

Designing Predicaments Step 1: the outline

Transcript of Tawe video

This is Norman Lamont from Light Touch Learning, working out loud for you today, trying out this software called Tawe to talk about my elearning (scenario) job aid, Designing Predicaments.

This post will be about the first step in the process, which is just the basic description of the scenario.

So there's a little formula here which says that

Given a situation (where a learner has some different routes to take)...

the learner will (take the best route) ...

for the right reason ...

with a certain result.

We state here what they're going to have to do, in rough terms, and why.

We need the 'why' because there's no point in the scenario being a one-off. It has to be something that you can generalise to other situations, in other words a principle or guideline or rule-of-thumb.

So this step 1 becomes simply your 'germ' for the scenario - something you can refer back to later, when you're getting lost in the detail and remind yourself of the most important learning point that you'd decided on at the beginning. Everything has to serve that learning point.

Ages ago, in a previous job I was asked to script some elearning by a finance department, who had seen some work I'd done with scenarios previously. One of the learning points was that managers had to use standard class train tickets, not first class. That was it.

"Can we have a scenario where a manager has to travel to Lincoln and has to choose between standard and first class tickets?"

I tried to probe a bit. "Why should she choose standard?" "Because she's not allowed to choose first class on expenses. Plain and simple."

I managed to persuade them that what they had here wasn't a scenario but a multiple choice question. We don't use scenarios for learners who have to follow a set procedure, we use them for people who have to make a judgement based on a principle, where there's some uncertainty involved, and they may have to act on that principle or guideline or rule-of-thumb in other situations.

To take an example that I worked on for a management trainer, this was about new managers learning to give positive feedback in the best way. It was actually part of a complex branching scenario but I'll use it simply here to make the point.

Given - a situation where one member of her team has turned in a particularly good piece of work...
the learner, a new manager, will choose to give the feedback at her own desk area, in confidentiality ...

why? Because any kind of feedback should be delivered confidentially ...

With the result that ... the team member isn't embarrassed in front of his colleagues and is able to talk about the piece of work.

That's just the basic idea, not the whole scenario. In steps 2, 3 and 4 we add some story and drama to it.

If you're talking to a subject expert and trying to get some ideas for scenarios, the kind of questions to ask would be:

Tell me about a time when you or someone else did this successfully.

What was the most important decision or judgement that led to that success?

Why did it lead to that success - what was the principle or guideline?

What happened as a result, what was the good outcome?

That's it for step 1. In future posts I'll talk about the other steps. If you would like the job aid, please just complete my survey or subscribe to my mailing list. I'll try this or another tool to talk about steps 2, 3 and 4 soon.

