

PLAYDAWN

WHITE PAPER I NOVEMBER 2026

Hiring for film, VFX and talent management in India, 2026

For studio heads, production companies, talent agencies and HR

Summary

Playdawn started in games, and in 2026 we also ran searches in film, VFX and entertainment: creative operations leadership at a VFX studio, talent and artist managers for a film company, procurement for VFX, and legal roles for film. This paper shares what 55 candidate conversations in media and entertainment taught us.

55
candidate conversations in media and entertainment, Feb to Oct 2026

₹45.2 LPA
median ask at director level and above

20 of 55
came from outside the role's industry

01

The market

FICCI-EY's 2026 media and entertainment report, as reported in the trade press, shows modest growth. Animation and VFX together grew about 2% in 2025, animation alone fell 6%, and VFX was valued at about ₹48 billion.

Maharashtra's AVGC-XR policy (2025) was reported to commit ₹3,268 crore and to target 2 lakh jobs.

02

Who we spoke to

55 anonymised calls in media and entertainment, February to October 2026.

Level	Calls	Median experience	Median current pay	Median ask
Director and above	16	18.5 years	₹38.4 LPA	₹45.2 LPA
Senior	20	8 years	₹11.5 LPA	₹17.0 LPA
Lead	10	8.6 years	₹9.6 LPA	₹13.9 LPA

Pay figures use the candidates who shared numbers. Groups below 5 are not shown.

Where they came from: outside the role's industry 20, freelance 8, outsourcing studios 7, their own venture 6, not working 6.

03

What we learned, by role

VFX creative operations and production leaders

- The best candidates combine creative oversight with technical pipeline knowledge: render capacity, review tools, infrastructure and vendor management.
- Several described practical wins, such as rendering scenes as plates to cut hardware load and artist wait time, or keeping a small in-house core team to hold quality steady across outside vendors.
- Senior candidates were open to moving for growth. Plan for a detailed conversation about pay, and for long notice periods.

> **HIRING TIP**
> Test for delivery under constraint as well as creative taste. Ask how they handled a late shot list, a render farm crunch or a vendor that missed a milestone.

Talent and artist managers

- The role now mixes scheduling and relationship care with deal-making: brand partnerships, contract negotiation, events and production logistics.
- Many come from freelance work or small agencies and want a stable employer.
- Freelance yearly billing can be higher than a salaried budget, so be clear about fixed pay, incentives and growth.

> **HIRING TIP**
> Ask how many artists they handled at once, and what a deal they closed looked like from first call to signature. Candidates asked us whether they would manage one artist or several, and whether a team would support them, so put both in the job description.

Motion and graphic designers moving between media and games

- Media designers bring strong editing and storytelling. When applying to game studios, the usual gap is direct experience making mobile game ad creatives.

> **HIRING TIP**
> A short timed edit from provided footage shows more than a long showreel.

Procurement and operations in VFX

- Studios want people who can design purchasing processes and make decisions on their own. Several candidates were already automating purchase orders and invoice handling.

04

Practical issues that slowed searches

- Relocation. Many roles were on site in Mumbai or Chennai. Candidates often wanted to stay in their city, or needed time because family would stay behind for a year.
- Freelance earnings. Experienced freelancers measure an offer against their best freelance year.
- Stability questions. Candidates asked about company structure and how long projects were funded.
- AI. Candidates ranged from building AI dubbing and agent workflows to "explored it, not confident". Say where AI fits in your pipeline and what is allowed.

05

A short hiring checklist for media and VFX roles

01	Write the scope: how many artists, shows or vendors the person owns.
02	Show the full pay picture: fixed, variable, project bonus and festival bonus.
03	Be clear about location and whether you help with relocation.
04	Use a structured interview built around real delivery problems.
05	For senior roles, plan for 60 to 90 day notice periods and possible buyouts.
06	Ask about AI use and set your policy.

Sources

- FICCI-EY Media and Entertainment Report 2026, as reported by AnimationXpress and Social Samosa, and the FICCI press release.
- Maharashtra AVGC-XR Policy 2025, as reported in the trade press.
- Playdawn data: 55 anonymised media and entertainment candidate calls, February to October 2026; anonymised client briefs.

About Playdawn

Playdawn hires for games, interactive tech and robotics, and has done so since 2016. We find, assess and place specialists for studios in India and abroad.

playdawn.com