

Rapid Ideation and Creative Problem Solving
Telling the Story: Scenario Writing

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The image features large, stylized lowercase letters 'ac4d' at the bottom. The 'a' is red, the 'c' is purple, the '4' is black, and the 'd' is green. The letters are bold and have a slightly rounded, modern font style.

Consider a common process issue:

We've conducted research, and through synthesis learned a thing or two.

It's pretty tempting to go find a computer and start building something!

What are the problems with this approach?

Put down that laptop!

Once we start using the computer (Photoshop, Coding, etc):

- We stop thinking conceptually and start thinking pragmatically
- We focus on the software tool's constraints instead of the problem's constraints
- We pay attention to painstaking details (colors, font sizes, pixels) instead of overarching concepts (users, goals, needs)
- We become artificially constrained by our own abilities with the tool

Ultimately, we achieve a narrow or laser focus – prematurely.

Remember the power of narratives?

We're going to use narratives again - only this time to describe your product over time.

Telling the Story: Scenarios

Create a scenario - a story - that paints a picture of a future state.

Scenarios are a written framework that can be used in a variety of ways.

- as provocations for workshops / brainstorms
- as ways to check and refine use cases
- as the foundation for storyboards or other visual narratives

What is the value of a story?

- for the design team?
- for stakeholders?
- for users?

Think in screens & scenes, not products.

Screens:

You are not designing the detailed interface yet
Think of general layout, navigation elements, core concepts
Capture relevant information, remove extraneous information

Scenes:

People in their physical context
Cultural/Interpersonal relationships
Workflow or information handoffs
Show sequencing of main ideas
Your product evolving over time/use

Telling the Story: How to write Scenarios

1. Pick one of your primary use cases to work from
2. List a series of steps that the user will take to achieve a goal. This can be different than use cases, as it can be a fraction or part of a complete use case, and includes environments, objects and interactions outside of the system that affect its use.
3. Include explicit “interface” steps as well as real-world interactions. Try to avoid discrete actions, like “pointing” or “clicking”.
4. Re-frame the list as a story.
5. Break the story into “frames” - or key moments that each describe something important, e.g. a change in context, an interaction between users or an interaction with the system.

Telling the Story: Scenarios Activity

Using one of our use cases from last class, let's write a scenario.

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