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Cast yourself in a 'Dilbert' strip

By John Geddes, USA TODAY

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For fans of cartoonist Scott Adams' *Dilbert*, there is now a way to show friends, family and colleagues just how "in" to the strip they really are — literally.

PixFusion, a subsidiary of Big Tent Entertainment, will soon provide fans with the ability to integrate their own images into animated *Dilbert* cartoon vignettes.

"We're thrilled to help fans take their appreciation of *Dilbert* to another level," says Big Tent CMO Rich Maryyanek.

"We like to say that we've always viewed *Dilbert* as the first social media brand," he jokingly explains. "These strips were among the first forms of entertainment that were being regularly faxed or e-mailed or posted up in cubicles. That *Dilbert* humor is always being shared."

PixFusion specializes in digital photo-swapping technology, providing users with the ability to share customized animation clips in which their own faces are placed on the bodies of animated characters or other personalities. The company has done a great deal of work in the world of personalized entertainment for children.

Maryyanek sees this type of customized entertainment as a growing opportunity. "We wanted to take what PixFusion is doing with kids' entertainment and move it to the next level," he says. "For us, that means bringing it more into the adult world, as well as tapping into the world of entertainment."

Dilbert was a natural choice, due not only to the office demographic that the comic reaches, but also thanks to the coincidental timing of one particular strip.

"We had recently launched our customizable *Garfield* site," Maryyanek recalls, "and a very short time afterward, a *Dilbert* strip ran that included a panel that said 'Your face here.' That strip inspired us and got us thinking that *Dilbert* would be a perfect fit for what it is that we're doing.

"You can crop a photo of your own face, your co-workers' faces, or your boss' face, and place it as one of the characters in a *Dilbert* strip."

When asked if that might potentially backfire on employees, knowing that *Dilbert* strips don't always depict bosses and co-workers in the most favorable light, Maryyanek laughs. "Generally speaking, I think everyone knows that it's all in fun."

PixFusion has plans to increase its presence in the world of personalized comic strips in

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"Yes, we're looking at future strips, for sure," Maryyanek confirms. "We're also looking into new forms of e-cards and some other personalized messages that our audience will be able to customize and send out. We want to make it all about you."

The customizable *Dilbert* strips are available at the PixFusion.com website.

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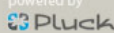
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