A Guide to Designing an Immersive Experience

LOTI_LDN

/loti-ldn

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Overview: Designing the Immersive Event

1

Define your Goals

Articulate the change you want to create in the world as a result of your immersive event.

2

Map your Context

Understand the key elements, relationships, and experiences of the system/challenge you are focused on.

3

Capture User Journeys

Pick the stories that best illustrate reality, resonate with most people, or will help you spark the type of conversation you want your participants to have.

4

Make it Immersive

Use interactive activities to make the stories come alive.

5

Put it Together

Design opportunities outside the immersive experience to bring back to the objective you are trying to achieve.

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Define your goals

- Identify your primary goal(s)
- Determine your target audience
- Establish how you will measure success

Guiding questions:
- ❖ *What do you want participants to experience/empathise with?*
- ❖ *What insights do you want to bring out through the event?*
- ❖ *What outputs will you take away from the session?*

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Map the context

- Conduct desk research to become familiar with the system
- Identify key individuals involved
- Conduct interviews to understand structure, challenges, and processes in the system
- Map your understanding of the overall system

Suggestions:
- Start interviews with individuals who are experts in the overall system and move towards those with day-to-day experience on the ground
  - Understanding the experiences of individuals 'using' the service will help establish the experience you want participants to engage with
  - Understanding the structure and process from the perspective of those delivering the service will help design the activities
- Map out key parts of system from the start and iterate as you go

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1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Define your Goals	**Map your Context**	**Capture User Journeys**	**Make it Immersive**	**Put it Together**
Articulate the change you want to create in the world as a result of your immersive event.	Understand the key elements, relationships, and experiences of the system/challenge you are focused on.	Pick the stories that best illustrate reality, resonate with most people, or will help you spark the type of conversation you want your participants to have.	Use interactive activities and exercises to make the stories come alive.	Design opportunities outside the immersive experience to bring back to the objective you are trying to achieve.

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Capture User Stories

- Identify key pain points to highlight in your immersive event
- Review anecdotes that came up in interviews / desk research
  - *Conduct additional interviews with service users / frontline workers at this stage if necessary*
- Select anecdotes that cover identified pain points
- Draw a storyboard (comic) to bring the stories to life (see guide)

Note:
- ❖ The system map can be a useful tool to use in interviews and capture user journeys
- ❖ Aim to end up with no more than 2 stories, each highlighting about 3 pain points
- ❖ You may want your stories to be A) reflective of a large population's experience or B) specific to one group's experience, depending on the goals of your event
- ❖ User tools like Canva to generate images for your comics and easily design them

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Storyboarding

- Divide your story into 3 distinct 'acts', each composed of a few different scenes (this helps structure the storyboard)
- Give each 'act' the following elements:
  - Key event
  - Sub events that lead to the key event
  - Setting
  - Characters (note that while you may have an actor for the main character, other characters can be represented in other ways without hiring an actor. Eg: a recorded voice, a mention by the facilitator, etc)
- Ensure the acts build on each other and end by the end of the third act
  - The final act may resolve the story or leave the reader with a question

See example on next page.

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Storyboarding Example

Story: Mrs. S

Main pain points:

| Lack of access to primary care and community services | Long stays in hospital | Challenges in finding appropriate care setting |

ACT 1: Mrs. S falls ill
- Key event: Has to call an ambulance in distress
- Sub events:
  a. Living independently
  b. Starts to feel ill
  c. Tries to call GP but cannot
  d. Tries to go to pharmacy but wait is long
  e. Community service shuts down
  f. Niece finds her quite ill
- Setting: Home
- Characters: Niece, Community organisation staff member, pharmacist

ACT 2: Mrs. S' hospital stay
- Key event: Hospital stay leads to complex care needs
- Sub events:
  a. Has to wait for long for a bed
  b. Disoriented due to disruption in medications
  c. Develops and infection
  d. Ready to be discharged, needs increased reablement support
- Setting: Hospital
- Characters: Hospital nurse, Niece

ACT 2: Finding Mrs. S a Care Home
- Key event: She is moved to a care home and her family is worried
- Sub events:
  a. Mrs S is assessed by staff member of a care home
  b. Care home unable to support
  c. Additional assessments
  d. Family is worried and confused
- Setting: Hospital
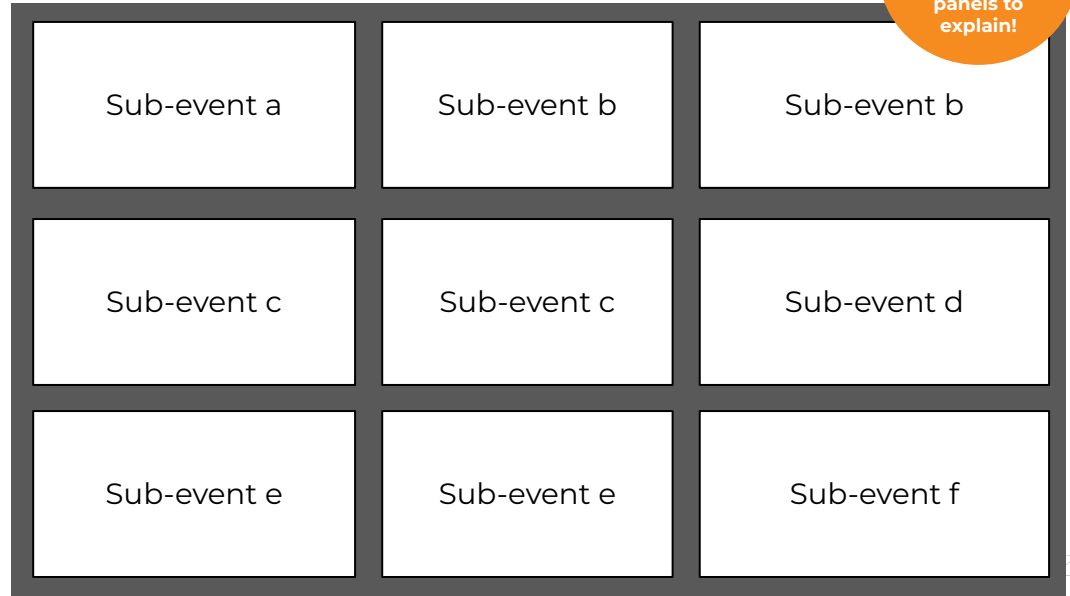- Characters: Care home assessor, Mrs. S' family

Storyboarding Example

Story: Mrs. S

Some sub-events may take multiple panels to explain!

ACT 1: Mrs. S falls ill
- Key event: Has to call an ambulance in distress
- Sub events:
  a. Living independently
  b. Starts to feel ill
  c. Tries to call GP but cannot
  d. Tries to go to pharmacy but wait is long
  e. She learns that ommunity service has shut down
  f. Niece finds her quite ill
- Setting: Home
- Characters: Niece, Community organisation staff member, pharmacist

Sub-event a	Sub-event b	Sub-event b
Sub-event c	Sub-event c	Sub-event d
Sub-event e	Sub-event e	Sub-event f

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Make it immersive

- List out the pain points from your story
- Match the experience to possible activities or mechanics from the next page
- While designing the activity, think about:
  - Whose experience you want the participants to engage with
  - What you want the participants to do
  - What key takeaway you want them to leave with
- Write out the whole experience out using the template provided
- Hire actors and props based on your stories

Note:
- ❖ Test out each activity with your team and make adjustments as needed
- ❖ The possible mechanics on the next page are a few suggestions, feel free to look at online resources for more ideas
- ❖ Am immersive theatre consultant or game designer can be a helpful ally in this process
- ❖ Consider smells / sounds that will add to the overall experience
- ❖ Ensure at least 3 rehearsals with actors and narrator before the event!

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Immersive Mechanics/ Activities

Flashcards of Bad News
Hand out numbered flashcards in an envelope at the start of the event to participants at random. Let them know that they will need to open their envelope and read the card aloud to move the story along when prompted.

Form-filling Challenges
Distribute forms (e.g., hospital discharge papers, service applications) and ask participants to complete them during a scenario. Highlight the complexity, emotional strain, or systemic inefficiencies tied to the process.

Decision Making Scenarios
Present dilemmas where participants must choose between competing priorities (this can be through a simple methods like a vote of raised hands). Allow them to experience the consequences of their decisions during the event.

Time Limited Tasks
Set a strict timer for participants to complete specific tasks. Mimic real-world urgency and demonstrate how pressure influences decisions and outcomes.

*Note: This list of activities has been curated to ensure accessibility for participants who might not be comfortable with an immersive experience yet. It avoids putting any one person under scrutiny or on the spot to come up with creative responses

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Immersive Mechanics/ Activities

Mindfulness Exercises
Ask participants to close their eyes and guide them through a vivid narrative spoken by an actor or facilitator. The actor describes an experience in detail (e.g., waiting in the ER), prompting participants to imagine themselves in that situation.

Fragmented Information
Divide participants into 2 sections and provide incomplete or conflicting data. Challenge them to come to a decision given their information and highlight the differences in decisions.

Prioritisation Simulation
Present participants with a collection of tasks, requests, or information—this could be in the form of an inbox, a stack of documents, a queue of patients, or a digital dashboard. Ask them to sort, prioritize, or respond within a set time limit.

Trade-off Auction
Set up an activity where participants "bid" resources (time, budget, staff) on competing priorities. Track what they spend and the trade-offs they're forced to make to meet their goals.

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Immersive Experience Design Template

Set Design	Event	Sub-event	Experience	Materials Needed
Where will the scene take place? *Tip: Ensure no more than 1-2 sets for your experience*	*One sentence outlining what the key point of this scene is*	*Write out detail about how this plays out*	*Eg: Actor speaking, Narrator voiceover, Immersive Mechanic (name)*	*Materials needed for this scene, including:* ● *Props for the set* ● *Assets for moments of interaction, if any*

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Put it all together

- Design your agenda for the day
- Split the immersive experiences into separate parts of the day
- Design breakout sessions after each one to facilitate discussions, brainstorm ideas, and come away with outputs based on your goals for the event

Note:
- ❖ Give participants a few minutes after the experience to reflect, process, and internalise the experience
- ❖ Keep your breakout session activities simple and focused on 1-2 key outcomes
- ❖ Keep the size of each breakout session to no more than 10-15 participants
- ❖ Anchor the discussions to the stories experienced in the immersive event as a jumping off point

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