

Design Scenarios

UX505

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You've done your formative research. Now what?

Scenarios are **short stories** about **specific users** who are using technology being designed to accomplish **specific goals** in a **specific context**.

Scenarios bridge findings about user needs and ideas about how a technology may support those needs.

Ever since Mary returned to work after her heart attack last year, she has struggled to incorporate regular physical activity into her daily life. HealthyHeart, an app she recently discovered, is slowly changing that. As Mary is finishing her meeting, her activity tracker gently vibrates to indicate that HealthyHeart has sent her an activity suggestion. When Mary looks at her phone, she finds a message showing her a 1500-step walking route to her next meeting that goes by the beautiful fountain on her company's campus. She has just enough time to walk over, so she hits "thumbs-up" to indicate she liked the suggestion, and she follows the suggested route. That evening, after dinner, HealthyHeart alerts her that there is a salsa dance three days later at a restaurant 20 minutes away. "Oh, great!" Mary thinks. "This could be a fun way to get more intense activity to meet my weekly activity prescription." She taps "let's do it!" and salsa dancing, along with the directions, is added to her calendar.

What did we learn?

- Mary's days are packed with meetings
- HealthyHeart is proactive
- Its suggestions are just-in-time and contextually tailored
- It helps Mary discover novel physical activities
- It's intended to induce feeling of pleasant surprise

Why use scenarios?

- Support reflection during the design process
- Open-ended and easily revised
- Anchor design discussion

Some HealthyHeart considerations

- How many suggestions would Mary tolerate before getting annoyed?
- What would the system need to know to provide good suggestions?
- How should such a system respond if Mary doesn't like a suggestion?
- Where would ideas for novel activities come from?
- ...

Elements of a scenario

- **Setting:** situation (state of the system, context of use) in which activity occurs
- **Agent(s):** people performing the activity described in scenario
- **Goals:** objectives agents are trying to accomplish
- **Actions:** activities that agents do to accomplish their goals
- **Events:** things that happen to users while doing the activities in the scenario

Types of scenarios

problem scenarios: describe features of the current situation

goal or task-based scenarios: what the user wants to do

activity scenarios: transform current practice into new design features

full scale task scenarios: steps to accomplish a task

information scenarios: how users perceive, interpret, and make sense of information

interaction scenarios: physical actions and system responses that respond to users' tasks

Some final considerations

- You don't need to be a great writer to write useful scenarios
- Scenarios should be quick. More rough scenarios are often more useful than fewer scenarios that are more refined
- Scenarios are *process* artifacts. Do only as much as is helpful
- Scenarios can help uncover unwanted technology effect

Scenario Summary

- Can help test early design ideas
- Support communication
- Help designers reflect on intended and unintended consequences of their design decisions