

Communicate Effectively.

STORYTELLING

Storytelling is a useful technique to communicate and engage others in complex ideas and concepts and share knowledge. In the design context, storytelling is about structuring a narrative to share research insights and information and engage others in your service – whether business colleagues, team members, partners, users or customers. Storytelling is useful in the understand phase, and during prototyping in the develop phase to generate, describe, evolve or validate a concept.

How to use storytelling

Storytelling can take on a large variety of forms, there is a great deal of variation in the process and procedures associated with its different uses. Firstly, identify what you want to achieve with storytelling. It could be widening engagement with the project's purpose; sharing research to build understanding; communicate the business case; take the project in a new direction etc. Pick an appropriate plot structure for your story. Christopher Booker, author of *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories* (2004) identified Seven Basic Themes of plot-writing.

- Overcoming the Monster: The protagonist sets out to defeat an antagonistic force (often evil) which threatens the protagonist and/or protagonist's homeland.
- Rags to Riches: The poor protagonist acquires things such as power, wealth, and a mate, before losing it all and gaining it back upon growing as a person.
- The Quest: The protagonist and some companions set out to acquire an important object or to get to a location, facing many obstacles and temptations along the way.
- Voyage and Return: The protagonist goes to a strange land and, after overcoming the threats it poses to him or her, returns with experience.
- Comedy: Light and humorous character with a happy or cheerful ending; a dramatic work in which the central motif is the triumph over adverse circumstance, resulting in a successful or happy conclusion.
- Tragedy: The protagonist is a hero with one major character flaw or great mistake which is ultimately their undoing. Their unfortunate end evokes pity at their folly and the fall of a fundamentally 'good' character.
- Rebirth: During the story, an important event forces the main character to change their ways, often making them a better person.

Miller & Salkind (2002) identified storytelling research comprised;

- Domain – the 'core' research problem;
- Demographics – the core audience you are targeting and individuals with stories to tell; and
- Story Building – gathering stories through interviews, documentation, observation, etc.

In the process of developing a design story, there are some existing guidelines on what makes a good story and how a designer/researcher should go about creating it. The following are elements of a good story for design are inspired by Gruen (2006) and (Parrish, 2006):

- Establish character and setting develop detailed characters with whom the audience can empathize;
- Inhabit the learner in the story - develop rich, contextualized settings;
- Identify goals (what the protagonist is trying to accomplish and why);
- Explore the motivations, desires, etc. of the learner in the story - develop causality, identify obstacles etc.