

## [2011 trends] Five key trends for SA's animation industry

The current animation and digital content creation industry in South Africa is growing at a phenomenal pace and fast becoming on par with the best in the world. The way digital content is created and delivered has changed dramatically over the last few years and the abilities of animation are becoming ever more powerful and more accessible, leading to a revolution of the creations possible and the creators making it.

**BIZ  
2011  
MARKETING  
TRENDS**



### 1. **Collaborations:**

Competitor behaviour is set to change this year. 2011 looks to be the year for growth and change in the industry, with many companies spreading their wings to take on international work, and also collaborate in many cases.

The calibre and affordability of digital work produced by South African digital studios is gaining increasing confidence abroad, which will lead to more workflow from international sources. This international inflow of work has two positive implications for the industry.

- First, due to increasing international demand, the local studios become less dependent on the local pool of work, becoming truly global players and opening the doors for others to follow, while at the same time creating more room on local soil for smaller upstarts and more jobs, but also more competition.
- Secondly, with generally larger international projects coming into a fragmented and very competitive local pool, most studios actually can't handle a single big project on their own, so they are 'forced' to look at creative ways of delegating the workload, often resulting in collaboration with other studios.

This collaboration between studios then allows for strategic partnerships between what would otherwise be competitors, allowing for the tackling of larger more ambitious projects often hard to take on for one studio alone.

This will hopefully have an accumulative effect, helped along by the film industry, and will gain momentum to a tipping point where SA becomes more of an all-round creative destination and not merely an outsource destination or a shooting destination.

### 2. **The rise of real-time visual effects:**

We are also seeing the end of 'purist' views of medium, with digital firmly entrenched as the de facto standard, and this in turn will lead to new ways of filming. One such advance would be real-time visual effects, where instead of inserting backgrounds and editing post-production, this is done in real time as filming takes place.

As this all filters down to the man in the street, it puts the power of the few into the hands of the many, providing the platform for almost anyone to be able to create a basic production. This will

also lead to a scenario where we will start seeing more local talent taking part in international filmmaking, whether it be as actors or behind-the-scenes production.

### 3. **Settlement in human capital movement:**

There are huge discrepancies between the best and the worst of talent, as well as what they earn. Currently, there is a lot of movement in the industry, what with all the recent retrenchments as well as the apparent over-supply of new graduates.

Although digital content creation is still very much a growing industry and, in general, digital content artists are still very much in demand all over the world, periodic slumps happen and the sector has not yet come to maturity or stabilised. We foresee a settling effect occurring, where talent and demand will reach equilibrium, creating less discrepancies but more to go around for everyone.

### 4. **Bigger focus on SA-animated short films:**

We also expect to see a bigger shift in short film entertainment, rather than the traditional 30-second hard-sell.

Our audiences are now demanding a character they know a little more about; they don't want 'perfect' characters that have no weaknesses or faults. They want a character they can relate to. They're becoming tired of the little cute character pointing to a title that reads, 'Limited time only R99.99!' It doesn't entertain them, and they don't relate to that. The new 2011 brand mascot will have more depth, a bigger opinion, collaborate with the cool and be socially aware.

We also expect to see trends in the film industry having an impact on the commercial market.

### 5. **Super-realistic animation on the rise:**

Character animation in commercials will follow the trend set by the long-form market, with more super-realistic characters being developed for brand use. The strides in technology demonstrated by films such as Avatar and the soon-to-be-released Tintin movie will soon be used by animation studios producing commercials.

Animation studios will no longer just focus on the basic principles of animation; rather, more so now than ever before, we look at breathing life into our animation performance. Technology is helping us along the way, as we see some of the leaps that game development studio Rockstar ([www.rockstargames.com](http://www.rockstargames.com)), the company that brought you the bestseller GTA IV, is busy with on its new title *La Noire*.

We will see more and more of this type of technology coming across into our commercial production models. As we see with the up-and-coming animated films of 2011, there is a continual drive to create the leading characters out there