# StoryTEQ
## Technical Requirements Guide

# Content

## Introduction

You are on the verge of creating a personalised video with our StoryTEQ technology. Great!

In order to successfully personalise the animation or video you are working on, it will have to meet some requirements. In this document you will learn the in-depth requirements for working seamlessly with our technology. To get started quickly and to get a basic understanding of what we do and what our software requires, we advise you to dive into our After Effects Demo project first, which can be downloaded on storyteq.com/FAQ.

We will replace certain placeholders in your video with personal information we have from the final receiver (the "viewer"). This requires rendering a separate video for each individual or target group on our renderfarm which runs a custom version of After Effects. Sometimes, this results in thousands of renders. Because of this we try to keep render-times short for the personalised parts. This also means you will have to provide your entire project in an AE file compatible with the version our renderfarm is running. The latest version our renderfarm supports can be found on our FAQ page, over at storyteq.com/faq. We will go deeper into those and other requirements later in this file.

In the end, don't forget that the number one priority is to create a kick-ass video! Even though your file will have to be compatible with our software, the end result is the most important. If you run into any questions or problems, do not hesitate to give us a call!

# Guide

## Summary

- We require an After Effects file, compatible with the current version of AE our renderfarm is running. (Check the FAQ page for the latest compatible version)

- Create a master composition, showing all scenes/modules in chronological order

- Keep your compositions the same size

- Keep your project organised

- Use placeholders where personalisation should take place

- Keep your effects in the personalised parts as light as possible

- Track using compatible methods, preferably Mocha using corner pins

- Keep masking on the personalised parts simple with the mask/shape tool and using edge feather instead of more complicated blurs (whenever possible)

- Stack modular scenes on top of each other in the master timeline at the timecode at the point where they are supposed to play. Continue with the next scene after the longest module of a scene.

- Unlock all layers, even hidden/shy layers and layers in pre-comps

- Finalize your project by reducing/deleting unnecessary files and create a package using the collect all feature.

- Add all used fonts to your package and send it to us.

## Creative/content

First of all, make it awesome! While we will ask you to keep several things in mind while working on your project, in the end the final video must be as awesome as possible! That said, here are some pointers to ensure a great final product:

Personalised parts must be visible. Keep in mind that the final user may not have a 27 inch monitor, but instead could be viewing your creation on a small smartphone screen, or that his or her name must be scaled down because it's simply longer than your own name. The video will change depending on who is viewing it, and we will have to accommodate for that as much as possible. So, make personalisation visible, and give personalisation some room to accommodate for longer names for example.

When working with personalised images, think of the source material. Logos for example can have a wide variety of aspect ratios and background colors. Try to make every possible combination work in your project. Keep in mind that profile pictures can vary widely in aspect ratio and size as well. Try to create a project that accommodates for multiple possible inputs.

## Software

We require an After Effects file compatible with the version our renderfarm is running. Of course, you may work in your prefered version of AE, but make sure all the effects and expressions you are using are backwards compatible. We have summarized some often used effects that are not backwards compatible on our FAQ page.

Our software does not support the use of plugins. Please use the tools AE gives you.

Plugins that generate expressions, like Motion, can be used if they are backwards compatible, but we advise against using them whenever possible. It is much harder to alter animations created using plugins than regular keyframed animations.

# The AE File

- Comps are preferably 1920x1080 and 25p. Other formats are supported, but we require all compositions to have the **same** features (framerate, square pixels, same size etc.)

- Make personalised layers easily findable in a composition, preferably at or near the top for easy access.

- Personalised text layers should be **individual text layers**, not text fields/boxes (click with the text tool vs drag with the text tool).

- Try to keep personalisation on a separate row in a text, so that we can use the most amount of space for scaling. Of course, attaching little words and commas for example is fine.

## Example

**Good:**
'Hey firstname,

Thank you for watching our personalised video.'

**Bad:**
'Hey firstname,
thank you for watching our personalised video.'

- Ensure there is enough space to accomodate for long strings when personalising text. Our technology will auto-scale the really long texts down, but the more room we have the less we will have to scale it down, ensuring better readability.

## Example

Don't try to fit a street name in a tightly fitting sign, but center it in a longer/bigger sign instead, to accommodate for longer street names.

- Personalised images should be **pre-comped**. Apply all animation/effects on that pre-comp instead of the image, so that changing the image, its size, or its aspect ratio does not affect your animation.

- In case of personalised files, like an image, make sure you reuse the same file in its final size, so that when the source file is replaced the change is reflected throughout the project. Please also make this file easily findable in the project structure.

- Ensure a clear project structure. Use **bins** to organize your project. Our technicians will have to go to work in your project, and having a clear overview of where everything is located helps speed up the process. We appreciate seperate bins for the following: raw footage, precomps, top level scenes, personalized compositions, but you are free to use as many bins as you like.

- Keep (personalised) files manageable. Please scale down personalised files before implementing them. (for example 8k stock images).

- Minimize the use of **alpha** footage. Only use alpha footage when it should overlap personalisation and masking/rotoscoping is not a (workable) possibility.

- When working with multiple video files or unfinished video files, please pre-comp the source footage and work from that pre-comp. This way new color grading or adjustments to a green screen matte for example can be easily replaced.

- Do not use **custom** effects on personalised textst. For example, individually masking letters to create a writing animation cannot be personalised, but using the typewriter effect can be.

## Final Delivery

- **Remove** any unnecessary or temporary files from the project. The 'reduce project' tool can be used for this.

- **Unlock** all layers. Even the hidden/shy ones or the ones in pre-comps.

- **Create a bundle** of all assets and the AE-file. This can be done with the 'Collect all' tool.

- Include all **used fonts** as an installable file for universal/windows platforms. TTF, OTF, etc. is all good. We cannot use DFONTS (mac only) for example, nor can we sync typekit fonts from the adobe cloud. We need their separate installable files.

If you have any questions, doubts or just want to talk about possibilities or best ways to tackle a certain challenge, do not hesitate to mail or call our after effects guru: Jeroen Rommelaars.

## Contact

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