



**START
SOMETHING**

Creating video and animation for learning at The Prince's Trust

Tom Boyesen-Corballis, Digital Learning Manager, has created hundreds of videos and animations for The Prince's Trust. He explains why they work so well and shares his hints and tips for creating them.

How did you get started creating animation and videos?

It started really by accident. In 2017, I was brought in to work on three short-term projects at The Prince's Trust and thought that including video and animation in them would make them more engaging.

I'd done a short course in digital film-making, and had a smattering of experience creating videos rather than animation. But I came across some online video animation software called Vyond, which appealed as I didn't have to install it on my computer - so there were no IT issues. I started using it to make some basic animations and they were well received. In hindsight, those first ones were probably awful! But you get better and better.

I've made hundreds of them now, including full courses, and have also started training other members of the L&D team to create them too. I can't even draw a stick figure outside of this context, but you really don't need to. Sometimes I create animations, sometimes video, and sometimes I'll use a mixture of the two.

What do you use video and animation for?

Video is great if you have something that might be considered a bit dry or perhaps abstract. Using videos means you can show rather than tell, and you can make them really colourful, funny and engaging.

Video and animation also work really well for information transfer, if I need to tell you about a policy or process, or show you how to use a system. We use them a lot for that. I also use screen capture, which can work brilliantly, because people can watch it, pause, then go through the process themselves. A really good example of this is that we've been using screen capture for training in how to use Microsoft Teams, for people who've returned from furlough. This translates really easily into a video and people can watch it at their leisure.

I wouldn't advocate video as a be-all and end-all though. We also have a course for facilitators who use Teams, to help them deliver engaging sessions. You can't really translate that into video because it relies on interaction between participants.

I like to use a wide range of different methods that complement each other. I create programmes using 'bundles' of different types of content. I've created a whole toolkit for managers, for example, that is a mixture of video, animation, screen capture and various documents. There are maybe 50 items in that altogether.

The bundles of content in a programme might include instructor-led training. Video complements that as it's great for preparing people before a face-to-face session or webinar. The instructor can then use the precious time they have face to face for more collaborative activities, using more of a coaching style.

Tom's animation and video toolbox

Software

Vyond to create animations

Camtasia a video editor for beginners that also allows screen recording

Adobe Premiere Pro to edit video

Adobe After Effects NB. This is more complex, and not necessarily for beginners

Hardware

A **Zoom H6** audio recorder

A computer powerful enough to run video software (check the recommended specs of software)

MAKE IT FUN



What do you see as the key benefit of creating video and animation in-house?

We stopped making bespoke eLearning modules in-house a while ago, because the return on investment creating video is so much greater. Once I have the script, I can make a two to five minute animated video in a day.

By comparison, the longer an eLearning module is, the more complicated it becomes - there are just more moving parts that can go wrong. It means spending a lot of time testing, making sure everything is working properly. The shortest eLearning course I think I ever made took about two weeks.

With a video, the only thing you really need to ensure that you have correct is the script. It might take a bit of going back and forth to get a script agreed but after that, creating bespoke video and animation is just much faster than creating eLearning.

I recently made a 12 video course on safeguarding - so very relevant for everyone in the organisation, no matter what their role. It only took about two weeks to make all 12 videos.

Another benefit of creating bespoke videos like this is that if one becomes outdated you just change that one, so I find making videos very convenient.



How do video and animation sit alongside eLearning provided by the Charity Learning Consortium?

Generic eLearning can work well when it's part of a programme, or bundle of content - and all the work creating the eLearning has been done for you!

We're working on creating content in project management, for example, and the project management modules from the Charity Learning Consortium may be useful for that. They might sit alongside some Prince's Trust specific content, so we might have a generic eLearning course with bespoke resources for context.

How do you evaluate the impact of using video and evaluation?

It's a real mixture. All the videos are in the cloud, and we do look at views. Some of the mandatory videos have had thousands of views, which is what we would expect from our whole organisation. Other non-mandatory videos might have between 150 and 300 views.

In the latest safeguarding course, which I've created using video and animation, I've also programmed in questions so people can't progress to the end unless they answer them.

From the feedback that people send me, they seem to react very favourably to video and animation. I've created an animated character that looks like me in the videos. And I also start every video now with my signature 'hello, hello, hello'. I've had emails from people asking 'are you the hello, hello, hello guy? I have this question for you.' I think just that little bit of humour makes me more approachable.

It's really difficult to track any changes in behaviour from video and animation though, and asking an individual is potentially not the best thing to do - you might be better speaking to their manager or colleagues.

We're developing a level one reaction survey, using the Kirkpatrick model, so in the future we hope to get better feedback. We'll then do a level two learning survey, and then the level three behaviour survey, but we're setting that up bit by bit.

Tom's top tips for creating video and animation for learning

- 1. Don't be afraid of failure.** If I look back at videos I've created I'd probably hate them! Don't wait for perfection, learn as you go.
- 2. Start with a clear brief.** Then think about how best to get an idea across. Starting with something small and clearly defined will help you get started.
- 3. You only need a small amount of equipment.** You can get started for only a couple of hundred pounds, which will give you a huge return on investment.
- 4. Write a script.** I quickly learnt that no matter how confident people are, they may freeze in front of a camera or microphone. Bullet points might work well if you want a more natural interview, but for videos about information, processes and systems, you'll need a script as you'll want people to say the right words in the right order, in the right way.
- 5. Get the script signed off.** I learnt that the hard way early on, and had to redo entire videos because a key piece of information wasn't included. Before recording anything, get the script approved. The script is where you work out all the kinks. It will save you time in the long run.
- 6. Avoid adding specific dates.** That means avoiding having a Christmas backdrop, for example. Refer to dates only when it's really relevant as it ages the video, so you may have to update it sooner.
- 7. Practise the script.** Practise, practise, practise to get the intonation right and to feel really comfortable with it.
- 8. Exaggerate when you're reading the script.** This is particularly true for animation, when people are not going to see your body language. You need to be 100 times more animated than in real life, and exaggerate the tone of voice that you're using.
- 9. Be mindful of your characters, cast and language.** People are usually very forgiving of mistakes in real life, but it's much easier to offend in a video or animation. Ensure you have a diverse range of characters, and check for any language that could possibly offend.



Tom Boyesen-Corballis is the Digital Learning Manager at The Prince's Trust. The organisation has approx 1,100 staff and 3,000 volunteers working across more than 25 regional offices.