The Magic of Wonder Animation

Omar Kaczmarczyk and Chris Fure have bonded to create Galactic Academy, which is a new transmedia property. Pickle tracks the latest offering of Wonder Animation here. Also, the company is at Annecy looking for strategic partners for gap finance and foreign-territory sales. Read on...
Perhaps due to its proximity to Silicon Valley, or perhaps due to having the pioneer of Segmented Rights licensing as its Head of Distribution, Wonder Animation has reinvented how animation companies operate. Wonder doesn’t see itself as an animation producer: the label is too narrow. Wonder sees itself as a Transmedia content producer, which simply uses animation as its medium. However, even the term ‘Transmedia’ is too narrow for Wonder. Wonder Head of Distribution Omar Kaczmarczyk explains, “Transmedia means content that is produced horizontally across five-screens and is managed vertically across five-formats.” However, limiting the understanding of Wonder, as a team that is focused on feature production, animated TV series collaborations, branded webisode production, mobile app game development, and social media offerings, only paints a thin picture.

Kaczmarczyk clarifies that Wonder’s focus is not just to fill every product pipeline, but rather to give foreign distributors an ‘industry in a box’. In other words, Wonder understands that foreign rights buyers don’t often have access to lucrative social media products because their local markets are not yet built-out to support such development. Therefore, Wonder sees this as an opportunity: Wonder will seed the market with its own content, allowing its foreign distribution partners also to become leaders in the space. Here, as Wonder’s content finds previously inaccessible (or unknown) foreign users, both benefit: Wonder and its foreign distribution partner.

Kaczmarczyk muses about this notion, since he was previously most famous for segmenting cinema, TV and home-video rights for ‘Super Man’. This effort beat the studio model and, thus, made the picture the most lucrative independent film of its day. Today, Omar plans to disrupt the paradigm again, except this time by bundling rights. It seems counter-intuitive, but for developing markets it works and, when taken in context with the contributed strategy of Wonder Head of Development Chris Fure, it sets the stage for a massive social media play. Fure and Kaczmarczyk bonded because they had a similar vision for not only the potential of animation, but also for the evolving media market. While Kaczmarczyk saw the ‘industry in a box’ bundling opportunity, Fure saw the primary wealth generator for content was the social media market. Combining their perspectives, it became clear that the primary value of content is its ability to amass eyeballs. Therefore, Wonder’s strategy became a social media play, where animated content is not only used to promote the play, but also to differentiate Wonder’s team from its social media competitors.

In other words, traditional social media budgets list marketing as a sunk-cost. You often hear accountings like: “[New-co].com spent $[x] in the acquisition of each user.” Well, Wonder seeks to change this accounting. It sees itself making the statement: “Wonder made $[y] in the acquisition of each user.” How is this possible? Well, Wonder is creating highly profitable content and is using it to market its social media site.

Wonder has developed two Transmedia properties with significant social media networking potential. The first, which is currently in production, is ‘Galactic Academy’ (family audience with children's rights for ‘Super Man’. This effort beat the studio model and, thus, made the picture the most lucrative independent film of its day. Today, Omar plans to disrupt the paradigm again, except this time by bundling rights. It seems counter-intuitive, but for developing markets it works and, when taken in context with the contributed strategy of Wonder Head of Development Chris Fure, it sets the stage for a massive social media play. Fure and Kaczmarczyk bonded because they had a similar vision for not only the potential of animation, but also for the evolving media market. While Kaczmarczyk saw the ‘industry in a box’ bundling opportunity, Fure saw the primary wealth generator for content was the social media market. Combining their perspectives, it became clear that the primary value of content is its ability to amass eyeballs. Therefore, Wonder’s strategy became a social media play, where animated content is not only used to promote the play, but also to differentiate Wonder’s team from its social media competitors.

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Director: Don Fox
Producer: Omar Kaczmarczyk
Writer: Chris Fure
Genre: Family (G Rating)
Format: Stereo 3D Animation
Logline: Struggling robot-world student becomes his high school’s hero.
Tagline: You only get out what you put in.

Galactic Academy Rocket-board team champion Switch has failed his Astronomy exam and, thus, is thrown off his team. When his love interest (Electra) reminds him that he can choose his own destiny, Switch decides to get serious about his studies. He then convinces Professor Lens to let him do an extra credit assignment for the upcoming summer Astro Meet. Switch’s assignment is to check-out a campus Time Flyer and catalog the Universe: Big Bang to End of Milky Way. However, Switch’s rival Flair seizes the opportunity to win Electra’s heart by promoting his own achievements on the Astro Meet Quiz team and by diminishing her expectations of Switch. Here, to bolster his position at both the Astro Meet and with Electra, Flair develops an elaborate plan to cheat during the Quiz team competition and to steal Switch’s completed assignment before it is turned-in. Note: due to Flair’s mischaracterization of Switch, Electra misinterprets a poorly timed call to Switch and loses interest. Thus, she decides to date Flair. Switch then has Gasket track down the chip that stores his assignment like a blood hound. After an epic chase sequence, Gasket leads Switch to Flair, who is sitting with Electra. The confrontation exposes Flair as a cheater to Astro Meet officials and restores Switch’s credibility with Electra. Switch is, thus, able to present his assignment at the Astro Meet, where he achieves top honors and dedicates the award to Electra for inspiring his best effort.
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7-10). Here again, Wonder doesn’t see its produced content as its primary wealth engine. Rather, it sees the Community that Wonder is creating for the Galactic Academy site as its primary engine. To this end, Wonder is in discussions with a major social media platform that seeks the millions and millions of eyeballs that Wonder’s content will generate; and, it sees all the potential sales that will occur from Wonder’s planned site activities and Community interaction.

On this note, Wonder may be the first content producer that is bought by a major social media platform prior to any release. Why? Because Wonder’s marketing plan is that focused, that specific, and that tailor fit to the evolved landscape of social media.

Kaczmarczyk and Fure are not yet ready to discuss their alignments, but suggest to stay-tuned for a big announcement. In the meantime, they are already beginning to focus on the production/sale of their second Transmedia property. “Galactic Academy is now fully developed; production is just an after-thought,” says Fure, who also leads Wonder’s writing team. “We have identified our [social media] community, our niche, our preferred partners, and have done everything required to put the production in the pipe, including perfecting our art and R&D,” says Fure. “The next step is producing our next social media offering for the next age level, which will hit the market just as ‘Galactic Academy’ fans grow into it.”

This gives perfect clarity on Wonder’s reasoning: develop content for kids 7-10 first, then for the 11-14 audience, then... Who knows? Wonder won’t speculate, but Kaczmarczyk smiles when it is suggested that Wonder may take its developed audience into maturity, never having to fight for the same eye balls ever again; all while building one franchise Transmedia property after the next, and selling them in sequence one after the other.