HOW MUCH DOES AN Animated Explainer Video COST?
An animated explainer video is one of the most powerful, engaging and effective ways for your business to explain who you are, what you do – and what makes the idea so special.

**But how much does it cost?**

It’s a really important question to ask. After all, the last thing you want is to invest time and money into a project, only to find that your costs spiral out of control – impacting ROI or, even worse, jeopardising project completion altogether.

But hey, there’s good news: video content is more affordable and more accessible than ever before! Businesses of all shapes and sizes cashing in on the many benefits it offers.

We’ve created this handy guide to demystify explainer video costs, making them simple and straightforward.

We’ll break down each stage involved in the video production process – then add these prices together to give you a ball-park figure of how much you might expect to pay for the end-product.
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Animation - An Introduction

Video is an incredibly versatile medium – and there are a number of different styles to choose from – from claymation to whiteboard and live action.

In this guide, we’ll be focusing on animated video – a genre with a long and storied history, that has gathered real momentum in recent years. It’s become increasingly affordable and accessible to a broad spectrum of businesses, from startups to Fortune 500s. Animation retains an inherent ‘cool’ factor and offers an incredible level of creative freedom, with near limitless options on every element, from storytelling through to character design, scenery and soundtrack.
Studio Vs. Freelance

One of the earliest and most important decisions you’ll make regarding your video – and a choice that’s sure to play a key role in determining cost – is simply, who’s going to make it?
The Studio Approach

The first option is to outsource the whole project to a video production company. There are numerous benefits to this approach.

These companies typically have valuable, industry-specific experience and expertise. With a highly tailored skill-set, this frees you up to concentrate on the bread and butter of your day-to-day role – without getting bogged down in the technicalities and timeframes of video delivery.

You’ll know what deliverables to expect, when to expect them – and have a pretty solid idea of when you’ll have the completed video file.

It’s fair to say there are many more unknowns when it comes to managing the process yourself!

Many companies offer an end-to-end service with a fully integrated team of writers, designers and animators – often under the same roof – meaning a level of co-ordination, consistency and vision that almost universally translates into a slick, cohesive end-product.

So what’s the downside? Well, some companies are very expensive. You could find yourself with a bill more than £20,000 per minute of animation. Pricy! Make sure to shop around, because there are affordable vendors out there to match pretty much any budget – you just may need to do a bit of digging to find them.
You also need total clarity in terms of what your money actually gets you. The last thing you want is to be restricted when it comes to feedback and changes, or have to pay for a bunch of optional extras that aren’t included in the package price. Do your homework in advance – check out reviews, browse plenty of portfolio work and have a thorough conversation with an account manager to make sure you find a company that suits your unique needs.

There are some great studios out there. Make sure to do your research and choose the right one for you!

The Freelance Approach

Another option is to go ahead and co-ordinate your own video production, enlisting a crack team of freelance creatives. There are a number of immensely talented freelancers who can help you with the various components of a video, many of whom prefer to work away from the auspices of one particular studio.

Video production does takes a dynamic set of skills, though – so you’re likely to need several different people to work on your project including writers, illustrators, animators and voice artists.
This gives you a vast amount of choice, and flexibility when it comes to styles. But there are two things to consider:

**Will they all understand your vision?** You could spend a lot of time trying to articulate your vision to different people, all of whom may interpret things in their own way.

**Will their styles mesh?** Will their work compliment each others to create a smooth, consistent and attractive end product that aligns with your branding and messaging-style? The only person who can guarantee that this happens, is you! It isn’t always the case, but this can make the freelance approach something of a time-sink, taking you away from other important tasks in the running of your business.

You also need to remember that you’ll likely be paying freelancers by the hour. When you’re first quoted, this can seem like a plus point – on paper, it can represent a big saving over the ‘inclusive’ prices offered by a lot of studios.

**But remember – per hour, means per hour.** if you need changes beyond that first draft, they’re gonna cost you...and wholesale changes can lead to costs that quickly spiral beyond your original budget.

Freelancing is a good way to retain a high amount of control over your project, but ultimately there’s no certainty over the price you’ll pay, and it’s difficult to ensure a slick, consistent style throughout the multi-step process. It can also create a mountain of work for you.
Breaking Down the Costs...

So what’s involved in making a great video – and how much will each stage cost?
Script

It’s pretty much impossible to create a great video without first writing a great script.

Here, in this humble word processing document or long-hand notebook, you’ll make some truly fundamental decisions about your video. What words will be said? In what tone? What will be happening on screen?

You may be tempted to try and do this yourself. After all, who knows your business better than you?

But you may be limiting your video by doing it this way. Hiring a professional copywriter not only gives you access to somebody who’s trained and experienced in creating clear, concise and powerful content – they also bring a fresh pair of eyes, and can offer their own, untainted view of what really makes your business rock.
The trick here is being able to understand the magic behind your product or service, and then distilling this into a short, punchy, well-packaged narrative. A well-paced professional voiceover is read at around 140 words per minute, which gives you an idea of how succinct this needs to be.

As Albert Einstein famously said:

“If you can’t explain something simply, you don’t understand it simply enough.”

When we conducted our 2016 State of Video Marketing Survey, 61% of respondents told us they’d been put off buying a product or service by watching a bad explainer video – and two of the most commonly cited reasons were script-based.

37% said the video didn’t explain the product or service clearly enough.

21% said the video was too long.
APPROXIMATE COSTS:

Hiring a freelance writer to write your script is likely to cost around £50 to £250.

Through a studio, you can expect to pay between £200 and £2,000.
Storyboard

Once you’re happy with the messaging of your video, it’s time to create a Storyboard.

These documents can take many forms. You can simply sketch out the scenes to visualise the story...

...or, as we do here at Wyzowl, you’ll probably want to go ahead and create all the graphics you’ll actually be using in the video. This helps ensure your graphics are on-brand and consistent with the tone and messaging defined in the script. It’s a much more tangible way to visualise the project as it moves forward.
Creating and reviewing a Storyboard in this way will also help ensure that your storyline is entirely bulletproof – does the narrative flow through into the graphics? Do the two elements support each other? Does the story still work now you have it visualised?

An example of a Wyzowl Storyboard – we create all the graphics for our videos at the Storyboard stage, exactly as they’ll appear in the completed video.
It’s important to remember that these graphics will subsequently be animated, which means there are some technical things to think about. Illustrations need to be scalable vector graphics – file formats include SVG, AI and EPS. With these graphics, you can blow up the graphics to an infinite size without losing any quality. This is crucial, as modern videos tend to be optimised for a screen size of at least 720p HD.

These graphics also need to be ‘split up’ and organized correctly. We may think of characters and graphics as singular elements but, when animated, they need to be treated as a series of layers which move independently. The source files for your illustrations need to be split up in this way. They should also, ideally, be labelled properly to make the job as easy as possible for the animator when it comes to identifying which layer is which.

Any video studio worth its salt is going to be well aware of all this – but it’s worth bearing in mind if you choose the freelance route, as you’ll need to brief this into your chosen illustrator.

If you’re freelancing your video and don’t specify that the layers need to be organised and grouped properly, you might incur extra charges – your animator will spend an age clearing the file up and this will no doubt reflect into your bill, and your illustrator would understandably charge you an extra fee for doing it retrospectively.
APPROXIMATE COSTS:

Hiring a freelance illustrator for your video is likely to set you back between £200 and £750.

A typical studio would be likely to charge you anywhere between £750 and £10,000.
The art of animation is perhaps the most complex and involved part of the process – and you’ll be requiring the services of some super-skilled professionals to get this done.

It’s incredibly important that the transitions and movement in your video are smooth and professional. According to our survey, out of every 100 customers who watched an explainer video, 6 were discouraged by what they perceived as dodgy animation.

The good news is that there’s lots of room for creative flexibility here, with dozens of different animation styles to choose from.

2D key frame animation is increasingly affordable and accessible, giving businesses from Startups to Fortune 500s a fun, creative medium to tell their story. We created this video for our friends at MagFinder, for under £3,000.
With powerful, cost-effective software doing much of the technical ‘heavy lifting’, it has become quicker and easier than ever to create awesome animated video – and businesses are reaping the rewards with affordable pricing and fast project turnarounds.

In this style of video, the graphics created during the previous stage are imported into animation software – most commonly Adobe After Effects or similar – and prepared so that each individual element can move. The graphics are then ‘rigged’ with anchor points, and made to move using key frames. This is still highly involved work – on average, you can expect to spend around a day on 30 seconds of character-based animation.

Other styles of 2D animation do exist, of course, and they can look really beautiful, including cut-out, cel animation, stop-motion and more.

John Lewis’ 2013 Christmas advert, dubbed ‘The Bear & The Hare,’ combined traditional 2D hand-drawn animation with stop-frame and 3D model-made sets. With a run time of around 2 minutes, it cost around £1m to produce.
Thanks to technological innovations, we’re also seeing 3D animation start to become accessible to the mainstream audience – of course, you need to manage your expectations if this is the direction you choose. Since the underlying technology is so incredibly complex, ‘high-end’ 3D animation pretty much remains limited to Hollywood blockbusters. It’s hard, involved, time-consuming work, which tends to translate into obstructively high pricing.

*Toy Story 3,* released in June 2010, remains Pixar’s most expensive movie, with a staggering budget of over £138m. The movie ran 1 hr 43 mins, clocking up an overall production of just over £1.3m per minute.
APPROXIMATE COSTS:

A freelance animator is likely to charge between £400 and £1,250.*

A studio could price animation anywhere between £1,000 and £20,000.*

*Prices based on 2D keyframe style animation.
Voiceover

The majority of today’s explainer videos include voiceovers. This storytelling device helps to piece the video together, provides important audio cues for the viewer and reinforces the key messages – it’s something we always recommend to our clients.

The voiceover needs to be clearly annunciated, properly paced and, of course, have the right tone. We generally recommend using a professional voiceover artist for your animated video – recording a great voiceover is harder than you might think!

Professional voiceover artists are trained to accentuate the right words and phrases, speak at the right pace (around 140 words per minute is the industry standard) and have all the kit they need to create slick, flawless, professional tracks. You can find a phenomenal range of professional voiceover artists – to suit most budgets – via websites like Voices.com.
Our clients often ask us what they should consider when choosing a voiceover artist. Our advice is always to put yourself squarely in the shoes of the viewer, and consider what kind of voice would resonate most powerfully with them. There’s no set answer; every brand, and every consumer is different, so we recommend doing a bit of soul-searching to help you choose the voice which best articulates what your brand is all about.

If you do decide to record your own voiceover, it’s crucial to build the best possible setup for yourself. You need to work in a sound-proof room to eliminate background noise, and use a high quality microphone. Don’t undermine all your hard work on the video with an unprofessional-sounding voiceover!
APPROXIMATE COSTS:

A freelance voiceover artist is likely to cost between £50 and £500.

A studio could charge voiceover work at between £50 and £500.
Music & Sound Effects

The right background music is also critically important. It helps you set the right mood and ambience for your video.

Take yourself out of the explainer video world for a moment, and think about your favourite movie: What would Rocky be without his training montage? How do we know business is about to pick up in Jaws?

We might not always be consciously thinking about it, but music dictates mood. It makes us laugh, cry and quiver in fear while watching movies, and, played over the loudspeakers in shopping malls, can even help entice us into spending more money at the cash register. Powerful stuff!
So let’s talk about music for your video – and how much you should expect to pay.

The first, and perhaps most important point is to make sure you have permission to use your chosen track, or it could end up costing a LOT more in the long run. Well-known tracks by popular, best-selling artists can cost literally millions of dollars to license. Using music (like any creative influence) without permission is not only ethically and morally wrong – it can lead to protracted legal battles and expensive settlements.

The best way forward is to make sure you pay for licensing your music. We recommend using a website like AudioJungle to find royalty-free tracks that are licensed for commercial use. These guys have a huge range of choice, and you needn’t spend more than £10-100 (with even cheaper options available.)

You can also pick up sound effects for your video here. Sound effects are a great way to bring your video to life – particularly when it comes to adding intrigue, believability and playfulness to an animated world.

If you do decide to record your own voiceover, it’s crucial to build the best possible setup for yourself. You need to work in a sound-proof room to eliminate background noise, and use a high quality microphone. Don’t undermine all your hard work on the video with an unprofessional-sounding voiceover!
APPOROXIMATE COSTS:

Freelancing all these components separately would be likely to cost you around £25 to £200.

A studio could charge between £50 and £1,000.
Consultation

You’ll likely need a lot of advice and support on the technical considerations of your video. These meetings, phone calls and emails mightn’t seem like much of a commitment on the face of it but it often all adds up – particularly if you’re paying by the hour.
APPROXIMATE COSTS:

However, you can typically expect freelance consultation costs to be between £0 and £500.

Studios can charge between £0 and £5,000 for consultation.
Revisions

When you’re spending so much money on a project, it’s really important to get it exactly how you want it. The last thing you want is to settle for an end-product that doesn’t reflect your original vision.

And that’s where revisions come in.

With the best will in the world, it’s pretty unlikely that the creatives you work with are going to hit the nail on the head first time, every time. This is where costs can start to rack up, because freelance artists are generally going to be paid by the hour, and studios often charge ‘per revision round’ to protect their margin.
APPROXIMATE COSTS:

It’s really difficult to put a fixed cost on this because it really depends on how many revision rounds you need and the revision policies of the individuals/companies you work with.

However, you can typically expect freelance revision costs to be between £0 and £500.

Studios can charge between £0 and £5,000.
Total Costs

So let’s add those prices together...

**Freelance**
- **SCRIPT**: £50 - £250
- **STORYBOARD**: £200 - £750
- **ANIMATION**: £400 - £1,250
- **VOICEOVER**: £50 - £500
- **MUSIC & SOUND FX**: £25 - £200
- **CONSULTATION**: £0 - £5,000
- **REVISIONS**: £0 - £5,000

**Total**: £725 - £3,950

**Studio**
- **SCRIPT**: £200 - £2,000
- **STORYBOARD**: £750 - £10,000
- **ANIMATION**: £1,000 - £20,000
- **VOICEOVER**: £50 - £500
- **MUSIC & SOUND FX**: £50 - £1,000
- **CONSULTATION**: £0 - £5,000
- **REVISIONS**: £0 - £5,000

**Total**: £2,050 - £43,500
Closing Thoughts

We hope this guide gave you an idea of how much you might expect to pay for your next video project. The costs outline above are certainly not set in stone, but they’re an educated guess based on solid industry research.

Here at Wyzowl we’re immensely proud of the service we offer. We believe we offer the best of both worlds – the affordability and flexibility of freelancing, with the cohesive, streamlined structure of a creative agency.

We know how important it is that you know when your video will be completed, which is why we offer you fixed turnarounds for each process, so you’ll know when your script, storyboard and completed video file will be with you for review. And we’ll make sure we deliver on that, too.

We keep pricing straightforward, too. We charge a simple, fixed price for our animation, and that’s the price you pay. It’s all included in the package.

We’ll also make unlimited changes to your video within the scope of the project, at no extra charge.

Our all-inclusive service includes any sound effects, stock imagery, soundtrack, and we communicate via our purpose-built Project Manager so you can review every bit of correspondence we’ve had, and communicate directly with each team member who works on your video.