

# Scenario How To

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TBD

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## Abstract

A scenario is an easily accessible story or narrative to make an application live. A good scenario is highly specific and articulated entirely in the problem domain: the native world of the users. An important function of a scenario is to enable specific (*quantified, relevant, explicit*) discussions.

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version: 0.1

status: planned

20th February 2002

# 1 Introduction

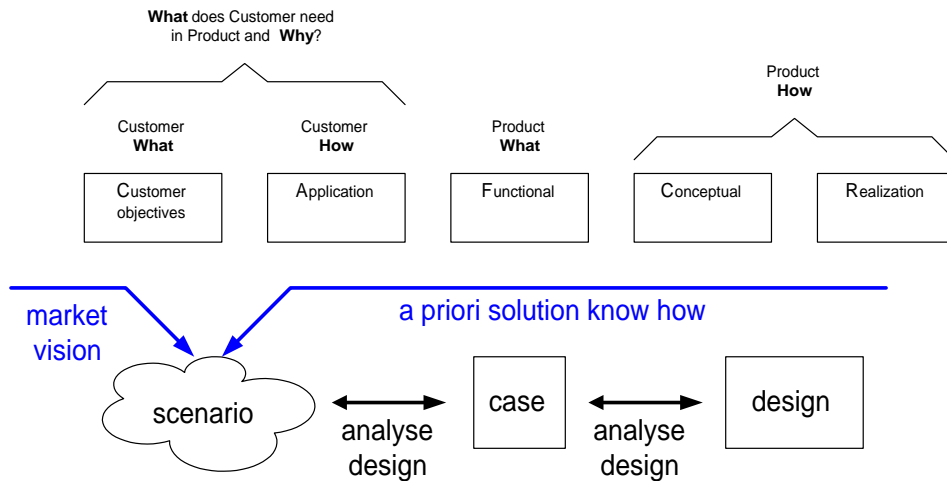


Figure 1: From scenario to design

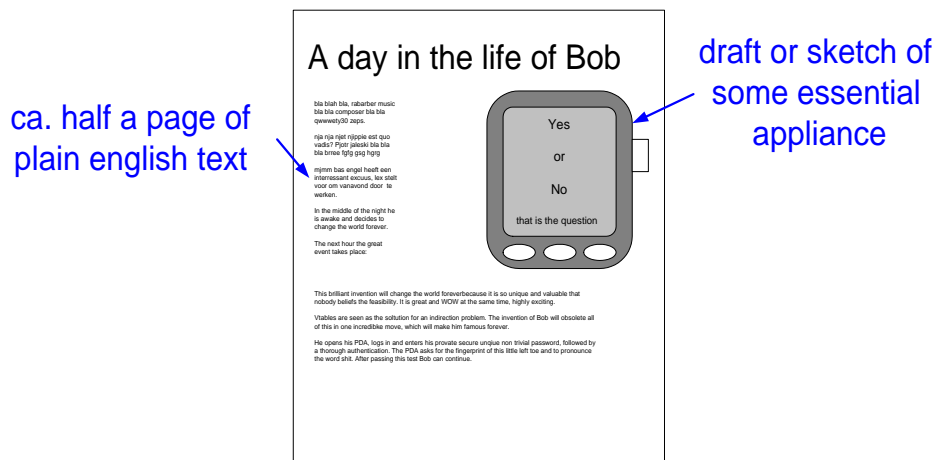


Figure 2: Example scenario layout

# 2 Criteria

Table 2 shows the criteria for a good scenario. It is recommended to assess a scenario against this checklist and either improve a scenario such that it meets all the criteria or to reject the scenario.

- purpose
- scope
- viewpoint, stakeholders
- visualization
- size (max 1 A4)
- recursive decomposition, refinement

Table 1: *points of attention*

- accessible, understandable
- important, valuable, appealing, attractive
- critical, challenging
- frequent, no exceptional niche
- specific

Table 2: *Criteria for a good scenario*

## 2.1 Accessible, understandable

The main function of a scenario is to make the opportunity or problem communicable with all the stakeholders. This means that the scenario must be accessible and understandable for all stakeholders.

The description or presentation should be such that all stakeholders can *live through, experience* or *imagine* the scenario.

A scenario is not a sheet of paper, it is a living story.

## 2.2 Important, valuable, appealing, attractive

The opportunity or problem (idea, product, function or feature) must be significant for the target customers. This means that it should be important for them, or valuable; it should be appealing and attractive.

Most scenario's fail on this criterium. Some so-so opportunity (whistle and bell-type) is used, where nobody gets really enthusiastic. If this is the case more creativity is required to change the scenario to an useful level of importance.

## 2.3 Critical, challenging

The purpose of the scenario is to learn, define, analyse new products or features. If the implementation of a scenario is trivial, nothing will be learned. If all other criteria are met and no product exists yet, than just do it, because it is clearly a quick win!

If the implementation is challenging, then the scenario is a good vehicle to study the trade-offs and choices to be made.

## 2.4 Frequent, no exceptional niche

Especially in the early exploration it is important to focus on the mainline, the *typical* case. Later in the system design more specialized cases will be needed to analyse for instance more exceptional worst case situations.

A *typical* case is characterized by being frequent, it is no exceptional niche which is described.

## 2.5 Specific

The value of a scenario is the specificity. Most system descriptions are very generic and therefore very powerful, but at the same time very non specific. A good scenario provides focus on a single story, one occasion only. In other words the thread of the story should be very specific.

Scenario writers sometimes want to show multiple possibilities and describe somewhere an escaping alinea to fit in all the potential goodies (Aardvark works, sleeps, eats, swims etcetera, while listening to his Wow56). Simply leave out such an alinea, it only degrades the focus and value of the scenario.

A good scenario is in **all** aspects as specific as possible, which means that:

- persons playing a role in the scenario preferably have a name, age, and other relevant attributes
- the time and location are specific (if relevant)
- the content is specific (for instance is listening for **2 hours** to songs of **the Beatles**)

This kind of specific data is often needed to assess the other criteria, to bring it more alive, and in further analysis. If during the use of the scenario numbers have to be "invented", it is often best to improve the scenario by bringing in the numbers already in the scenario.

### 3 Acknowledgements

Within the IST-SWA research group lots of work has been done on scenario based architecting, amongst others by Christian Huiban and Henk Obbink. Rik Willems helped me to sharpen the *specificity* criterium.

### References

- [1] Gerrit Muller. The system architecture homepage. /www.extra.research.philips.com/natlab/sysarch/index.html, 1999.

### History

**Version: 0.1, date: February 20 2002 changed by: Gerrit Muller**

- added criteria descriptions

Version: 0, date: January 2002 changed by: Gerrit Muller

- Created, no changelog yet