



How to write a Motion Graphics Design Treatment

design – direction – graphics – animation – cgi – visual effects

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Advice and Tips on writing a Motion Graphics Design Treatment

Give Yourself the best chance of winning the project

Title & Introduction

The first thing you will write on any treatment is the name of the project, so it is highly advisable to ensure you get this part correct. When taking a brief it is always a good idea to take as detailed notes as possible about all aspects of the project including the personnel involved, key words, references, technical requirements, audio preferences and working titles. These notes will help when putting the basics into a treatment, and showing your full understanding of the brief, like the correct title, or key words that the client was clear to describe the project with.

Once you have a clean leading page with the clients name, the name of the project, and any subtitle, you are ready to add the first and most important body of text, the introduction or approach.

The introduction, premise, outline or approach to a treatment is a vital and concise 2 or 3 line paragraph, plainly telling the reader what it is they are about to read, and the reason for the document they are reading. It will ideally 'grab' the reader immediately and arouse their interest, wanting to read the rest of the document

Writing Style

The use of descriptive language is a very important part of the art of all writing, no less with treatments, where you have (ideally) one or two sides of a4 paper to paint a clear picture in the readers mind of exactly what they can expect the final piece to look like.

When describing your brainchild, try and use flowing and elegant phrasing while being descriptive and to the point. A good use of language will keep the reader interested and their brain visualising the result using the imaginatively written definition of the concept.

For example, The brief is for a tv murder mystery drama title sequence, and the Director wants the style of the title sequence to reflect the period, atmosphere and subject matter of the script. The Director may use quite descriptive words in a brief like, dark or chilling, ensure to re-use these words in the treatment and add some of your own to further embellish the treatment. For example, dark foreboding blackness, or chilling, spine tingling crescendo.

Try not to repeat the same word too many times, and think of alternative ways to describe the same or similar part of the project. For example; when mentioning a transitional effect in the animation or film, try and find new ways to write that effect.

Branding

Ensure that your studio, company or organisation logo and branding is clearly marked on the front of the treatment, as well as the body of the treatment to ensure that all who read it will know where it is from. It will also help ensure your ideas stay as your ideas and are not snaffled by an eager to please other. Another consideration is to flatten your document to ensure that the logo and graphics are displayed properly and no one is able to edit your treatment or take paragraphs for re purposing into another document. Saving your MS Word or other word processor document as an Adobe Acrobat PDF file is an ideal way of achieving this.

Concept

This is the main body of text where you can flesh out the idea in more detail. It is important to ensure that this paragraph is easy to read and to the point. Use this part of the treatment as a way of quickly describing the rest of the information that you eloquently included in your Introduction. Try and keep the sentences short with enough space around them to be absorbed easily by the brain. Allow the sentences to flow together easily to ensure the reader does not get lost partway through, it is vital that your idea makes sense from start to finish giving your reader the chance of constructing the piece in their own minds eye.

Imagery

Consider including images to assist your concept.

You will probably be producing a storyboard separately to your treatment, but using additional reference images, character illustrations, environment simulations or mood board images in your treatment can really help the reader to grasp what you are saying. Positioning the images is also important, breaking up the paragraphs can lose the readers flow, so try adding an image or series of images under a paragraph. Using a large image under the Introduction can act as a real eye grabber.

Reference

Reference material is key to helping sell your idea, especially if you can reference your own previous work. It is another chance to showcase your work and give the client every confidence in your ability to deliver what you are writing about. References can be url links, embedded links, images, sounds, music tracks, illustration or video. If possible, try and collate it all into one place, an ftp location, your website, a file share location or as zipped attachments to make it easy for the client to explore your references and not have to go all over the internet to many different sites. Again, keeping the treatment easy to read, follow and absorb is paramount.

Technical Breakdown

The technical section of a treatment should be very factual, very brief and very clear. The clarity will, once again, illustrate to the reader that you have carefully thought the process through and understand exactly what it will take to achieve the finished result. You will always be able to change your thinking with kit later, but at least at this early stage you have approached the idea with a way of technically creating your masterpiece. This paragraph will also illustrate your ability to handle both aspects of any motion graphics project, creativity and technical knowhow, the core components to any motion graphics designer.

Think about outlining what and how many workstations you will need, how much storage space and backup will be required, which software packages will you be using and are there any specific plug-ins or presets that are relevant. Also take into account the amount of rendering time and hardware that will be needed, archiving considerations, and final delivery formats and other aspects.

Audio

As we all know, music and sound effects can really bring animation and video to life and is a major part of any visual experience. Touch on ideas you have for the music and sound effects approach, include references to other similarly styled pieces and describe the tone and atmosphere that the music will evoke with your visuals.

Budget & Costs

Costs and quotes are also a huge factor in whether you will succeed in getting the project you desire, but refrain from including any mention of money in the treatment. Instead provide a separate quotation document including any elements technically and creatively referred to in the treatment.

Conclusion / Summary

The final part of your treatment should act in a similar way to the introduction. It is a short paragraph that allows you to quickly remind the reader of the key points you discussed in the rest of the document. It is also a chance to use good language to leave the reader wanting to see what you have described, wanting to explore further, wanting to make it come to life.

List of Components

INTRODUCTION - short and sweet
CONCEPT - main descriptive body of text
IMAGES - reference material
TECHNICAL - geeky but essential breakdown
AUDIO - style and reference guide
SUMMARY - the final roundup