



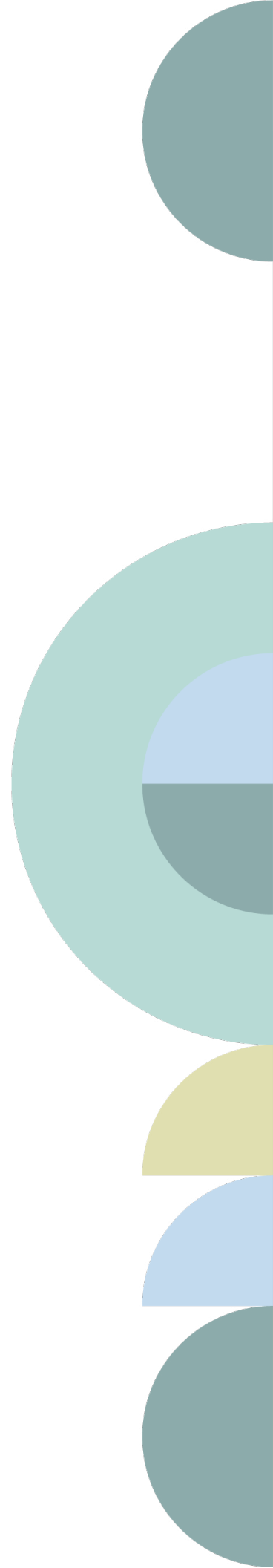
# HOW TO MAKE YOUR DESIGN STORIES SHAREABLE




PRAGMATIC  
—INSTITUTE—

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HAVE YOU EVER worked on a design presentation that took weeks to develop and was never discussed again? Whether you're speaking to stakeholders or teammates, delivering stories that actually motivate your audience to take action is no easy feat.

This ebook will help you transform your storytelling through “shareability.” Discover strategies to engage your audience and motivate them to spread your message—expanding the reach of design. More influence can help you achieve goals like earning a promotion, hiring additional design staff or getting buy-in on user research.

We'll provide story-sharing techniques to help you guarantee understanding, scale your message, articulate calls to action and promote wider sharing. Plus, find practical, real-life examples of shareability in action. You'll be armed with the knowledge to give your stories wheels—helping you achieve your design goals and amplify your impact.

1

# ENCOURAGE ACTIVE LISTENING

Simply telling a story isn't enough to guarantee your message will stick. It's essential to engage your audience and foster active listening throughout your presentation to make it shareable.

## TECHNIQUE: POLLING

Ask stakeholders to connect and “acknowledge receipt” of your story by having them participate through polling, with real or digital props or physical signaling (e.g., hand raises).

Other approaches might include:

- 1. Asking open-ended questions:** Encourage your audience to think critically with the content by asking questions that require more than a simple yes or no response.
- 2. Cold calling:** While this strategy is popular in college classrooms, it could also play a role in your presentation. Ask someone in the audience to contribute their perspective (just make sure the question is clear). This encourages participation from the whole group.
- 3. Interactive Quizzes or Game:** Use an online platform to create a quiz or game your audience can participate in during your presentation to help reinforce key points.

**BENEFIT:** Asking stakeholders to reflect and respond to what’s being said helps them retain information. It also helps the storyteller read the room, adapting a story in real time to make sure it lands.

**EXAMPLE:** Pragmatic Institute’s *Influence Through Storytelling* course starts off with a silent poll. The instructor shares a scenario aloud and asks attendees to copy and paste an emoji on the Miro board every time they hear a situation or data point they relate to, which creates input and a sense of community.



**Designers.**  
**We've got problems.**



**Instructions:**

When you hear something relatable—find an appropriate emoji, copy it and paste it somewhere on the frame above.



## 2

# MAKE IT STICKY WITH REPETITION

Repetition is key if you want people to share your message with others. Enable and encourage re-telling to solidify concepts in the minds of your audience members. You can weave in repetition by summarizing key points throughout your presentation and using memorable analogies and metaphors.



## TECHNIQUE: **ENABLE AND ENCOURAGE RE-TELLING**

After sharing your story, ask your audience to break into pairs. Assign each pair the task of quickly retelling the story from another perspective or for a different audience. Encourage creativity and out-of-the-box thinking.

After the allotted time, you can invite people to share their adaptations with the larger group. This provides an opportunity for everyone to hear the story again.

**BENEFIT:** This activity helps stakeholders adapt your story for different audiences in a safe space, with feedback. By asking listeners to synthesize and retell a story, we ensure that they can play it back and flex it.

**EXAMPLE:** Try explaining it like you would at a family gathering. Let's say you're trying to enable your sales team to tell a cohesive story about your agency's design services. You can share that story from the design team's perspective. Then, have the sales team pair up to retell that same story to each other. Provide stimuli that ask them to tell it differently (e.g., to a technophobe or to an aunt or uncle at a holiday gathering).

3

# DON'T KEEP THEM IN SUSPENSE

Sometimes your audience wants to know the ending first, and that's okay. Create a simple story summary to quickly telegraph findings or avoid surprises. Think of it as providing a movie trailer to set the audience's expectations.



## TECHNIQUE: CONSIDER AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An executive summary gives a clear overview of key takeaways from the presentation. Start by summarizing the main ideas. From there, focus on the most important points and their impact. Mirror the structure of your presentation in the summary so that your audience can anticipate what's coming next.

**EXAMPLE:** Executive summaries don't have to be pretty. They're typically one page or slide that helps your stakeholder understand the "what," "how," and "why now" of your story.

Imagine you're presenting to higher ups the results of a project that focuses on improving the user experience of your company's mobile app. Before diving into the details, you might provide an executive summary that looks something like this:

- **Objective:** Enhance the user experience of our mobile app to increase user satisfaction and drive a 15% increase in in-app purchases over the next three months
- **Key Findings:** Through user testing and feedback, we identified pain points related to the navigation menu, product search functionality and checkout process
- **Recommended Improvements:**
  - Redesign the navigation menu for easier access to key features
  - Implement a more powerful search engine with improved filtering options
  - Streamline the checkout process with a simplified payment flow and clearer calls to action

**BENEFIT:** You'll help time-crunched stakeholders focus on your story by exposing material quickly before they make the investment. This technique prevents them from interrupting your story with high priority questions, allowing for a smoother presentation. And it's another way to incorporate repetition to improve retention.



## 4

# CATALYZE PROGRESS WITH A CALL TO ACTION

Rip a page out of the direct marketing playbook. Use a call to action, or CTA, to help your stakeholders understand what you want them to do with that information. If we create strategic stories to achieve certain goals, how might we enlist our audience to help accomplish them?

## TECHNIQUE: BE DIRECT ABOUT WHAT YOU EXPECT

Communicate your desired outcome clearly, with motivating language. Use strong verbs like “join,” “start,” or “discover” that ask your audience to take the next step.

Make sure your call to action stands out in visual presentations. You might use contrasting colors or bold typography to draw attention. Explicitly state how your stakeholder can take action or support your efforts.

**EXAMPLE:** Habitat for Humanity is an organization that tells powerful stories about the impact of its work: building homes for families in need. Calls to action ask the audience to donate money or volunteer their time to support the cause, for example, “Help us build a better future for families in need. Donate \$50 today to provide the materials for a new home, or sign up to volunteer at a local construction site.” By incorporating this CTA, Habitat for Humanity can spur increased support and tangible results.

**BENEFIT:** Providing a CTA draws a clear line between the story you’ve shared and desired outcomes, enlisting your audience in fulfilling that mission.



**Habitat for Humanity**



A young child's cry shatters the quiet. A wet, moldy ceiling has collapsed on him -- the reality of substandard housing. His family is waiting to move into a safe new Habitat house. Please help us finish their home.

\$400 Raised

[See Who Has Donated](#)

\$400 Goal

Make a Donation

Become a Fundraiser

Share



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# GAMIFY IT

Transform your story into a fun, engaging experience. By gamifying your story, you'll incentivize your audience to share your message.

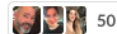
## TECHNIQUE: USE INCENTIVES TO PROMOTE SHARING

How can you make a story “go viral”? It helps to incentivize sharing. Encourage your audience to compete for a prize or recognition by sharing your story with others, creating a sense of excitement and urgency.

**EXAMPLE:** The Pragmatic Institute marketing team wanted everyone in the company to internalize its newly refreshed brand. So team members invited participation in company-wide sweepstakes—asking employees to share stories of their colleagues embodying the brand attributes in a designated Slack channel. At the end of each month, both the story sharers and subjects were entered in sweepstakes for a gift certificate.

**BENEFIT:** Encouraging others to share your message means viral marketing that can quickly spread your message throughout your organization. Gamifying your message also adds a fun element, creating a community keen on helping you reach your objectives.

#brandstories ◀▶



**Eddie Gordon** 1:09 PM

This month's winners from the [#brandstories](#) Slack channel are ...

[@Cali](#)

and

[@Kelsey](#)

Congratulations and thank you for exemplifying the attributes of the Pragmatic Brand!

B I

Message #brandstories



## 6

# KEEP SHARING THE STORY AFTER IT'S OVER

Sharing your story after the initial delivery keeps your message at the forefront of your audience's minds. One effective way to achieve this is by leaving behind physical artifacts that remind your audience of your story.

## TECHNIQUE: LEAVE PHYSICAL ARTIFACTS

Placemats, personas, posters, books, wallet cards, magnets—physical artifacts help stakeholders keep your message front and center. Design them to encapsulate the key points of your story. You can also offer practical resources, such as illustrations, checklists or templates that enable your audience to apply the insights to their work.

**EXAMPLE:** Imagine you just presented a new design concept to a client, showcasing how their website can be revamped to improve user experience and engagement. To ensure that your story continues to resonate with the client even after your presentation is over, you decide to leave behind some user personas. You could print these personas on cards or posters, allowing your client to easily refer to them when discussing future design decisions.

**BENEFIT:** These keepsakes make your story easier to share and create a sense of permanence for your message.



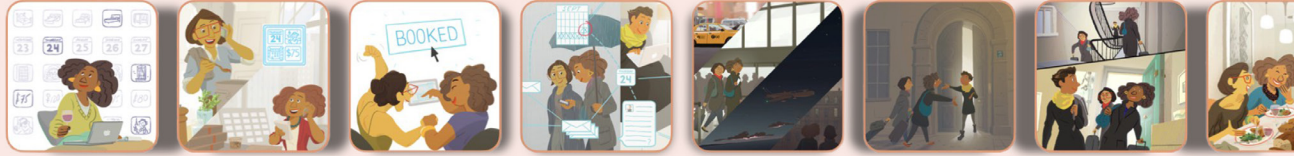
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# GRAB YOUR “CUSTOMER” FOR A QUICK MEETING

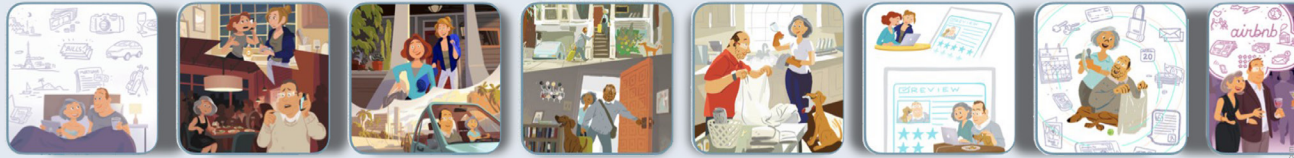
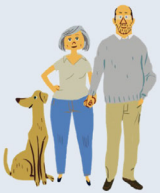
Leverage mobile, user-centered artifacts to engage your audience and keep your message accessible on the go. This will help your story reach a wider audience and drive greater impact.



## Guest experience



## Host experience



## TECHNIQUE: EMPLOY MOBILE, USER-CENTERED ARTIFACTS

By designing mobile artifacts, you can create content that is easily viewable and accessible. You can also leverage mobile-first presentations, interactive visualizations, or surveys to engage your audience.

**EXAMPLE:** Airbnb employs storyboards to illustrate the guest and host experience within their app. These storyboards, which are framed and displayed throughout the office, serve as a constant reminder of the user journey and help guide decision-making.

When discussing a specific moment in the user journey, team members are encouraged to reference the relevant storyboard to ensure that the user's experience remains at the center of the conversation. Using portable artifacts like these storyboards, Airbnb fosters a culture that prioritizes the user experience and keeps its story alive.

**BENEFIT:** Content can be easily shared and consumed. Align cross-functional team members on the human they are designing for and use that story as the measure for decision-making.



# Influence Through Storytelling

Shareability just one factor contributing to an strategic story. Learn how to craft strategic stories that achieve goals, align stakeholders and inspire action in Pragmatic Institute's *Influence Through Storytelling* course.

This training is perfect for designers—in practices like UX, product, service and digital design—who want to grow their impact.

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.

**Register Now**



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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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