

## Designing Predicaments Step 3

Welcome to step 3 in designing a predicament.

In previous steps we've outlined the basic plot, and we've created some characters.

Here we're describing the situation in detail.

There are two aspects to the situation:

- the here and now, at the point where the character has to make a decision
- the background, everything that leads up to it.

This has to be a 'tip of the iceberg' presentation. In the final course you won't be able to put much text on screen; even if you could, you wouldn't want to.

So a lot of it has to be off-screen.

You might for example offer links to reports or email chains that set the situation up. So in a care home situation, you could have extracts from the service user's care plan. In a customer service scenario, a screen shot of the customer's previous transactions, or an email chain they've been involved in.

Or you might want to put information into the mouths of characters: the boss giving you targets; the service user's mother demanding special attention for her child; a doctor giving medical information on an insurance case.

Hide the relevant information in irrelevant detail - if everything the learner sees gives key information about the choice, the right answer will almost always be obvious. So the care plan has to contain lots of detail other than what you're looking for; the screenshot of previous transactions won't have the important part highlighted in red! As always, make the situation as close to real life as you can. In real life you have to search.

If you're building a branching scenario, with more than one decision point, you'll want to keep some information back to be revealed later. When you challenge Mike for not turning up for a meeting, you didn't know his dog was being put to sleep that day. You only find out if you ask him before you reprimand him. But you - the author - need to create that part of the story now, in stage 3.

How much information and how deep to hide it in detail? That depends on how much background you'd need in real life. In a customer advice scenario, you'd obviously need to research the customer a bit before opening your mouth. If the training is aimed at new staff you'd have to let them research the products too. So quite a lot of background needed there.

But in a scenario about speaking up against discrimination, where a colleague says something questionable, you wouldn't expect to do a lot of research before making the decision to intervene or hold back. So how much background would you need in real life to make the decision?

Let's go back to the giving positive feedback scenario we described in Steps 1 and 2.

Given a situation where a member of staff, Alex, saved your company from losing a client by producing a great report

Chris, a new manager, will choose to invite Alex to her desk area to deliver positive feedback to Alex

Because Alex is shy and feedback should be delivered in privacy

With the result that Alex is happy to receive the praise and motivated to continue the good work.

How did Alex save the company from losing a client? He stayed behind late for three evenings and worked at home the night before he completed it. The client was about to drop you, but the accessible and visual way Alex presented the data persuaded them that their previous investment had actually paid off.

But in doing so, Alex neglected another job you'd given him, looking after a new start. So it's not all roses.

We'll see in the next step how we can extend this to add some pressure.