

Why character-driven animation is vital to the future of workplace education in South Africa

 By [Glenn Gillis](#)

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Thanks to accelerated technological change and the societal shifts that accompany them, no company can hope to survive if it doesn't properly equip its employees to deal with the challenges of the contemporary workplace. Workplace education, in other words, is no longer a nice-to-have, it's a necessity.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

Organisations around the globe have realised this and have come out with any number of solutions, from webinars to online courses, and training seminars. Some, of course, are more effective than others.

But in the South African context, where organisations often have big variances in educational level, and where there are 11 official languages, character-driven animated videos are hard to beat. Here's why:

The power of storytelling

Storytelling is [fundamental](#) to the human experience. All of the available evidence suggests that we've been telling stories for as long as we've been around.

While some of those stories were used to explain the world around us, they were also a survival mechanism. Sometimes these early stories contained practical advice about what food to eat and how to prepare it, for example.

More frequently though, they were ways of entrenching concepts and codifying behaviours. Here, things haven't really changed all that much. Think of all the morality fables we were taught as children and how they shaped the way we interact with the world.

The reason these stories are so powerful is pretty simple: humans [aren't persuaded by facts](#). They're persuaded by emotional connections and good storytelling drives those connections. Stories are what glues societies and, by extension, companies together.

Bringing it to life

Another thing that the best storytellers understand is that stories are at their most powerful when they go beyond just words.

Again, there's evidence to suggest we've known this for a very long time. We now know, for instance, that early humans used fire to [animate cave art](#). In doing so, they turned static drawings into moving characters that people of all ages and statuses could relate to.

While the tools may have changed a lot over the past few thousand or so years, the fundamentals remain the same: if you want to grab everyone's attention, do it with good storytelling, relatable characters and big visual impact.

So how does this look in the workplace?

Let's say the organisation you work for has updated its code of ethics and wants to inform everyone about the new rules. There are a few ways it could go about doing so.

One approach would be to hold seminars with small groups of employees. While there's value in such an approach, it comes with its own issues. Not only is it expensive, but it's almost impossible to ensure a consistent experience across the organisation.

It could also put together a live action video, but that's similarly expensive and, well, live-action workplace videos almost all feel like parodies these days.

Finally, the organisation could put together a short character-driven animation that explains what it wants to get across.

Which one do you think people across the organisation, regardless of age, income, or social grouping are most likely to connect with?

Even better in SA

This ability to inspire universal understanding makes character-driven animation particularly important in the South African context.

In a large organisation, it allows you to speak to everyone from the C-Suite to workers on the factory floor. And, with minimal additional expense, you can do so in whatever language they speak.

Character-driven animations have other benefits too.

Using mobile and compression technology, they can be pushed out to everyone within an organisation at once, with minimal strain on the company's networks or employees' phones or data packages. And, if the first project goes well, it can easily be scaled up to tackle any issue the company feels needs addressing.

If South Africa is to get the best out of its employees and compete on the global stage, organisations across the country should embrace storytelling. And they should do so in the most powerful way possible.

ABOUT GLENN GILLIS

Glenn Gillis is the managing director of Sea Monster Entertainment, one of South Africa's pre-eminent animation, gaming and augmented reality companies. He has a Business Science degree from UCT and has been an entrepreneur, hired gun, and consultant with growing, knowledge-intensive businesses around the world for over 25 years.

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