



blender

Contractor Handbook



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1.0 Introduction

This handbook is an outline of the Blender Creative vision, beliefs, internal operations and policies. It is meant to serve as a guideline within which the business operates; at the same time, Blender is a dynamic company and will continue to evolve. Flexibility and adaptability are core competencies of our organization and we seek partnerships with subcontractors who share these values.

1.1 note from Darren

Hello and welcome. I want to start by saying that I am truly proud to offer the unique opportunity that Blender embodies. It is my belief that collaboration among leading-edge creative professionals and a flexible, low-stress environment combine to produce exceedingly powerful results.

Modeled after the famous Bauhaus school of art and design, which operated in Germany from 1919 to 1933, the mission of the Blender community is to effectively unify art, craft, and technology. Our primary objective: to deliver strategic solutions that challenge convention, create emotional connections, and achieve results.

Bauhaus has undeniably played a role in shaping major artistic and architectural trends in Western Europe and North America. I believe that this lasting impact has had much to do with its holistic approach and the enthusiastic, 'no-limits' mindset the members of its community shared.

Just as history was not taught at the Bauhaus school because everything was to be designed according to first principles rather than by following precedent, Blender is intended to function as an incubator of fresh, relevant, high-impact creative communications. In this mass-advertising age, consumers are numb to the same old tricks.

Therefore, we challenge ourselves to produce brilliant creative that drives brand strategies home, delivering value and facilitating meaningful, emotional connections to brands, thus, achieving positive results in the marketplace.

Are you ready to step up to that challenge? In reading this handbook you will learn more about the Blender Creative vision and values; where we've been and where we're going; what we do and how we work together.

Warm regards,
Darren Davis
Founder & CEO

1.2 our history

In 2001, after many years as a creative director and partner in a traditional advertising agency setting, Darren Davis ventured out on his own to establish Blender Creative. His vision was to attract the best and brightest creative talent anywhere to collaborate on innovative branding and marketing initiatives.

Davis' 10 years in the industry demonstrated to him that the overhead and fixed staff inherent in big, full-service agencies can diminish the value of the creative for which they are hired. He could see that consumers were becoming numb to the mass media approach to marketing and advertising. With Blender, Davis introduced a new, streamlined business model that takes an efficiency-oriented approach to the creative process, crafting high impact strategies by encouraging a free exchange of ideas among creatives.

The Blender model quickly attracted independent, highly adept professionals from a variety of disciplines, including graphic design, web development, public relations, and guerilla and viral marketing. Today the firm is comprised of a global talent pool that works primarily via iTraffic, Blender's proprietary online project management system. Thus, Blender is structured around eco-friendly practices such as telecommuting and utilization of online applications that reduce consumption paper and other resources.

Over the past five years, Blender has achieved a great deal of success working on ambitious projects with highly recognizable brands such as ABC, Coca Cola, Procter and Gamble, Kraft, Dreamworks Pictures and Capitol Records.

Blender's ability to produce engaging, creative communications has been recognized repeatedly within its highly competitive industry. The team has received a number of awards such as ADDY's, Prismas, and Clios for their work in graphic design and has been featured in highly regarded creative forums including How, Print and Communications Arts.

1.3 our culture

Blender Creative established a community in which creatives, working in a range of disciplines, share ideas, talents and enthusiasm. It's an ideal environment for fresh thinking and real results; where together we experience first hand the principle that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Blender subcontractors enjoy the freedom and flexibility of being a freelancer with the added benefit of being part of an innovative and supportive community.

1.4 mission statement

Our purpose is to craft emotional connections between brands and their consumers. Blender mixes the capabilities of a traditional agency with the resources, depth and efficiency of its global team of creative talent. We blend these strengths with those of our client and their brands to deliver powerful print, web and broadcast communication that stirs brand awareness.

2.0 Blender Specialties

Blender's creative community includes graphic designers, production artists, illustrators, web developers, copywriters, photographers, videographers and project managers.

2.1 graphic designer

The Graphic Designer assists the Creative Director in the strategy, creative concepting, art direction and production of design projects. Key responsibilities include:

- Participating in strategy sessions, creative concepting, internal art reviews, and client meetings and presentations.
- Executing creative design.
- Ensuring that art and copy are on brand and aligned with the creative brief.
- Proofing, copy editing, sign-off of art files.
- Delivering all final art files on CD to the Creative Services Manager.

2.2 production artist

The production artist works with the designer and art director to implement and finalize the design they have created, while insuring the design is sound for output. Once the art has been finalized, the production artist is responsible for sending production-ready files to the appropriate vendor/printer. Key responsibilities include:

- Having a thorough working knowledge of all key page layout, illustration and photo manipulation programs such as InDesign, QuarkXPress, Illustrator and Photoshop.
- Taking design, look and feel created by the designer and art director and carrying it through any other collateral pieces, if needed.
- Color correcting photos, if needed.
- Working efficiently to carry out requested design changes or revisions.
- Proofing files for errors and typos.
- Preflighting all files to double check that they will print correctly when sent to a printer. This includes but is not limited to: images being CMYK and the correct resolution, all necessary fonts and links being included, and bleeds and die lines are included and accurate.
- Having the technical knowledge to troubleshoot problems in files that have caused or may cause problems for printers.
- Going on press checks and approving press proofs as needed.

2.3 web developer

Works with Creative Services Director in devising the technical scope of a project as they relate to the creative design requirements, as workflow will generally flow from the design team to the programming team. Key responsibilities include:

- Primary web developer on all coding projects.
- Participating in strategy sessions, technical development of scope documents on new projects.
- Executing all data and web development.
- Ensuring that final technical deliverables are aligned with the original and adjusted scope of the project.
- Performing 2nd phase testing on completed work.
- Ensuring code is up to coding standards with substantial in-code documentation.

2.4 traffic/project management

Traffic/Project Manager is responsible for all processes between the Account Executive/Client with the assigned Development Team. This includes managing meeting times, assigning deliverables, ensuring timelines are met and client needs are established and clear. Additionally, this includes collecting all project collateral and making adjustments to project paperwork when necessary. Key responsibilities include:

- Manages iTraffic system
- Creates and executes project work plans and revises as appropriate to meet changing needs and requirements.
- Identifies resources needed and assigns individual responsibilities.
- Manages day-to-day operational aspects of a project and scope.
- Reviews deliverables prepared by team before passing to client.
- Effectively applies our methodology and enforces project standards.
- Prepares for engagement reviews and quality assurance procedures.
- Minimizes our exposure and risk on project. Proofing and edits for risk management.
- Ensures project documents are complete, current, and stored appropriately.

3.0 Your Blender Personnel Account

Blender subcontractors are provided with a Blender Personnel account login, email account and business cards. The Blender Personnel account is the portal through which subcontractors can bid on Blender projects, submit invoices, and access key information related to their assigned projects.

3.1 your blender contact information

Blender subcontractors will present themselves as Blender at all times when dealing with the Blender clients or potential clients, and will only use their Blender business cards for contact information. Personal/private business cards are not to be distributed to Blender clients or potential clients.

3.2 bid quotes

When bidding on a Blender project, subcontractors must complete the online Bid Quotation Form. Invoices will only be accepted and paid if Jeanie Beck receives a Bid Quotation Form from the subcontractor prior to the start of a job and Darren Davis or Caleb Miller has approved the bid. Costs that are incurred during a job are the responsibility of the subcontractor and must be included in the initial bid form. If additional costs are incurred because of changes, these costs must be approved and sent to Connie Richardson prior to incurring them or the additional expenses will not be reimbursed to the subcontractor.

3.3 invoicing

Subcontractor invoices must be submitted using the online Invoicing module within the Blender Personnel account. Invoices will be matched against the approved Bid Quotation that was submitted at the beginning of the project.

When the subcontractor has completed one-half of the contract, an invoice may be submitted for one-half (1/2) of contract price. The remaining balance should be invoiced upon job completion and sign off and final payment from client. The subcontractor should submit all original art files at the same time they submit their final invoice. Payments will be mailed 30 days from the invoice date.

3.4 expenses / purchasing

Subcontractors must receive approval from Jenie Beck before incurring expenses on behalf of Blender Creative.

4.0 Billing Guidelines

The following guidelines should be followed when determining if an activity is billable or non-billable.

4.1 new business

Contractors should record all time spent on new business activities. If Blender wins the business, then all hours should be billed 100% against the project(s). If Blender does not win the business there will be no compensation. Here is a list of new business activities in which a Contractor may be asked to participate:

- Discovery meeting in which a prospective client presents their business needs.
- Prepping for Blender presentation to a prospective client.
- Participating in Blender presentation to a prospective client.
- Writing a contract/proposal for a prospective client.

4.2 weekly project status meeting

Participation in the weekly project status conference call is not billable. Weekly status meetings are set so that subcontractors can communicate progress with Blender, their client.

4.3 overtime and rush jobs

Overtime work and rush jobs are determined by Creative Services and must be communicated clearly to accounting. The client must approve the additional charge for overtime work and rush jobs before work is started. Overtime work will be determined on a case by case basis.

4.4 mileage and drive time

Drive time to/from a client or prospective client meeting is not a billable activity. Mileage for travel to/from a client or prospective client meeting is not a reimbursable expense.

4.5 business travel

In the event that Blender requests the presence of a subcontractor at business meetings organized by Blender, Blender will be responsible for all expenses including meals at business meetings, travel and lodging necessary to conduct business meetings.

5.0 iTraffic

iTraffic is Blender Creative's proprietary project management system. As its name suggests, iTraffic tracks the progress of a job through all internal creative channels, from concept development through final production. Through a series of forms, iTraffic captures the important details about each project that form the basis for the Creative Brief, as well as all changes, redirection and edits requiring creative action. It also offers online client approval mechanisms and project team email notifications. These functions ensure the creative process is efficient, streamlined and quality controlled.

6.0 Code of Conduct

When representing Blender, subcontractors are expected to be professional, honest, ethical and fair when dealing with clients, vendors, and other Blender subcontractors.

7.0 Non-Compete Agreement

The Blender Contractor Agreement form that a subcontractor signs prior to working with Blender states that he or she will not perform any services outside of Blender with Blender's existing clients.

Blender contractors are a valuable resource. The subcontractor pool is truly our intellectual capital. The Blender model allows subcontractors to utilize the services of other Blender subcontractors so long as you run the business through Blender and follow the non-compete guidelines detailed above.

8.0 Client Confidentiality

When Blender Creative signs a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) with a client, the tenants of that agreement extend to Blender subcontractors. Subcontractors are expected to maintain the confidentiality of all client information.

9.0 Work Hours

A key benefit of the Blender model is the flexibility it affords to subcontractors. Aside from key meetings that subcontractors are requested to attend (e.g., project kick-off, art reviews), subcontractors are free to schedule their work hours as they deem necessary to meet project deadlines.

As a courtesy, subcontractors are asked to let Client Services know when they will be on vacation so that project deadlines are scheduled appropriately.

10.0 Closing Comments

The fabric of the American workforce is rapidly changing. A much greater emphasis is now being placed on quality of work rather than on punching a clock. We see this change happening within large corporations and we see it evident in the growing number of independent contractors, especially in our industry.

An industry-wide migration away from a very corporate “big agency,” mass media advertising approach to marketing and the increasing movement toward greater work-life balance, places Blender on the leading edge for more than one reason. Blender’s culture, structure and proprietary iTraffic project-management interface diminish limitations of time and location, affording the opportunity to:

- integrate one’s personal and professional life
- achieve higher levels of satisfaction and recognition within one’s craft
- pursue interests that deeply enrich one’s entire life
- collaborate with other creative minds in an innovative and supportive community

Americans are demanding greater work-life balance and through new practices such as ‘flex-time’ and telecommuting, many enjoy much greater time freedom than generations past. Blender is comprised of individuals who value this freedom, while appreciating the benefits of a collaborative professional community.

11.0 Clients: Past & Present

ABC, AutoXray, AVS, BirdAbove Technologies, Capitol Records, Cambridge Properties, CB Richard Ellis Investors, Cisco Systems, Coca Cola, Dreamworks SKG, Nothing but Noodles, NFiNet, General Dynamics, Lifelock, Kraft, Monster Cable, NuVision, Procter & Gamble, Plaza West, Playa Dorada, Shade Magazine, Shamrock Farms, Stratosphere Sports, Vision for Youth, Yum Brands