Content Strategy: Case Study

What is a Case Study?

In a case study, you are analyzing a particular instance to illustrate a principle. You are giving the learners an opportunity to solve a problem or see how a problem was solved. A case study requires them to understand and apply what they have learned. When they apply a given principle, they are much more likely to recall and use it later and under different circumstances.

What makes a good case study?

Your case study should include someone your audience can relate to. It should include real data. Typically, you will set up the case from beginning to end, and give the audience opportunity to weigh in on the strategy for solving the case before the solution is revealed.

Now it's Your Turn

Go through your presentation, course, or wireframe plan. Are there opportunities to include a case study?

Ideas:

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Content Strategy: Stories

Stories

I love using stories when I design courses. Sometimes the stories are real, and sometimes they are made up to emphasize a point. I like to carry the story through the length of the course; for instance, for a course on identity theft, I invented a character named Bob, whom we followed through the process of having his identity stolen. By the end of the course we saw him resolve most of the issues, but along the way we watched how he had to remedy the problem.

Stories provide the learner with an easy way to remember how to use the learning principles in a practical way. So, how do you write an educational story? You should begin by explaining a little about the character and their circumstances. The character will encounter an obstacle—this is the pivotal moment of the story. Your audience will wonder what is next, and how the story will resolve. Next, your story will explain the ways in which the obstacle is overcome, and finally, the story will resolve with the lesson you wish your audience to learn. This is just one way to approach storytelling for instructional purposes.

Now it's Your Turn

Go through your presentation, course, or wireframe plan. Are there opportunities to include a story?

Ideas:

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Content Strategy: Stories

Can you come up with an engaging story that will support the point you are trying to teach?

What are the circumstances?

What is the obstacle and pivotal moment?

How does the story resolve?

Content Strategy: Stories

Topic or objective:

Write the story:

Content Strategy: Scenarios

What is a Scenario?

Scenarios are situations in which you allow your audience to contemplate possible outcomes based on the decisions the characters make. I have personally used scenarios in the past to help managers understand what workplace harassment is and is not. I set up the scenarios and asked the managers to determine what would happen as a result of each character's decisions. Based on their responses, I was able to provide appropriate feedback.

Now it's Your Turn

Go through your presentation, course, or wireframe plan. Are there opportunities to include scenarios?

Topic or objective:

Possible scenario:

Content Strategy: Experiments

Give Them Something to Do

Experiments are procedures executed to make discoveries and test hypotheses. Experiments put learning in the control of the learner. This strategy will especially appeal to your hands-on learners, a group that is largely ignored in online education. When you are creating online materials, remember that you are not limited to only creating online experiences; you can create online applications that will simulate real life, but you can also blend the learning with their realities by using tangible items in the learner's environment.

Experiments can be used in both technical or soft skill courses. In a class on setting up printers, you might have the learner experiment with different settings. In a communication class, you might ask the learner to experiment with saying things a different way. In a social media course, the learner might experiment with posting to different platforms.

Now it's Your Turn

Go through your presentation, course, or wireframe plan. Are there opportunities to include an experiment?

Ideas:

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Content Strategy: Eavesdrop

Eavesdropping

There is something in human nature that makes us want to listen in on the conversation next door, even when we know we shouldn't. In this activity, however, we are giving the learner permission to eavesdrop. Want to know a secret? With this tactic, we are motivating them to listen. This approach is particularly useful in soft skill training; for example, you can ask the learner to click on a button to listen in on a manager as he gives his first performance review. This method is also effective for customer service and technical support training.

Now it's Your Turn

Go through your presentation, course, or wireframe plan. Are there opportunities to include eavesdropping?

Ideas:

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Content Strategy: Cartooning

Include Humor

They say laughter is the best medicine, but did you know that laughter also can help your audience learn? If they are relaxed, they will learn more. You don't have to be a comedian to include humor in your course or presentation; just add a joke here and there to break the content up into digestible pieces, making sure the humor is appropriate and relevant to what you are teaching. This element of humor might be just what you need to engage your audience! Before you begin creating your own cartoon, try reading a funny blog or watching a humorous show. They may help you get your creative juices flowing.

Make a cartoon. If this isn't your talent, sketch it out and ask a graphic designer to complete it.
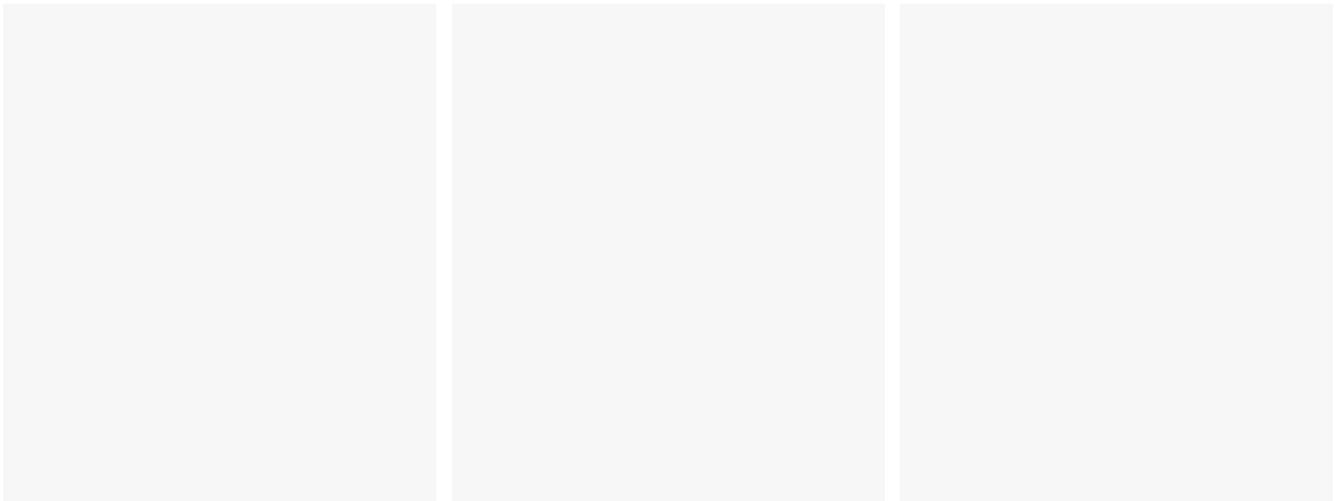
Content Strategy: Social Media

Be Social.

Social media has given us another tool to use for education or information. Collaborative learning is nothing new, but employing social media to encourage participants to interact with each other is a more recent development. If you are teaching a course that results in a final product, have the participants share a picture of their final product on the social media platform of your choice. Many members of your audience may already be on Facebook or Twitter.

Facebook

You might have the participants go to a Facebook page or group you have created and post screenshots of their final products. For instance, as a result of going through this workbook, you might post screenshots or photos of the courses you designed.

Twitter

You could also moderate a chat on Twitter by choosing a hashtag for everyone to use at a given time. For instance, you might tell your audience to meet on Twitter every Thursday at 5 p.m. and use a particular hashtag.

Now it's Your Turn

Go through your presentation, course, or wireframe plan. Are there opportunities to include social media activities?

Content Strategy: Quotes

Good quotes can be inspirational and pack a lot of wisdom into a small space. You can use quotes throughout your presentation or course, but be careful to not overdo it—less is more in this case. Give your audience a quote they can hold on to throughout your presentation to keep them focused and motivated.

Now it's Your Turn

Go through your presentation, course, or wireframe plan. Are there opportunities to include the wisdom of a quote?

Topic:

Quote idea:

Topic:

Quote idea:

Topic:

Quote idea:

Content Strategy: Choose a Path

Let Them Choose a Path

When I was little, I used to love reading books where I made choices that led me to an unknown destination. After completing one path, I would flip back to the start and investigate where a different choice would have taken me; I was curious to see what the consequences were of the decisions I had made. Likewise, you can use their natural curiosity to engage your audience. I applied this element in a course I designed on financial literacy: we gave college students the opportunity to choose if they wanted to go on spring break or stay home and pick up a side job. They made many more decisions along the way that led to different results. At the end, the students were able to clearly see the advantages and disadvantages of their choices.

Now it's Your Turn

Go through your presentation, course, or wireframe plan. Are there opportunities to include a choose-your-own-adventure activity?

Final Outcomes/Destinations

Decisions to get there
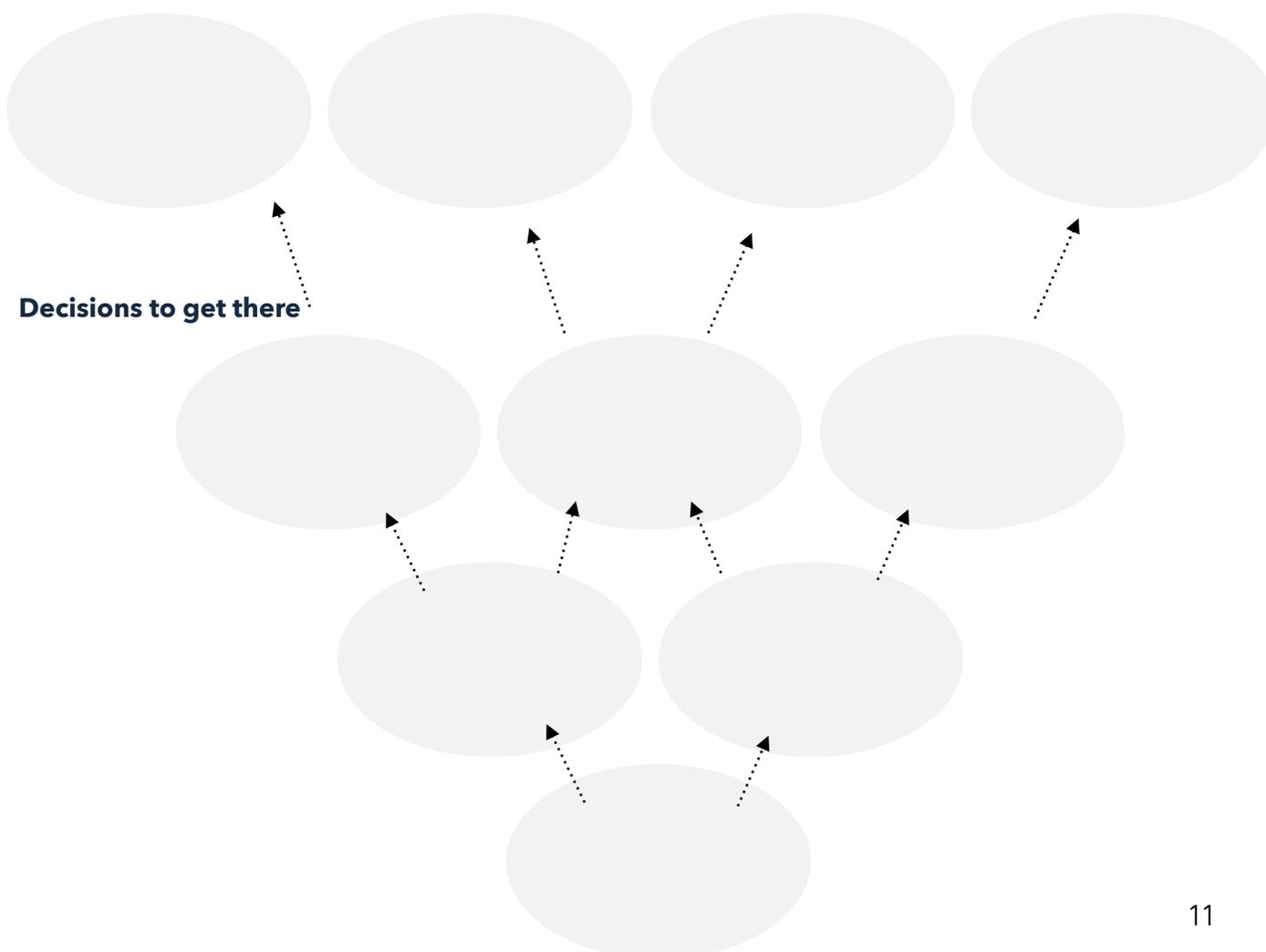
Content Strategy: Interview

Act Like a Broadcaster

One skill broadcasters must have is the ability to ask good questions during interviews. Interview-style broadcasting is an excellent way to engage your audience, because they can watch the conversation unfold. In some cases, you might have a subject matter expert (SME) who is nervous about presenting in front of a camera or your audience. Try interviewing your subject instead. The conversational format can remove the pressure from your SME, and the content will flow naturally.

Now it's Your Turn

Go through your presentation, course, or wireframe plan. Is there an opportunity to interview a subject matter expert on one of the topics? Write down possible interview questions and a rundown below.

Interview questions:

Rundown:

Interview Rundown for <TOPIC>	
00:00 - 00:00 (Time)	Question or what you want to cover:

Content Strategy: Brainstorming

Create a Storm in Your Brain

Brainstorming can aid you in the creative process when you are devising activities, but it can also be used as an activity for your audience to promote a higher level of competency. You are helping them move from basic comprehension to synthesis and application. There are a number of ways to approach brainstorming, but like with creativity, you need to give yourself and your audience the chance to let judgement go. So, in other words, anything goes in brainstorming. Sometimes individual brainstorming is more effective than group brainstorming, because in a group, not everyone is playing by the no-judgement rules. However, when you gather a few people together to brainstorm, another person's perspective can spur you to think differently or entertain ideas you might not have thought of. My suggestion? Do both! When you form the group, try to choose people who are respectful of the process and others' ideas. Set expectations up front that this is a safe place to be creative.

Ways to Brainstorm

1. Group Brainstorming: Leverage the ingenuity of several people. Create a risk-free environment where individuals feel safe to share their ideas.

2. Individual Brainstorming: Brainstorming on your own can be very effective, because you don't have to worry about what others think.

3. Reverse Brainstorming: This one can puzzle the brain, because its purpose is to do the opposite of your goal. If you want to solve a problem, try figuring out ways to *create* the problem.

4. Rolestorming: Pretend to be someone else while you brainstorm to remove the obstacle of fearing what others think.

5. Brainwriting: Have individuals write their ideas and avoid having anyone dominate the conversation.

Now it's your turn.

Go through your presentation, course, or your wireframe plan for the course. Are there opportunities to include a brainstorming activity?

Content Strategy: Checklists

Check it Off

Adult learners are task driven; checklists are not only a great way to give your audience an overview of what will be covered in your class, but also give them the satisfaction of completing something and being motivated by progress. On the flip-side, if you overwhelm them with tasks, they may quit altogether because they cannot complete all of them. So be reasonable when deciding what to include on your checklist.

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Now it's Your Turn

Go through your presentation, course, or wireframe plan. Are there opportunities to include checklists?

Content Strategy: Tips

Tips

Sometimes we need to use long passages of text to convey the information we need our audience to learn. In many cases, this can cause overload and brain fatigue to the point where your audience isn't paying attention to what they are reading. To fix this issue, you can insert tip notes and icons, allowing your readers to take a short brain break. Tips and icons break up the text in your course or presentation so that your audience does not experience brain fatigue.
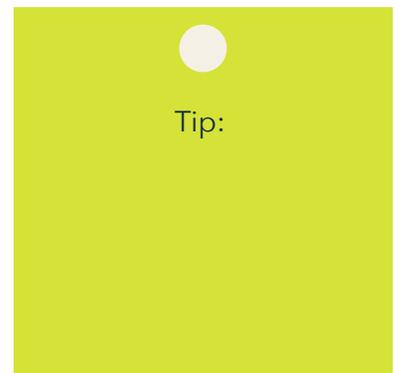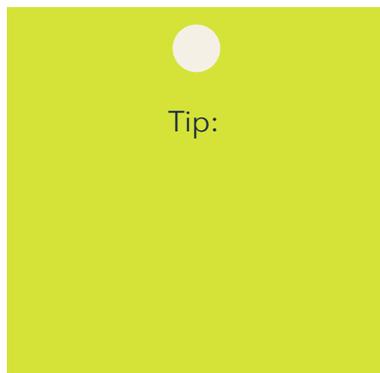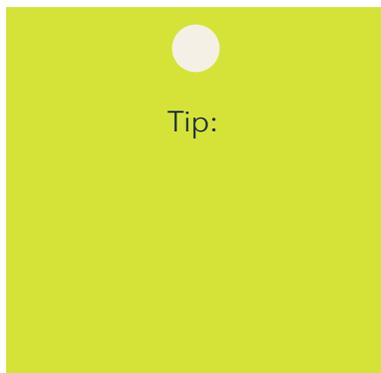
Tip: Tip: Tip:

Now it's Your Turn

Go through your presentation, course, or wireframe plan. Are there opportunities to include tips?

Content Strategy: Ask the Expert

Ask the Expert

Mentoring is an effective way to learn a job or task quickly. Mentors take learning beyond the theoretical to the practical: when learners see how an expert approaches a problem, they quickly pick up new tools to solve problems of their own. However, a mentor is not always available or affordable, so allowing learners to compare their responses to an expert response is the next best approach. For example, I worked with a group of managers on when to escalate issues brought to them by their subordinates. In this case, the expert answers were the ideal responses for each situation. This activity helped new managers avoid making costly mistakes, because they learned how an experienced manager would handle it.

This approach is effective in technical training as well, because a learner can simply compare their answers to an expert answer. It is also a good way to gauge progress: if you use these exercises throughout your course, you should see the learner improving in their approach to new problems. You could keep the format as simple as clicking to reveal the solution on a new slide, but if you really want to engage your learners, capture the expert answer on video.

I used this method to relay wisdom to learners with strategically placed videos throughout the course. As the learners were grappling with how to handle a problem, video footage of a coach explaining how he would approach the scenario would play on the screen.

Now it's Your Turn

Go through your presentation, course, or wireframe plan. For each of your topics, list experts that you know of. Can you contact any of them to provide wisdom for your course or presentation?

Content Strategy: Additional Resources

Additional Resources

Once upon a time, we called the act of visiting different websites a "webquest." It might be time for a new name, but the activity is still valid. Allowing your audience to visit applicable websites, videos, or apps, gives them the freedom to discover more about your topic on the world wide web. It is a good practice to provide them with initial resources or links, and then let them explore.

List a few of the resources your audience might find valuable:

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Now it's Your Turn

Go through your presentation, course, or wireframe plan. Are there any other opportunities to include additional resources for your audience to explore?