *Alfred* render-management system to present a task-based processing system specifically designed to manage distributed rendering. Cinesoft is an affiliated branch of the Cinemateka post-production house and developed the software in response to the growth of remote working in the industry. *Duma* is currently in development: you can apply for a demo version that links to Cinesoft's test server via the developer's website. www.cinesoft.ru

