<u>Creating a Menu-Driven DVD for a Client</u>

It is the goal of multimedia designers to create a comprehensive and engaging product for their client. Working with a public service client is mutually beneficial for the designer and the client. Since most public service clients are unable to afford the high cost of producing a menu-driven DVD, the expectations on the designer are greatly reduced since the project is more of a learning experience. The project will consist of producing an original multimedia DVD utilizing nonlinear editing and DVD authoring software.

The first step in the project is conducting interviews with the potential client; these meetings will concentrate on determining the scope of the project. This will require the designer to assess the client's needs as well as determining clear and attainable goals for the project. When you have settled on the focus, it is time to refine that focus by creating both a flowchart of the DVD structure and a written proposal. Once this has been agreed upon, it is important to construct a realistic timeline to keep the project on schedule. A good suggestion on projects with a fixed time and budget is to "Never throw more money at a problem; just scale back the scope."[1] Sometimes that means "taking a hard look at whether there's a simpler solution, something that meets the 80% or more of project goals that really matter, and can be done quicker."[2]

Organizing media assets and textual content provided by the client is essential to finding out what material still needs to be gathered or produced. At this stage it is

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[1]   David F. Carr. "Project Management: Simple = Success, May 23, 2006.
[2]   Ibid.

important to remember, "While careful management takes a lot of time up front, it always saves more time toward the end of the project."[3] Keeping proper documentation of all project paperwork including client interactions will ensure that any disputes can be resolved with a look back at the records. While disputes are always a possibility, it is possible to minimize such occurrences through a continuous two-way communication with clients.

If communication between the client and designer breaks down, the chances of successfully communicating with an audience is severely diminished. Both parties should be committed to a free exchange of ideas and suggestions. The goal of both parties is to effectively communicate information to the intended audience. A good way of finding out if your message is reaching the audience is to conduct peer reviews of the project.

Well before the finished product is delivered to the client, the designer needs to conduct both technical and user tests of the DVD. One of the worst technical problems is "DVD's that may not play or may not play the way the author intended."[4] User tests can tell a designer if the intended message is being communicated effectively. Perhaps the message is getting across to the user, but he or she has trouble navigating through menus or finds a certain template too chaotic.

Any first-year multi-media student can construct a menu-driven DVD. The challenge is to create a compelling visual aesthetic that utilizes underlying client themes. Whether working with others or alone, it is imperative to establish and document specific style guidelines at the outset. This will ensure that work could continue on the project even in your absence. While it is the goal of the designer is to create an original project, sometimes

[3] "Introduction to Management Issues"
[4] "What Is DVD Authoring?" http://www.discmakers.com/authoring/services

less is more. "The most effective thing is to have something you can use right now … and the way you do that is you cut your vision in half."[5]

After setting design parameters, you will reference back to your flowchart to begin building menus for the DVD. Utilizing shortcut techniques such as drag and drop and pick whip will help keep the project on time. It is at this stage of the project where the designer begins incorporating video, audio, and images, such as a slideshow with music, to create an entertaining and informative media product. The use of chapter points and scene selection menus, as well as creating hidden links to assets, will help to provide the user with a more in-depth experience. It is also possible to place PDFs and other data files or even hyperlinks to websites on the DVD, which will help to turn the project into a multimedia experience.

You can now start the process of burning and labeling DVDs for the client. It is good to provide your client with at least ten copies; remember, it takes much less time to burn multiple copies. Proper labeling of DVDs is important since that will be people's first impression of your work. Now you are ready for presenting the project to the client. You only get one shot at this, so make sure you test that copy before playing it for the client.

The differences among multimedia DVDs is vast and constantly changing with the advent of new technology. Despite this fact, almost every project follows the same basic process. The designer must keep in mind that this is merely a guide and their own level of commitment will determine the success of their project. It is through individual creativity and proficient technical execution that certain DVDs rise above the rest.

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[5] David F. Carr. "Project Management: Simple = Success, May 23, 2006.