

Choosing the right animation or Virtual Reality studio to work with may seem like an easy task. You simply peruse the work of multiple vendors on the Internet, find a studio whose design aesthetics suit you, determine whether they can stay within your budget, and then launch the project. However, there are other issues that come into play when choosing a creative partner that you may not instinctively consider. The following are seven questions that you should be asking before you decide which studio your company should work with.

**1. Does the studio outsource its work or is it created in-house by the studio's employees?**

In the digital age, it's more important than ever to employ best practices when it comes to protecting your company's intellectual property. Many studios will outsource some or all of their work to foreign vendors in order to save on costs. While this will save the studio money, your company will be at a major disadvantage if it ever has to enforce its intellectual property rights in another country. A court in India is not going to show proper reverence for the value of your company's trade secrets. You will be left without a remedy and your trade secrets could easily be adopted and employed by your competitors. At Elara, we create all our work in-house with our own employees. Your trade secrets are as safe with us as they would be if they were locked in a vault at your company's headquarters.

**2. Who will own the content that is ultimately created?**

This answer to this question may seem obvious to you when you are choosing an animation or Virtual Reality vendor. Your company paid for the piece, so they should own it. However, the law does not assume that ownership rests in the hands of the buyer. Your company could pay tens of thousands of dollars for a 3D animation only to see it being used in the studio's marketing materials months later. At Elara, our clients own the final product and it will never be used in another forum without the client's consent.

**3. At the completion of a project, how are files stored?**

When your company is embarking on an animation or Virtual Reality project, probably one of the last things you would consider is where the files for the creation of the asset are going to be stored. Some studios do not save final files once a project is complete because the time and expense that goes into storage and archiving is very high. Despite this reality, Elara maintains all of the files for its completed projects. Because of this, when our clients call upon us to update a completed piece due to branding changes and the like, we can easily assemble the files utilized in the creation of the project and make the necessary changes in an efficient and expeditious fashion.

**4. What is the studio's creative process?**

Once again, this may not seem like a very important question at the time you are selecting a creative partner, however, it is *extremely* important. At Elara, our primary emphasis during the creative process is client collaboration. We do not want to waste your time and your company's money creating an animation or Virtual Reality experience that does not meet or exceed your internal creative vision. The

way we avoid this is to have dedicated and scheduled touch points with our clients during the creative process. After the initial call with our creative team, we will schedule a storyboard review, an animatic review, a rough final review and a final review. These reviews are conducted on an Internet-based review platform so that our creative team and your team can collaborate in real time watching the same visuals and marking changes and revisions. There will be at least four touch points during the course of a project so that we can ensure that your creative vision is being matched or exceeded by our own.

**5. Is there a dedicated project or account manager that will be your company's primary contact during the life of a project?**

The last thing you need when you are trying to efficiently produce an animation or Virtual Reality project is being routed around to different individuals within a studio for different types of questions. At Elara, questions as diverse as the look and style of your project, billing and invoicing issues or preparing a completed piece for your company's internal compliance review are all handled by one point of contact from the beginning of the project to the end. While the project manager will be consulting with others within our company in order to get your answers, you don't have to figure out who to ask. This will save you a lot of time and a lot of frustration.

**6. Are there other creative assets that your company will receive upon the completion of a project?**

When your company is commissioning an animation or Virtual Reality experience, you might not be considering whether you will receive ancillary creative assets at the completion of the project. After all, the primary objective is the creation of the underlying piece. However, we have found throughout our 20 years in this creative space, that our clients can effectively leverage other assets that are pulled from the underlying animation. For example, 4K renders of the "hero shots" of our clients' products can be used on a trade show floor or in print advertising materials. Elara offers a bundle of these assets, included in almost every project we undertake, at no additional cost. Additionally, if your company wants more or different types of assets, we can customize bundles that will effectively meet all of your media needs.

**7. How many jobs can the studio handle at one time?**

Naturally, this question is entirely dependent on staffing and, more importantly, the efficiency of the creative team. At Elara, we employ a full-time staff of 3D artists, Virtual Reality designers and computer programmers that are used to handling many jobs at the same time. We work with our clients to establish schedules and deadlines and we never miss those deadlines. While we can't create everything overnight, we can definitely stay within a reasonable timeline and once that timeline is established, you can rest assured that we will never deviate from it.