USING RESOURCES TO
BRING DESIGN STORIES TO LIFE

PRAGMATIC
INSTITUTE

CONTENTS

THERE ARE MYRIAD WAYS to apply storytelling in design, from aligning on user context with cross-functional stakeholders to sharing learnings from a project with peers. If you have a goal in mind for your story, it's easier to achieve it with the help of resources.

Sometimes, resources are confused for the story itself—they're not. They are tools that bring a story to life. Ideally, resources help you transition from telling a story to sharing a story. Telling a story looks like a monologue, whereas sharing a story looks like a dialogue. Sharing invites active engagement: it allows your audience to take the story and make it personal.

As designers, we can have a dizzying array of resources at our disposal: photos, infographics, models, videos, data and more. It's tempting to use it all. On the flip side, we can also find ourselves describing a point when it would be much more compelling to visualize it. Finally, we might fall into the trap of defaulting to a deck just because that's what people expect for a presentation.

Ultimately, the aim for resources in storytelling is to help simplify complex ideas, make connections, and surprise and delight the audience. So, what resources might you include, how might you present them, and what might you edit out? This ebook outlines ideas to help designers leverage resources in new ways to increase engagement and story retention.

1

DITCH THE DECK

TECHNIQUE

A simple suggestion for your storytelling: Always ask yourself, "Does this really need to be a deck?"

As designers, we can spend hours creating decks. Compare the cost to benefit: Would your narrative be more compelling in any other medium? With a simple handout? A physical model? What's the least amount of work you can do to telegraph your story?
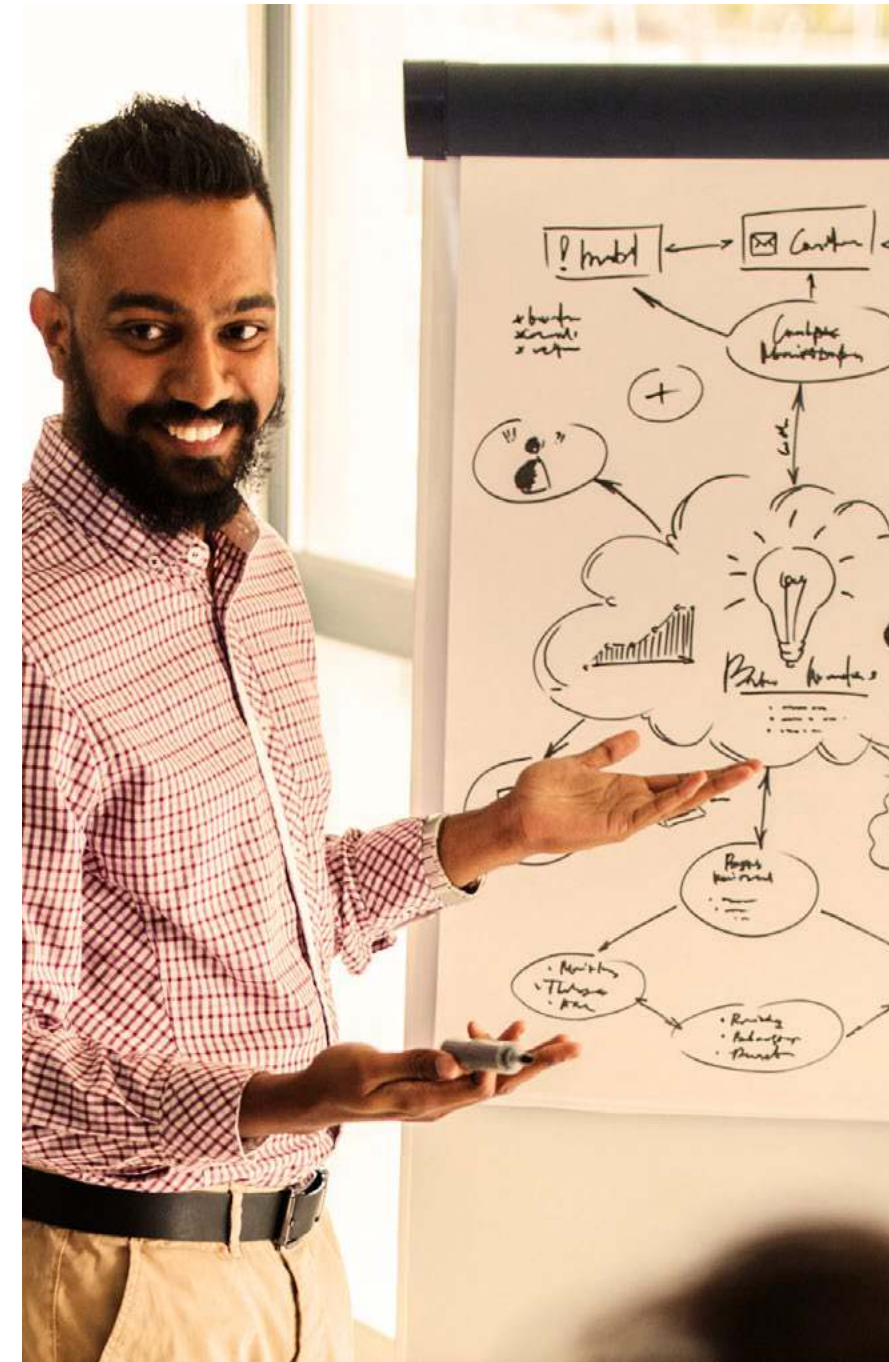
PowerPoint or Keynote presentations (even beautifully-designed ones) fall short when it comes to audience engagement. They are often used as a default tool for sharing information, but they can be monotonous and fail to capture the audience's attention.

CONSIDER CREATING a short video, drawing a sketch, showing a diagram or model, or simply having a conversation. For example, if you're sharing findings from user research, you could edit together video or audio clips from user interviews (with permission) and then have an open dialogue about what the research revealed. This approach will engage your stakeholders in a more interactive, collaborative way. They might better focus on the most important points and provide insights that would have been missed in a traditional presentation.

BENEFIT: Spend less time doing busy work. Focus on the medium that will give you bang for your buck.

2

CAPTURE THE STORY AS YOU SHARE IT

BENEFIT: Invest less time in creating resources up front, and allow for the arc and content of your story to be captured in a dramatic, organic way.

This technique lets you capture the essence of your story as you share it, creating a visual record. It also provides an interactive element, as the audience can see the story unfold in real time.

Using a sketchnote artist or tool can help simplify complex ideas and make connections. The visual notetaker can also highlight key points, providing a valuable resource for the audience to refer to long after the presentation is over.

TECHNIQUE

Create a record of your story as you tell it with a visual notetaker. You can employ a sketchnote artist or use a sketchnote tool while presenting.

SKETCHNOTING IS a method of note-taking and visual storytelling that combines text and illustrations to capture key points and ideas. It is often used in presentations, meetings and workshops to record information and make them more memorable and visually engaging.

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IMMERSE YOUR AUDIENCE IN RESEARCH

TECHNIQUE

Invite your stakeholders to swim in the research. Paste anonymized quotes on a wall or online whiteboard and ask your stakeholders to react with sticky notes. This approach can be particularly effective in group settings because it encourages collaboration and allows for a more dynamic and interactive discussion of the research.

THIS TECHNIQUE CAN be used in various ways to engage stakeholders; for example, to gather feedback, validate findings or understand perspectives and concerns. The goal is to create a shared understanding of the research, making it more likely that stakeholders will act on the data.

BENEFIT: This technique allows stakeholders to feel heard and surfaces additional nuance for future stories or potential obstacles. It can also help identify any divergences of opinion and any areas of agreement among stakeholders.

TECHNIQUE

Personas are a commonly used empathy tool to help stakeholders understand the people behind the data, but they should not be the only tool. Don't miss opportunities to use documentary video footage or photography from research activities (with permission) in juxtaposition to the data. It will help you provide a human perspective.

FOR EXAMPLE, Charity: Water founder Scott Harrison found great success not by sharing facts and figures about water scarcity alone, but by connecting donors to photography and video exposing impact on real human lives.

BENEFIT: This technique can provide a more immersive and relatable experience for stakeholders. It can help facilitate credibility and compassionate empathy. For example, if you're presenting data on how a certain product is used, showing footage of real people using it in their everyday lives can provide context and understanding that statistics alone cannot.

4

STRIKE A BALANCE: FACES VS. FACTS

5

CONNECT DATA TO GOALS

BENEFIT: This technique helps stakeholders with <u>analytical communication styles</u> understand where their interests connect to yours—how your success is their success!

TECHNIQUE

Another technique for increasing engagement and retention of your story is to incorporate metrics that are most important to your stakeholders. Then, clearly demonstrate the positive relationship between those metrics and your design work. You likely have lots of data, so you'll need to edit what is and isn't vital to your audience.

FOR EXAMPLE, you want to showcase the impact of your design work on the customer experience. You could gather data on customer satisfaction scores (or complaints to customer service) before and after the implementation of your solutions. Then, highlight that data for your stakeholders and explain how your efforts directly contributed to the improvement. In this way, you can demonstrate the positive relationship between design and an important metric for stakeholders.

TECHNIQUE

Create visual interest where it's not expected. Search for opportunities to embed supporting resources in unlikely places. Drop a game into your presentation. Experiment with interactive elements. If you tastefully break some rules when it comes to presentations, you'll find your audience leaning forward.

TOOLS LIKE Mentimeter let you drop in polls during a presentation to re-engage the audience. Other tools, like Kahoot, are made for K-12 classrooms, but who says you can't enliven a story with whimsical games? This tool lets you incorporate quizzes, polls and other interactive elements.

BENEFIT: By making your resources more unusual and creative, you can help them stand out in your stakeholders' minds, increasing the chance they will remember the story later on.

6

SURPRISE AND DELIGHT

7

USE RESOURCES JUDICIOUSLY

TECHNIQUE

More tip than technique: Use only the most persuasive resources that support your goals. Data, infographics, audio, video, models—ask: Is this element necessary? If I removed this, how would it impact the story? Consider sharing supporting information in other ways.

ONE EXAMPLE: Due to a diversity of stakeholders and an inability to come together for a long research readout, a design innovation team developed a newsletter that shared out the story of their product over several weeks.

BENEFIT: Using resources judiciously helps maintain the story's focus and keeps the audience engaged. It allows your listeners to understand the key points and takeaways without getting bogged down in unnecessary information.

Influence Through Storytelling

Pragmatic Institute's *Influence Through Storytelling* course is perfect for designers across practices (such as UX, product, service, and digital design) who want to grow their impact. Learn how to craft strategic stories that achieve goals, align stakeholders and inspire action.

Facilitated by experts and built within Miro—a visual collaboration platform—this course provides an immersive, interactive learning experience. And you'll walk away with a step-by-step process for designing your next great presentation, share-out or project update.

Find Out More

About Pragmatic Institute

Pragmatic Institute is a trusted learning partner to professionals across data, product and design—providing training, support and resources. With a focus on dynamic instruction, continued learning, and what works for today's businesses, Pragmatic Institute delivers engaging and impactful education to thousands of companies worldwide.

Pragmatic Design learning experiences are developed by design practitioners, instructional designers and industry leaders. These courses empower designers to contribute more strategically, influencing the organization's vision and uncovering new ways to add value.

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