

DAVID HECKER

COO / SENIOR PRODUCER / PROJECT MANAGER

PROFILE

Highly experienced COO and Senior Project Manager/Producer with a strong background in operations management, team leadership, and process improvement. Proven track record in driving efficiency, managing cross-functional teams, and delivering high-quality projects on time and within budget. Skilled in developing employees for leadership, managing budgets, and fostering a culture of operational excellence. Spreadsheets are my happy place. Firm believer that productivity and creativity can co-exist in the right environment. Equally at ease talking to developers, artists, project managers and executive leadership.

- Scaled a dev team 5x and transitioned to fully remote with zero momentum loss
- Leading teams to create large format interactive applications major international brands such as HSBC, Amazon and Dubai Ports World
- Delivered interactive experiences for multiple museums and science centers globally, including in the Middle East
- Senior Animation Director on international shows, including for Disney
- Game designer and project manager on various game projects across desktop, mobile and console
- Broad industry experience base enables me to manage and lead more effectively

CONTACT

- ☎ +27 82 923 2847
- ✉ david@davidhecker.com
- 🏠 Cape Town, South Africa
- 💻 davidhecker.com
- 💻 openops.davidhecker.com
- 🌐 linkedin.com/in/dhecker

SKILLS

- Cross-functional team lead
- Team management
- Leadership development
- Digital project management
- Creative problem solving
- Game design
- Animation/art direction
- Conference speaker
- Spreadsheet design

MOTIVATORS

- Passionate about building sustainable and high-performing teams
- Committed to fostering leadership growth across all levels
- Firm believer that operational efficiency and creative excellence can and should coexist
- Advocate for open communication and clarity of purpose
- Thrive on solving complex challenges with practical, actionable solutions
- Motivated by unlocking hidden efficiencies and streamlining processes
- Driven to create cultures where people feel empowered to excel

WORK EXPERIENCE

HEAD OF STUDIO

Yellow Lab Games | Cape Town | Oct 2024 - Present

- Successfully led the studio transition from RenderHeads SA to Yellow Lab Games following its acquisition by Reforged Studios, ensuring seamless continuity across all projects and teams
- Oversee all day-to-day and strategic studio operations, including HR, resource planning, budget management, and long-term project scheduling
- Serve as the primary contact for all external stakeholders
- Producer on all internal and external projects, ensuring delivery and maintaining quality standards throughout

COO/SENIOR PRODUCER

RenderHeads South Africa | Cape Town | Oct 2016 - Present

On the Production side, primary responsibilities involve managing project managers and developers to ensure projects are delivered as expected, acting as client/partner liaison and handle external interactions. Oversee production management for both code and asset teams, streamlining internal processes and stimulating productivity. Provide international on-site installation and support for traveling exhibits.

As COO, duties include overseeing general company functions, long-term scheduling, recruitment, and HR. Develop and implement strategies to drive efficiency and effectiveness across all levels of the business. Collaborate with external partner teams to integrate processes and enhance performance. Mentor and empower staff, fostering a high-performance culture and aligning with overall objectives. Manage budgets, allocate resources, and analyse monthly results with finance team. Identify growth opportunities, manage operational costs, and generate reports to support strategic decisions. Manage weekly Board/Shareholder meetings.

- Instrumental in scaling the business 5X from 7 to 35 employees
- Successfully delivered 45 apps for the SAASCC museum in Kuwait within 14 months
- Managed a R20m kids' entertainment center project, coordinating efforts among developers, architects, and product designers
- Project managed a R40m museum project at KAUST in Saudi Arabia, including on-site installation and sign-off
- Set up weekly MasterClass sessions to stimulate employee growth and encourage learning

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

RetroEpic Software | Cape Town | Feb 2016 - Sept 2016

- Look for new opportunities to create partnerships for service work and own IP
- Client liaison for existing projects
- Production management for both the code and asset teams, to help streamline internal processes and stimulate productivity

2D PIPELINE SETUP/TRAINING

Infinite Frameworks | Batam, Indonesia | Sept 2015 - June 2016

Set up the 2D pipeline in Toon Boom Harmony for a new show, Shutterbugs, for Big Jump Entertainment. Continued to work remotely as a rig and asset checker.

- Provided Toon Boom training for new and existing staff
- Designed pipeline workflow and processes and template setup for all departments
- Checked new assets and character rigs for consistency
- Assisted the Producer, Production Manager and Animation Supervisor to ensure the production started off smoothly for the team of 50 animators and artists

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KEY PROJECTS

GAMES

- [Metavoidal](#)
- Unannounced Titles ;)

EXPERIENCES

- [DPW Pavilion Expo 2020](#)
- [Petrified](#)
- [Amazon Digital Catwalk](#)
- [HSBC Smart City](#)
- [SAASCC](#)
- [MOSTI](#)
- [Wonderdal](#)

ANIMATION DIRECTION

- [Florrie's Dragons, Disney Channel, Wish Films \(UK\) - 52x10min](#)
- [Caillou, Cookie Jar Entertainment \(Canada\) - 26x24min](#)

INTERESTS

- Photography, especially shooting on film and collecting vintage cameras
- Technology, side projects include tinkering with ESP-32 devices and custom circuits
- Playing games on the couch, mostly RPGs and indie titles
- Travelling and exploring new cities and urban areas
- Keen runner and cyclist

REFERENCES

- Available on request

WORK EXPERIENCE (CONTINUED)

HEAD OF DIGITAL

Sunrise Productions | Cape Town | Jan 2012 - Aug 2015

Started at Sunrise as the Production Manager, ensuring the animation pipeline ran smoothly. Managed interactive media projects, working on various sports brands creating digital mascots and content for them. Moved to Head of Digital which included games and web.

On the games side took the lead in various areas:

- Game Design, including developing initial concepts to pitch to clients along with game design documents and game specifications for developers, UX/UI and design mockups
- Project management, including defining budgets and overall timelines for projects
- Managed internal design teams and external development teams
- Client liaison regarding features, schedules, testing and deliveries
- Managed release of games and updates in the app stores, including marketing and ASO
- Testing and QA, including technical feedback to the developers

Continued to provide input to various animation departments at Sunrise:

- Designed a new animation pipeline (script to delivery) before a rapid expansion, including new folder structures and full data/asset flow throughout the system
- Involved in Story/Tech planning sessions to catch episode issues before production
- Set up and managed various company-wide Google Sheets, including staff leave calendars and production schedules
- Recruiting for Digital and provided input on applicants for other departments
- Set up a weekly internal training session for all staff to learn skills in new areas

SENIOR ANIMATION DIRECTOR

Clockwork Zoo | Cape Town | June 2009 - May 2011

Responsible for the smooth running of the general animation pipeline while providing leadership to the Animation Directors and Lead Animators.

- Coordinated efforts with the Producer and production team, and guided the team of Animation Directors and Lead Animators to ensure overall efficiency
- Involved in the storyboard, animatic and layout processes prior to reaching animation
- Trained new staff in Toon Boom and provided refresher and update training to the experienced team of animators
- Facilitated leadership training for leads and seniors

Directed animation on the following shows:

- Florrie's Dragons, Disney Channel, Wish Films (UK) - 52x10min
- Caillou, Cookie Jar Entertainment (Canada) - 26x24min
- Various pitches and pilot episodes
- Numerous commercials and infomercials, including for the Cape Town Stadium during the 2010 Soccer World Cup

2d Animation directing showreel can be viewed here: <https://vimeo.com/24508895>

SENIOR ANIMATION INSTRUCTOR

learn2 Digital Media Academy | Cape Town | Jan 2006 - Dec 2008

Senior Animation Instructor for full-time, part-time and individual instruction.

- Classroom and customised training for small and large groups
- Set up curriculum for 2 year full-time and 12 week part-time courses
- Autodesk Authorised Instructor for Autodesk 3ds Max and Autodesk Combustion
- Toon Boom Digital Pro, Animate Pro and Harmony training
- Adobe Creative Suite, including Photoshop, Premiere and After Effects
- Product demonstrations and client presentations
- Technical and installation support
- Workflow support and on-site problem solving
- Set up and maintained classroom workstations and network for the school

SENIOR 3D ARTIST

Leapfrog Gaming | Cape Town | Sept 2002 - Jan 2006

Leapfrog pioneered a proprietary online bingo platform that was licensed to various brands. Features included customisable animated avatars and real-time chat among players.

- Conceptualised new brands with marketing department and licensees
- Researched new game play methodologies and recommended changes for implementation
- Managed design of various online gaming brands from concept to implementation
- Managed team of designers for both 2d and 3d artwork
- Created 3d artwork for use in-game
- Scripted the visual setup of new games and rooms (level design/building)
- Set up an efficient asset pipeline for re-skinning of bingo platforms for new licensees

For a more complete work history, please connect on LinkedIn:

www.linkedin.com/in/dhecker