

Are you part of a collective?

WE ARE NOT ALL INDIVIDUALISTS

How you view yourself influences how you relate to others at work

CAROLE KANCHIER
CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

VANCOUVER — Are you an individualist or collectivist? How does this influence your work relationships?

Most experts agree individualism is the belief the individual is the primary unit of reality and the ultimate standard of value. No person should be sacrificed for the sake of another. This view sees a society as a collection of individuals.

Collectivism views the needs of the individual to be subordinate to those of the larger group, and should be sacrificed for the collective good. The group is the primary unit of reality and the ultimate standard of value. One's identity is determined by one's group.

Studies suggest the well educated are more individualistic than the less educated. City dwellers are more individualistic than rural residents. Men are more individualistic than women, and young more than old. Thus, we need to consider peoples' experiences when interacting with them.

Are you more individualist or collectivist? Indicate whether you agree or disagree.

1. I prefer being direct when speaking with people.
2. My parents influenced my career choices.
3. Winning is everything.
4. I like sharing things with colleagues.
5. I enjoy competitive situations.
6. What happens to me is my own doing.
7. My aging mother lives with us.
8. I like being different.
9. My successes are usually the result of hard work and abilities.
10. I enjoy exploring.
11. I'm free from group influences.
12. When making work decisions, I try to please others.
13. I have friends from different cultures.
14. I have a university degree.
15. I have lots of traditional education.
16. I grew up in a large family.
17. My leisure activities allow me

to do my own thing.

18. I like working alone.

19. I value privacy.

Scoring: 1 for each agree to items 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 17, 18 and 19; and disagree to items 2, 4, 7, 12, 15 and 16.

A score of 14 - 19: You're individualistic. You're independent, like giving opinions, enjoy doing your "own thing" and value privacy.

A score of 7 or lower: You're a collectivist. You like maintaining harmony, respect authority, are interdependent and value tradition.

A score of 8 - 13: You balance individualistic and collectivist traits.

Many Canadians combine characteristics of both orientations.

Individualists are more direct, whereas collectivists are indirect.

Collectivists ask a third party to help resolve conflicts; individualists resolve conflicts by themselves.

We live in an increasingly diverse workforce. Statistics Canada projects that by 2017, one Canadian in five could belong to a visible minority group.

South Asians and Chinese will continue to be the largest groups, followed by Blacks, Filipinos, Latin Americans, Southeast Asians and Arabs. This mixing of backgrounds is changing the workplace.

To be successful, we should know the culture, demographics and experiences of individuals with whom we're interacting. Training programs that respect diversity enable organizations to draw on multiplicities of strengths.

Cultural awareness and sensitivity training programs help employees respond to diverse issues and enhance communication. Employees learn to treat others with honour and value differences.

Facilitators provide opportunities for workers to speak and feel heard. Employees are encouraged to participate in problem resolutions. Everybody learns the value of collaboration and competition.

VANCOUVER SUN



DAVE SIDAWAY THE GAZETTE

Anthony Sparapani had worked on several projects when he got the call to be an animator on the Oscar-winning film Happy Feet.

Happy Feet was animator's big break

Personnel file

Name: Anthony Sparapani
Age: 30
Position: Animation director
Employer: DamnFX
Salary: Starting salary is

\$35,000
Perks: Pension, medical and dental benefits
Vacation: Two weeks per year
Education: Attestation d'Éducation Collegial (AEC) in 3D animation (Inter Dec-College,

1999)
First job: A cook at McDonald's
Home: LaSalle
Personal info: Married, loves to cook and build things, passionate about Formula One racing

KEVIN MIO
THE GAZETTE

Career path

Growing up, Anthony Sparapani was passionate about movies and acting. He also spent time drawing flip-book animations. Although he did not know it then, that might have been the start to a successful career in 3D animation.

Was a restaurant worker: After graduating from Marymount Academy in 1995, he worked as a waiter at several restaurants on Crescent St.

It was during that time that his passion for animation was sparked.

One movie changed it all: But it wasn't until he saw Toy Story that it all came together.

"Once I saw Toy Story, it was like a light bulb went off in my head, and I said that's what I am going to do for the rest of my life.

"I saw the magic in animation and the way animation communicates to a person."

Sparapani started looking at schools where he could study 3D animation.

Studied animation: He enrolled in the one-year intensive 3D animation program at Inter-Dec College.

"I didn't see my friends, my family; I was poor," he said. "My brother used to bring me food from the house and, seriously, nobody saw me for eight to 10 months."

The courses taught him about the four different but equally important elements of every animation: modelling, animation, lighting and texturing.

"But I knew right away what I wanted to master in, and that was animation. So I just focused on animation," he said.

Landed first job: Within a month of graduation, Sparapani landed his first job as an animator for 4Elements, a video-game company in Montreal, working on the Dukes of Hazard game.

"They gave me a chance. They saw my demo reel and they liked what I was doing."

Moved to another project: After his three-month contract with 4Elements was up, Sparapani was hired as a senior

animator at Klik Animation Studios in Montreal, working as a team leader on a German television series called Junior Wrapparound.

As a team leader, he oversaw a group of 10 animators, making sure the animations were consistent with the vision of the animation director.

Hired by TVA: After leaving Klik in 2001, he worked as a team leader for the French television network TVA, devoting a year to a feature film, Kaena: The Prophecy.

At TVA, he supervised a team of four animators.

"I like the smaller groups better because you can get more personal with your guys or girls, and you can spend more time communicating and mentoring."

Became an animation director: After his stint with TVA, Sparapani moved to Cinegroupe Studios and took on even greater responsibility for his next project. That was P3K: Pinocchio 3000, the first major 3D movie produced in Canada. "And I was to be the animation director," he said.

He spent two years working on that film, completing it in 2003.

As animation director, he was responsible for hiring staff, creating animation styles and establishing a look for the entire project.

"Of course, you are working very closely with the director so you can communicate his vision to your (team supervisors), and they'll communicate your vision to the animators."

Worked on dinosaur pix: After completing the Pinocchio project in 2003, Sparapani was signed to a three-month contract as a senior animator at Meteor Studios in Montreal, working on a TV series entitled When Dinosaurs Roamed America.

"Then came the phone call: 'Anthony, would you like to work with us in Sydney, Australia?'" he said.

His big break: That call came from Animal Logic Studios, which was looking for an animator to work on its latest project, the wildly successful Happy Feet.

For the first two years, Sparapani worked as an animator in Sydney, animating a set of five characters, The Amigos.

Landed second big movie job: After his work on Happy Feet was finished, Sparapani moved to Adelaide, Australia, to work on another Hollywood project, Charlotte's Web.

He was responsible for animating Charlotte.

Sparapani returned to Montreal in May 2006, and finished his work on Charlotte's Web remotely from his home in LaSalle.

Now working in Montreal: In August, Sparapani began working at DamnFX as animation director, working on several projects, including Kaw and Deceits Part 2, science-fiction horror movies that were released straight to DVD.

After those projects were completed, he was the animation director for DamnFX's Dino's Alive, a recently-released 3D IMAX dinosaur movie.

He is presently working on another 3D IMAX movie called Sea Monsters, a film about ancient aquatic animals, which is expected to be released in October.

But there is no doubt, Happy Feet was his big break. When it was time for the Oscars, Sparapani didn't think Happy Feet would upset Cars, which was produced by Walt Disney and Pixar.

But when Happy Feet won the Oscar for Best Animated Feature Film, "we freaked," Sparapani said. "Everybody was screaming in the house. It was crazy."

"It was a really great feeling because we were the underdogs and it was such a struggle to get there. It took five years in production.

"I loved being on Happy Feet because it won an Oscar, but it also gave me the opportunity to discover another country, so the memories will last a lifetime."

Sparapani said his career has been a "great ride," one he hopes will continue.

His advice

Although he studied in a one-year intensive program, Sparapani believes the best route to take to become an animator would be to complete the three-year fine

arts program at Concordia University. "They teach you things that they don't teach you at specialized schools," he said, things like animation theories.

Next, choose a project that will boost your career.

"If you're struggling and you want to

make a name for yourself," he said, put in the time.

"You need to sell yourself," he said. "If you're willing to work eight hours on an animation, go the extra mile and work 10 hours, and it will work out better. Those two extra hours will get noticed."

IT taking guesswork out of decision-making

DEREK SANKEY
CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

Corporate decision-makers are increasingly turning to technology to help solve their business challenges, placing more focus on complex algorithms and less emphasis on intuition and gut instinct.

The latest example is a decision-making software tool called ReleasePlanner, developed by Guenther Ruhe, the industrial research chair in software engineering at the University of Calgary.

"I have observed a huge potential in IT in making strategic decisions to improve the efficiency of this (decision-making) process," said Ruhe.

"The main thing is to bring together rigour, systematic processes, sound theory and computational efficiency with the other component necessary to make qualified decisions ... the human factor," he said.

The point of using more IT solutions in basic business decision-making is not to replace the human equation, but to reduce the amount of human error when making critical decisions.

The trend is also being driven partly by the fact that increased focus on governance and transparency means stakeholders want better reassurance important decisions are based on sound knowledge and accurate information, Ruhe said.

"They cannot afford to make these decisions ad hoc or in an unsystematic way any longer," he said.

ReleasePlanner organizes information input by users, resources to be consumed by projects, bud-

gets and other relevant data.

The system then allows all stakeholders - external and internal - to access the program online to incorporate their feedback.

Gary Klassen, director of development and building approvals for the City of Calgary, says the system has enabled his staff to make better decisions that incorporate greater feedback.

It's just the latest example of companies moving to more reliance on technology, particularly in labour-starved Alberta.

Last year, another U of C professor startled the human resources industry when he developed the Synthetic Validity software tool.

It's a job-candidate selection tool using a complicated mathematical formula he claims can choose the most qualified candidate for the job and with better outcomes and accuracy than by human intuition alone.

Dan Hilbert, head of staffing for U.S.-based energy giant Valero Energy, also turned to technology to solve the firm's staffing woes. He hired a team of IT interns to develop a software tool that used "predictive modelling" to predict future labour needs and adjust resources accordingly.

During Hilbert's leadership in human resources at Valero, the company went from a 5,000 workforce to more than 23,000 and saw its value climb from \$10 billion to \$85 billion U.S.

His IT team saved the company money on downtime in refineries due to lack of workers or under-utilized employees, anticipating hiring needs years in advance.

CALGARY HERALD