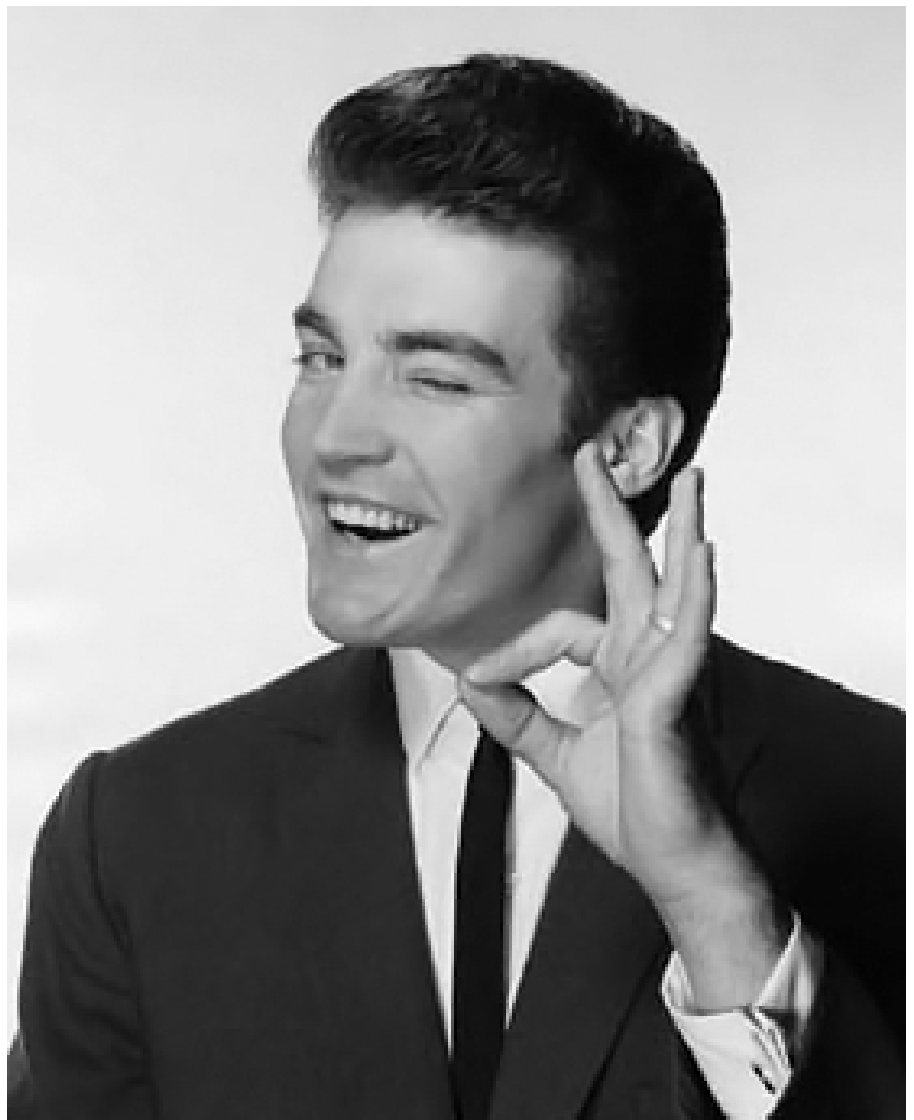
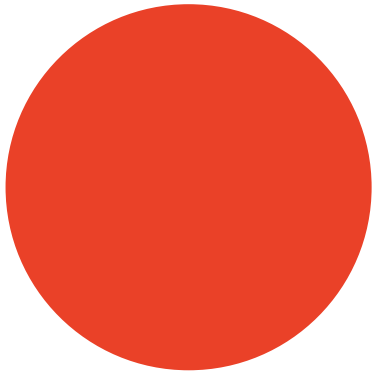


DESIGNING PREDICAMENTS *workbook*

How to
plan an
elearning
scenario
that really
works





HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

For the learning designer

These 14 steps give you a structured way to work with your subject matter expert, who may have little or no experience of elearning scenarios.

We assume that, having downloaded this book, you already believe scenarios are what you need for the project: to help learners learn in an active way, by making mistakes and seeing the consequences of decisions in a safe environment. We're not going into the pros and cons of scenarios here.

Your SME, however, may be expecting you to create a series of information slides followed up by a quiz. Follow these steps and you'll boost your credibility as an expert in this new form of learning and get them talking about applying judgement rather than shovelling information.

For the subject expert

You may be working with a learning designer, or you may have to create learning material yourself. That's not always a comfortable position to be in.

A scenario is all about applying knowledge, rather than acquiring it. If they need to acquire knowledge to answer the question, we provide it on request, not by making them wade through it before.

You know a lot already - these 14 steps will help you use your expertise to challenge your audience by simulating situations they will meet in working life.

Print and scribble

This book is a working document - something to print and write on as you work your way through the process of creating a scenario.

It's not going to give you the final wording that goes on the screen - that will come down to the creativity of the author and the possibilities of the authoring tool. I've suggested a possible structure at the end but your tools or your preferences may mean you structure it another way.

A scenario isn't something to make up as you go along - it's very easy to get sidetracked. So it's good to think it through in a structured way first.

Answering the questions in this book means you're thinking logically through everything you need before you go near your authoring system.

A simple scenario

Here we're looking at a scenario where one decision is made and we see the consequences of that decision. If they're not good, we get a chance to go back and try again. Then we explore why the best choice was best.

For a complex branching scenario, where the consequence of a decision is another decision, which leads to another, and so on, you can still use the questions. It takes a lot more planning and you'll probably want to flowchart it first. But you can still use these steps - repeat steps 3 - 10 for each resulting situation.



OUTLINE

What is the basic dilemma? Describe the situation and the best outcome briefly.
What's the main takeaway learning point?

Given a story where

... the learner will make the choice to ...

... because (this is the key learning point) ...

... with the result that ...

This is your 'germ' for the scenario. Refer back to it when you start getting lost in detail. Decide on one learning point that must be kept and emphasised at all costs. Everything else serves that.



CHARACTERS

Who are the characters? Give each a name, age, some background details. If members of staff, role and length of experience.

The more detail you imagine the more convincing it will be. Each character is one person, even if your main character is 'first-person'. You have to know how much knowledge they start with.



SITUATION IN DETAIL

Describe the situation and what has led up to it in detail. What brings us to the point where someone has to make a decision?



Some of this will go in your main screens, some of it in clickable background, but the important thing is that *you* know what is happening and has happened.



PILE ON THE STRESS!

What extra factors can you add to make it more stressful for the main character? Time pressure? Having made mistakes before? Someone's angry at you for something?

There has to be an element of drama so the important thing is that someone has to suffer! The learner should recognise something he or she finds stressful in working life.



RIGHT CHOICE

What is the best choice the main character can make?



This will be in line with the learning objective you wrote in stage 1.



JUSTIFY AND GENERALISE

Why is this the right thing to do? How does it transfer to similar situations?

Refer to policies or legislation where principles are set down, not just common sense.

We want something we can apply to similar situations, not just this, or there's no point.



BEST OUTCOME

What happens in the story as a result of this good choice? For the main character and the others?

A happy ending, for some at least, is needed. This should be a direct result of the decision. What good feedback, credit, rewards etc would accrue to someone who did well in real life? Add that.



THE LESS GOOD CHOICES

Now think of at least two more choices the main character could have made. We need two for the scenario to be viable.

choice 1

choice 2

This is the hardest part of the job. These need to be believable and attractive (to the unsure). So they have to be based on common errors of judgement from real life, not just made up,



MISGUIDED REASONS

For each of these, why might it seem the right thing to do?



choice 1

choice 2

Most people are trying to do their best and have a reason for their choice, especially under stress. We can put misguided advice into the mouth of another character to put this over. Avoid picking mere laziness or ignorance.



CONSEQUENCES OF POOR CHOICES

For each of these, what are the unwelcome consequences of the choice?



choice 1

choice 2

You can describe what happens and/or have characters describe the impact it has on them, for example a customer's impression of your company. Make it as unpleasant as possible!



JUSTIFY AND GENERALISE

For each of these choices, why is it wrong?



choice 1

choice 2

Refer to principles or legislation that might apply to similar situations, not just this case.

Try to help learners see how it relates to their situation.



RESTATE AND REVIEW

Recap the main principles and learning point.

Once again, what are the main principles here that could apply to similar situations?

Are you happy that they're shown clearly in the consequences of decisions?



JOB AIDS

What decision aids or checklists could help staff in similar situations?

If it already exists, link to it throughout the scenario and make it an essential bit of help.

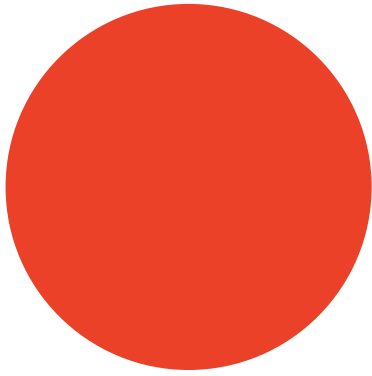
If you have to create it, make sure it's available afterwards without the user having to access the elearning again. Where would they expect to find it?

step
14

CALL TO ACTION

Ask them to do something as soon as they get away from the lesson.

Recap the kinds of situations this lesson could be applied in, and ask them to prepare in some way, one concrete action they can take and, perhaps, report to someone that they have taken.



THE SHAPE OF A SCENARIO

This booklet has been about the thinking you need to do for your scenario. How you build it will depend on your authoring tool's capabilities and the media available to you.

But here's one structure you could apply in the likes of Storyline, Captivate or even, with a bit of work, Powerpoint.

The flow goes like this:

Get their attention 'Have you ever been in a situation where you were torn between what a colleague tells you to do and what the customer needs?' This makes the vital link to the learner's previous knowledge.

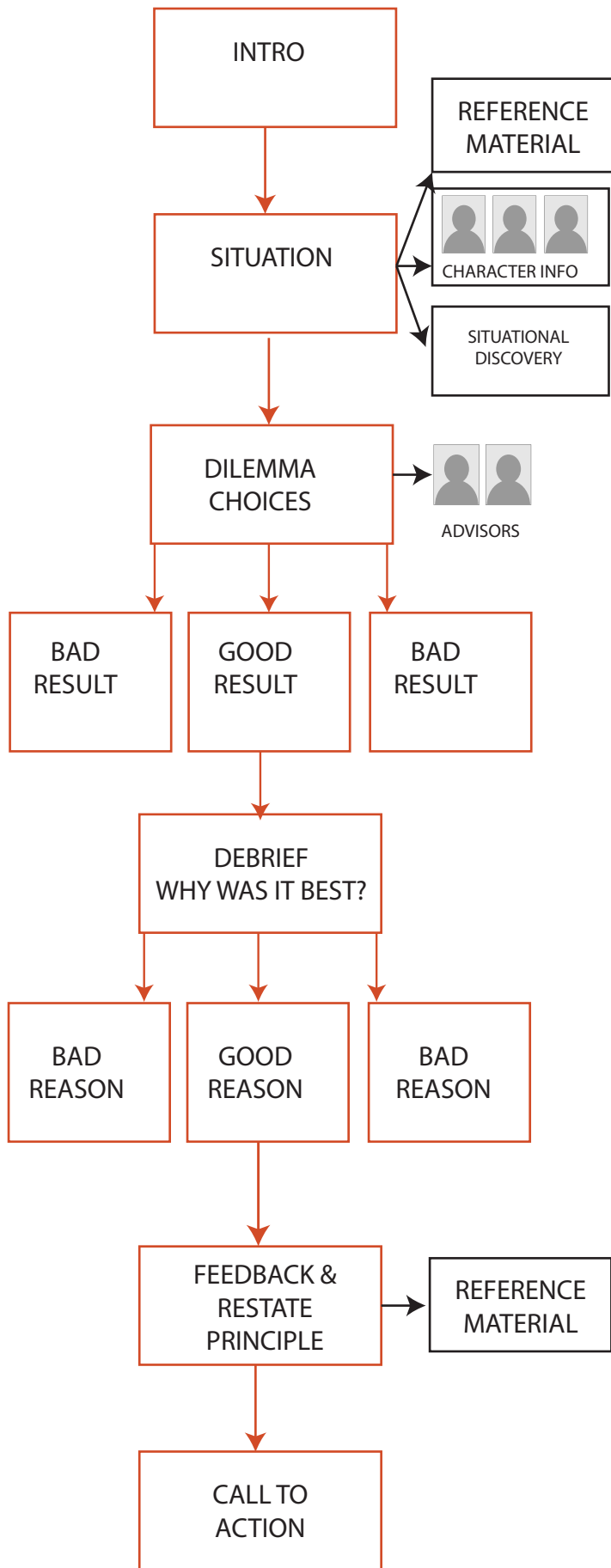
Present the situation but not necessarily all at once. For more challenge, bury key bits of information in emails, reports, diagrams etc, if that mirrors the real life situation. If they have access in real life to online resources, link to them here too.

To draw out the reasons for making bad choices, you can use one or more characters to voice them. For example in whistleblowing, a spouse might advise you to keep silent until you know everything about the story. This isn't trickery. If someone would choose this action in real life, believing it to be right, we want them to do it here.

Let them make their choice and show the result. If it's a poor choice show them the result and let them try again without saying 'Wrong' or explaining why it's wrong. Use language like 'rewind and try a different tactic'.

To summarise, create some sort of question to ensure you get at the principle underlying the scenario, so it's not just about this situation. This is more likely to stick than just telling them. At this stage offer links to more information and job aids (but make them available outside the learning module).

Ask them to commit to one action back at the workplace.



Use what you wrote in steps

- 13
- 3 4
- 2
- 3 4
- 5 8
- 9
- 7 10
- 6 11
- 6 11 12 13
- 14

Introduction

Get the learner to think of times they've faced difficult choices like this. Present this as chance to build up confidence by practice.

Situation

Describe it, and offer links to background information, like 'live' reference material on your intranet, character information and perhaps something they have to dig into to find out key information about the situation in a mass of detail.

Advisors

Use advisor characters (like 'angels and devils') to highlight the reasons for taking different choices. Like 'phone a friend' but not all friends are reliable!

Debrief

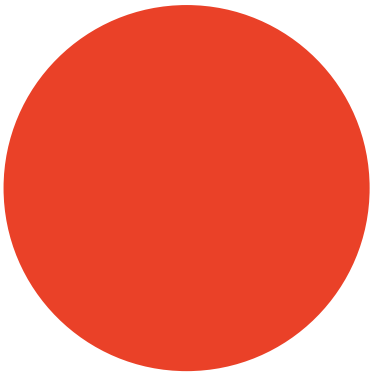
Here we examine why the good choice was good or, if you prefer, why the bad choices were bad, by getting at the underlying principle. You can just tell them, but it's better to draw it out with a question. If you can do this offline - in a discussion - you don't need such detail here.

Summary and restatement

State clearly what the 'takeaway' is and give them links to explore it further. You could set a task to find out how it applies to their specific role or location.

Call to action

Get them to write down one particular action they'll take.



OVER TO YOU

I hope this tool proves useful to you and you use it over and over again.

To explore scenarios further start with these and follow the links:

Tom Kuhlmann's blog <http://blogs.articulate.com/rapid-elearning/building-scenarios-for-e-learning/>

Cathy Moore <http://blog.cathy-moore.com/2015/09/3-quick-tips-for-strong-scenarios/>

Cathy also runs an excellent online course over four weeks.

Elearning Brothers <http://elearningbrothers.com/8-effective-scenario-ideas-for-instructional-designers/>

There are articles and examples on my own site Light Touch Learning, <http://www.lighttouchlearning.com> and of course I'd be happy to work with you on your own scenarios in whatever capacity you want.

Norman Lamont