STORYTELLING & HANDS-ON TASKS

A CASE STUDY

THE PROJECT

THE ASK

The client needed a learning path that would help mid-career product managers level up and grow in their roles.

OUR SOLUTION

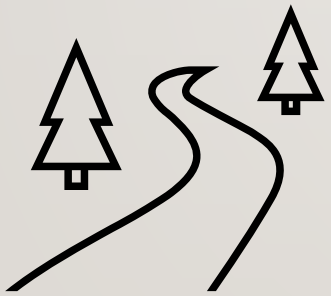
What we delivered is a Rise course in which:

- Fictionalized case studies illustrate concepts and maintain learner focus on analyses.
- Learners execute practical tasks with feedback from coaches.
- A capstone project, in which learners perform tasks they have learned and present their findings to coaches (and potentially peers) in a simulated stakeholder presentation.

STORYTELLING

"The Universe is made of stories, not of atoms."
- Muriel Rukeyser

This project weaves instruction with story throughout to help learners retain concepts and feel invested in the practical tasks.



We used storytelling at four complexity levels:

- Success story/cautionary tale pairs
- Module case studies
- A single case study for all the practical tasks
- The capstone project

STORIES TO LEARN FROM

SUCCESS STORY/ CAUTIONARY TALE PAIRS

These simple case studies provide real-world examples.

In 2007, streaming technology was still new and Netflix realized their DVD rental business model was at risk. . . .

When smartphones were new on the market, Nokia failed to recognize the intersection of smartphones and software, much to the company's. . . .

MODULE CASE STUDIES

Module case studies of fictional corporations based loosely on real-world companies describe how various concepts and analyses work.

At startup, Platypus Boots' SWOT analysis revealed that the company had a robust product but was weak in customer estimation. This was to be expected of a new company. Leadership decided to devote 25% of the budget to marketing and PR, thanks to this analysis, which. . . .

STORIES TO DO THINGS WITH

PRACTICAL TASKS

All the module-level practical tasks use the same case study of a fictional product produced by a fictional corporation and involve the learner as a character.

> As a product manager at "Sarcan," you are responsible for the introduction of their latest feature, the spleen monitor. Your current task is to perform a PESTLE analysis. . . .

THE CAPSTONE PROJECT

The capstone project uses another fictional case study and introduces conflict between two stakeholders. Learners are characters who must take a side and present their case.

> . . . Research this issue and create a strategy and customer roadmap. Then advocate for either Sunil's or Kaylee's position and provide a plan for moving forward with an MMP.

FEEDBACK

Each learner is assigned a coach, who is a more senior product manager in their organization.

The coach provides feedback both according to the provided rubric and according to their own observations.

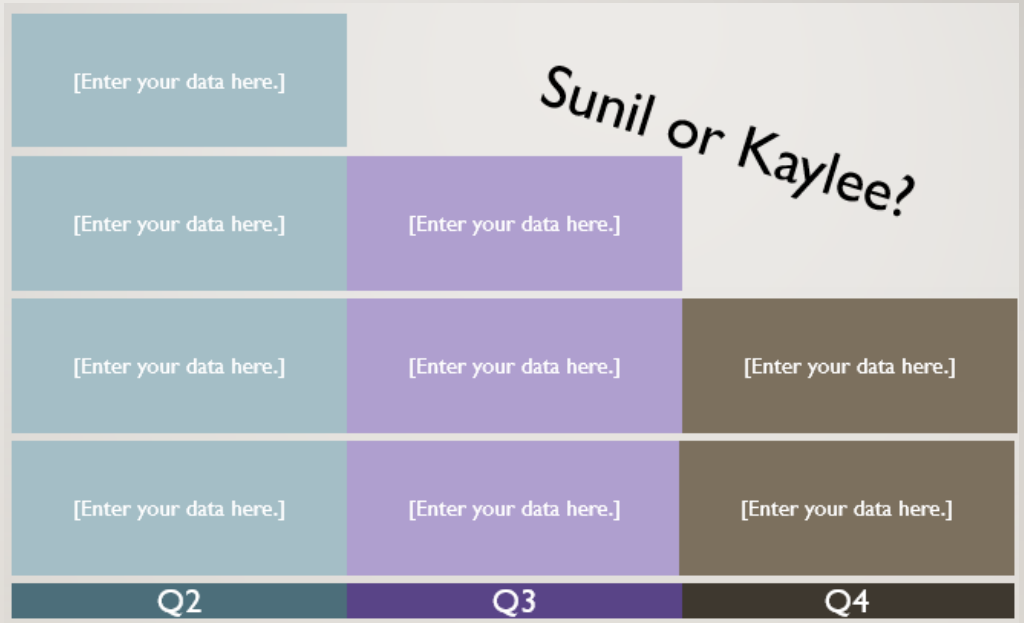
The rubric is also provided to learners, who use it to guide their work.

	Meets Some Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
Clarity of Reasoning	Your recommendations and stated goals are either not well-aligned or not well-explained.	Your recommendations address your stated goals but may leave out important considerations.	The alignment between your recommendations and stated goals is very clear.
Foresight	Your recommendations will remain reasonable only if the market does not change.	You have either a strong assessment of potential market shifts or a reasonable and constructive risk assessment but not both.	You take into account potential shifts in the market and your risk assessments are reasonable and constructive.
User-Centricity	Your approach prioritizes your team or organization over the customer.	Your approach takes solving customer problems into account.	Your approach is fully centered on solving a problem for customers.
Pertinence	Your metrics are not relevant or are unlikely to provide insights that help you achieve your goals and mitigate risks.	Your metrics have been selected to provide insights that help you achieve your goals and mitigate risks.	Your metrics have been selected to provide insights that help you achieve your goals and mitigate risks while setting your product up for success in a volatile market.
Personalized Feedback	Yuliya, I really enjoyed reading your analysis of how an organization might approach the type of problem set up for you in the practical task for this module. It reminds me of the		

THE CAPSTONE PROJECT

The capstone project has some flexibility and can be adjusted to suit client need:

- Simple: Each learner presents their product roadmap and strategy to their coach and receives feedback.
- Complex: A festive business event in which a cohort of learners present their product roadmap and strategy to receive feedback from all the coaches and one another.



THE RESULTS

The course was well-received by product managers. Learners reported that they gained value from the hands-on learning opportunities and enjoyed the way storytelling was used to illustrate concepts and frame practical tasks.

- The approach permitted learners to focus on their own strengths and weaknesses, filling any gaps in their own experience.
- Personalized coaching helped forge bonds between mid-level and senior product managers, promoting future collaboration.