Experience Definition Through Storyboarding

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Abstract
The “Experience Definition through Storyboarding” studio will offer participants the opportunity to design compelling experiences from a user/audience perspective, using the storyboarding process as the primary ideation tool.

Studio organizers will present an overview of their methodology, providing examples of their techniques in action and comparing it to other approaches. They will demonstrate how they use storyboarding in their practice, using the same tools and techniques that the studio participants will use. Following the demonstration, participants will form teams and collaboratively design an experience using the storyboarding process. Lastly, studio organizers will facilitate a group critique session and offer closing thoughts on employing this methodology in one’s creative TEI practice.

Keywords Human-centered, product definition, user interface, contextual, storyboard, prototype, technique

ACM Classification Keywords H5.m. Information interfaces and presentation (e.g., HCI): Miscellaneous. D.2.2 Software Engineering: Design Tools and Techniques. H.5.2. Information interfaces and presentation (e.g., HCI): User Interfaces.

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**Studio Proposal**
Traditionally, the areas of filmmaking and tangible embedded and embodied interfaces have seen almost no overlap. While both are creative endeavors requiring deep domain knowledge, they appear on the surface to have little in common. We (the studio organizers) believe that this chasm, and the larger issue of artificial divides between many creative practices, has been detrimental to the audience’s experience. Whether it is film, music, sculpture, design or TEI – all of these media require an audience to complete the experience. Particularly in digital experiences, which are active media, an audience is required to build a “narrative” with the creator/author. And the best way to write that narrative is through the use of storyboarding during the ideation, or concept-generation, phase of a project.

Over the last several years, the design team at gravitytank (spanning industrial, interactive, motion and communication designers) has used storyboarding as their primary ideation tool and has shared this methodology with clients, colleagues and students in workshops and seminars. Long before determining the form, features or underlying technologies, the team’s focus is on the audience, the end user. What will the experience be like for the audience? What are we trying to communicate to them (i.e., what is our intent)? How will they interact with the experience? How might the system respond? Through an empathetic, audience-centric starting point, we have found that the work, across a wide range of media, is far more engaging as a result. And we achieve this through the heavy use of an iterative storyboarding process.

This studio requires no prior skills or experience, aside from an empathetic perspective and a desire to work differently. This studio is best suited to TEI creators who are looking to revitalize their practice. While storyboarding does involve drawing, the use of templates and other techniques allow participants of all sketching talents to embrace the methodology.

Our Studio consists of four phases: an introduction to our methodology, a brief demo of the methodology in action, a facilitated team exercise, and a presentation and recap phase.
Hour 1 – introduction to our methodology: The studio coordinators will introduce storyboarding as an ideation tool, presenting the benefits of the approach and how it differs from traditional experience and interface design methodologies.

Hours 1-1.5 – demo of the methodology: Studio organizers will demonstrate how they use storyboarding as an ideation tool, focusing on the techniques and tools that the studio participants will use.

Hours 1.5-3.5 – facilitated team exercise: After a demonstration of the methodology in action, the studio participants will divide into groups of 3-4 and collaboratively create a story, design an experience from the user perspective, and produce storyboards, detailing the features and flow of the experience. They will create these storyboards on individual sheets of paper and then assemble them on foam-core boards to present back to the studio. The studio organizers will provide the participants with example concepts to help accelerate the story and storyboard development.

Hours 3.5-4 – presentations and recap: Upon completing the exercise, each team will present their storyboards to the studio participants and solicit feedback. The studio organizers will facilitate the presentations and offer final thoughts on the opportunities for the studio participants to use these techniques in their practices.

**Studio Topics to be covered**
The following topics will be covered in the studio: designing interactive experiences; traditional ideation methods; the importance of context and empathetic design; storyboard development and simple illustration techniques; creating storyboard templates; basics of character development, narrative arcs and three act structures.

**Studio Learning Goals**
By its very nature, Tangible Embedded & Embodied Interfaces require interaction, which means that an audience is engaging with the work. And to make the work as compelling, engaging and relevant as possible, the design of the experience must be undertaken from the audience’s perspective. To accomplish this, the studio organizers have pioneered an ideation methodology built on storyboarding, an easily accessible tool that it the cornerstone of the film and animation industries. Participants will emerge from this studio with hands-on experience with a process that can fuel their creative work.

**Studio Supporting Web Documents**
Additional online materials detailing the storyboarding process, storyboard templates, narrative development and links to relevant content (recommended books, authors, etc.) will be provided on a host site (URL to be determined). After the conference, the presentation and work materials from the studio will be posted, providing participants with a wealth of reference materials.