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Visual Media Alliance Quarterly Newsletter

Q2 2010

PINC Rebranded as Visual Media Alliance

Communication is no longer print centric. It's a multiple-media proposition. As a result, your own companies are diversifying and incorporating the many electronic technologies that allow you to create better solutions for your clients. So it is with PINC. The new name marks a shift in scope of the Association as we expand our membership.

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3D, animation and special effects are the cutting edge for advertising images

Graphics Are On The Move

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by Noel Jeffrey



Motion graphics project produced by Pacific Digital Image.

The movies and by extension TV are not the only viewing platforms benefiting from advanced computer technologies that put products and people in motion, sometimes in 3D. Images in games, websites, presentations, smart phones and portable wireless devices can also move and shake to communicate. And people in what was strictly prepress are making it happen.

For industry veterans, that prepress businesses have jumped to the leading edge of cyberspace imaging should actually be no surprise. Their long history of adaptation began when as typesetters in the 1980s they learned how to handle digital files to stay in business. The survivors became prepress houses. Now, digital file expertise and technology have enabled them to broaden their business prospects.

In the Bay Area, a number of firms offer Motion Graphics services or CGI.* Three

representative San Francisco companies, XYZ Graphics, Inc., Pacific Digital Image and dmax imaging, tell the story of how communications and advertising are evolving. All three companies started out as production for print businesses but have morphed into a great deal more with services that include photography as well as Motion Graphics.

*CGI is alternately called Computer Generated Imagery or Computer Graphics Imagery.

We see the development of computer-generated, still and motion graphics as the natural evolution of what we have always done. —ALEX LANKSTON, PDI

No Standing Still

“XYZ Graphics was founded in 2001 as a print production studio. In the past four years especially, we’ve seen a shift in how our clients, typically advertising agencies and corporations, use their assets, especially for advertising on the web,” says John Miazga, Director of Creative Development.

“At first they expected their print advertising to be perfect but on the web quality was not an issue. Now everyone is more sophisticated and the ‘good enough’ mentality is no longer the standard.”

Pacific Digital Image has a longer history in the field but has followed a similar path. “PDI has produced high visibility imagery for more than two decades,” says Alex Lankston, Senior Vice President and Managing Director/CTO. “As technologies have developed our industry and therefore

our focus has changed. The need to meld with broadcast and interactive spaces has become more apparent.

“We see the development of computer-generated, still and motion graphics as the natural evolution of what we have always done – which is to provide new and innovative ways to meet the demands of clientele,” he adds.

The story is much the same at dmax imaging. “Our traditional prepress business meant optimizing our customers’ digital files,” Bruce Cearn, Plant Manager, points out. “It really was not too difficult to start animating. It was really driven by our employees. They want to be on the cutting edge and they are constantly pushing the envelope.”

Cearn adds, “CGI also requires investment in some very expensive software. You need a variety of programs from 3D to pure animation applications and others that help you light, animate, and attach special effects to images that you already have.”

Miazga says that at XYZ, they have done a great deal of cross-training for employees who have shown interest and also hired new people who are fully trained in CGI. “We are using our talent at its best,” he says.

Bound to Grow

Like most CGI practitioners, Cearn sees growth for his company through Internet work. “The best use of Motion Graphics is for motion pictures and TV because they have few bandwidth restrictions.

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Graphics Are On The Move

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(Right) CG graphics image by XYZ Graphics.

Wikipedia defines Motion Graphics as “graphics that use video and/or animation technology to create the illusion of motion or a transforming appearance. These motion graphics are usually combined with audio for use in multimedia projects.” The article also goes on to state that there really is no universally accepted definition for the term.

According to Wikipedia, today’s use of the term “Motion Graphics” was popularized by Trish and Chris Meyer’s book about the use of Adobe After Effects, titled “Creating Motion Graphics.” This was the beginning of desktop applications which specialized in video production, but were not editing or 3D programs. Autodesk’s Maya and 3D Studio Max are also widely used for the animation and design of motion graphics.

Adobe’s Flash is perhaps the most common application for animated Internet graphics.



(Above & right) Two 3D motion graphics projects produced by dmax imaging.



3D generates a gigantic set of numbers to get crunched and requires intensive calculations. We see the Internet as our growth potential.”

He points out that while there are restrictions on the data stream on the Internet and these require a lot of compression, they are also seeing much more cooperation among the parties involved, for example regarding hosting requirements.

L ankston says, “In the last decade, we’ve seen a continuing and accelerating trend towards faster, smaller implementations in the interactive space. With the advent of mobile and now tablet-based computing, we see that trend pushing further and further towards an always-on,

always-connected audience. There is also an increasing demand for motion-based and flexible imagery to satiate that growing rate of consumption.”

“Integrated campaigns using print and the web are effective,” says Miazga. “Clients now see the value in keeping the integrity in a campaign as well. For instance, if you’re running an ad in a magazine that’s sending people to a website, the car in print and the car on the web have to look as though they are the same car. We work closely with our clients and want to be ahead of the curve to meet their needs. However, the fact is that many are shifting to fully digital campaigns with no print component.”

“It’s astounding,” says Cearn. “CGI is growing so rapidly it’s breathtaking. Our print production work is still the largest part of our business but the balance is changing rapidly.”



dmax imaging www.dmaximaging.com
PDI www.pacdigital.com
XYZ Graphics www.xyzgraphics.com