

Blender Courses and Certification Program

1. What ?

Blender is growing very fast and it is reducing its list of missing features when compared to other similar applications. It has come to a point where we can say that it even has features that no other 3D application has.

With this growth we have seen better works done by avid Blender users, animations and still scenes that amazes those who see them.

A Demo Reel made for Siggraph shows how Blender has evolved and how good, if not say amazing works can be achieved with it.

This leads us to a point where we have the tool, but we miss the workers.

The question made here should be: Why ?

Well, Blender has a different approach than most 3D applications and its look and feel is somewhat different than what exists on the market, which doesn't mean that it is bad, I dare to say that most of us would probably state that this is what makes Blender so great and the reason it has evolved to the great application we see today.

What we lack is a way to help new comers, new to 3D or users of other applications, to learn what is Blender, what it can do and most of all how can they use it.

Once as a new comer to Blender I saw what lacked in the Education area and it was a Program lead by the Blender Foundation that would provide Courses and Certification for Blender.

2. Why it makes sense ?

Blender is a great choice for any 3D use, both in the commercial market as well as for professionals.

Small to Medium size companies, the ones involved in TV commercials and other types of publicity, are companies that most of the times use expensive software through piracy since they do not have the necessary funds to buy those expensive licenses other 3D applications have. They incur in a great risk when they take that choice.

Blender would be the perfect choice for this kind of companies, it has the necessary features and it can deliver a lot more work in a smaller time in this kind of scenario.

Still for these companies Blender would be a even greater risk than using piracy, since Blender does not provide commercial support nor it provides training for their employees to move to a new platform.

By providing a Courses and Certification Program, Blender would be decreasing their lack of support, thus providing companies a safe way for moving to a new application.

Professionals would gain if Blender provided a Courses and Certification Program. It would help them gather experience, help them build a portfolio, provide a list of companies that might be looking for employees, as well as many other things that will be shown later.

It would in the end give them credibility and help all in getting a successful future.

3. How ?

The big question, we all saw what it was all about and why it would make sense, but how can it be achieved?

Well, as the name says, it should be a combination of Courses and Certification, since a Certification cannot live without Courses and Courses usually evolve to a Certification, as a proof of knowledge.

Many other companies with 3D applications have their own Courses and Certification policies. They are successful because their applications are well known to the 3D world, because Big Companies use them and because professionals trying to get a job find it a good point to show their credibility and knowledge.

Their approach on courses circles around the application itself, showing what are the features the application provides and small examples of things that can be achieved by it.

They Certify people if they attended all classes and made their homework assignments.

Blender is not so Popular, although its share of users and Popularity has grown, it is still far from others.

So, for Blender to have success in such a Program it has to follow its roots, it must be innovative, it must use a different approach.

The Program should be done for the People, centering both Courses and Certifications on the people itself, showing them how to solve normal day life situations using Blender, helping them by showing what a company will expect them to do in a professional basis, be interactive and most of all help them get ready for applying for a job, creating a small portfolio with each Course and a bigger one with each Certification.

This way the program would be great for new comers, that are looking for a job and we know that nowadays experience and a good portfolio talk louder than anything else. And it would be great for employees on a company moving to Blender, since it would increase their knowledge and give them a larger subset of ways to do something on their job, showing them at the same time Blender and how it works.

4. Courses and Certifications

x Courses overview

I will try to explain my perspective on what and how the Courses should be delivered.

First of all there should be two type of Courses, those being lectured at a Training Center with a trainer and Web Courses provided by a book and videos.

The person would have a trainer if it would do the Course at a Training Center or a Web-Supporter if it would choose a Web-Course. On Web-Courses it should be provided specific support forums that would be monitored by web-supporters so that it would provide fast help.

There should be a range of courses, ranging from the Basic Courses, Intermediate Courses and Advanced Courses.

The Courses should consist in three steps, choosing a category, learning the contents having focus on the chosen category and delivering a small portfolio at the end of the Course.

Well, the person would choose their Course (Web Course or at a Training Center) and it would be given to them some Categories to choose from (as an example: Nature, Sports, Architecture). The person would choose the Category that it would like the most.

After that, it would have to choose an “idea” (based on the chosen category) that would have to be brought to life, this idea would be in the form of an animation and it would have to be delivered at the end of the Course. It would consist of a paper providing the animation as a small portfolio, with some explanation on how it was done and what technics were used.

This work would have to be done outside the Training Center if the Course was to be lectured at a Training Center. It would have to be completed solely by the person, no help from the trainer or web-supporter should be given, to ensure it has gathered the knowledge provided by the Course.

Some key points would be provided to the person that would have to be present on this work, these key points would have to be the same, no matter what Category would be chosen or idea being done. It would have to be key points related to the content of the Course itself, so it would have to be the same for everyone making the Course.

At the end of a Course the person would be evaluated by their trainer or web-supporter based on their assignments and their final paper. The trainer or web-supporter would be responsible for evaluating the person and ensuring the work was made by the person itself.

At the end the person would be given a rate for that course, it would be issued a diploma and the person should be listed on a Blender Training and Education site, with their final paper (small portfolio) animation, their grade and some other useful information.

x Certification overview

The Certification should also be divided into a small range of Certifications, but they should be something like those provided by the Courses, Basic, Intermediate and Advanced, probably a better range can be achieved, since this should be more of a professional level.

The Certification would be a way to show that a person has a level of experience that can be Certified to a certain professional level, yet it would also be a way to help that person build a portfolio, show their experience.

Again there would be two types of Certification, the ones done at a Training Center and those done via Web.

The Certification would consist in two steps, an animation and an exam.

Again the animation would follow the same path as the Courses, there would be some categories and one would be chosen randomly, from there the person would have to state an idea that would be personified in an animation.

This animation would have a wider set of key points that should be met.

It would then be given a one week (or other timing that could better describe the type of animation being done) to the person to make the animation along with a paper that would explain what was used to bring the animation to life, techniques and a detailed explanation of the whole process, as well as a portfolio paper that would present the animation if it was to be show to a company.

This would then be evaluated by the trainer or web-supporter to define the veracity of the animation and to ensure it was done by the person itself.

The animation would be given a rate, that rate would define if the person could be submitted to the exam or not.

If the rate was good the person would be given an exam with Blender specific questions and a case study were it would have to be explained how to achieve a certain goal, which of Blender functionalities should be used and some techniques that could be applied on that specific case study.

The case study would then be discussed with the trainer, web-supporter once the exam was finished, for a more in depth review of the persons knowledge.

After this a rate would be given to the person along with a Certificate. Their name would also be listed in the Certified Blender Heads page containing the person general information, the courses it has attended to, their rates, some of their animations and other useful information.

x Companies Certification

Companies that have a given number of Certified professionals should be listed as Certified Companies and could benefit of discounts or other contents.

There should be provided some dedicated support forums also for certified Companies, to ensure they have not been forgotten.

5. After the Certification

The Blender Foundation should create a way for Companies and Professionals to interact with each other.

The Blender Foundation site should provide a place where companies could find professionals when they want to hire someone, as well as helping professionals find companies that sport Blender to send an application for a job.

Some meetings could be arranged by Blender between companies and professionals, as a way to interact.