Projects

A Journey to Leadership

Help Layla Become a Better Leader

Begin Scenario

Branched Scenario

Project 1: Branched Scenario

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Experience The Prototype

This scenario-based eLearning experience helps female professionals make appropriate decisions and put leadership soft skills to the test. It gives them the opportunity to overcome common behavioural pitfalls, and put into practice the skills that are often necessary to advance a career. It was built using Storyline 360, Affinity Designer, Adobe XD, and Canva.

Experience the project immediately or continue to see details of the ideation and analysis stages, as well as the design process.

Audience: Mid-senior level professionals, identifying as female.

Responsibilities: Instructional Design, eLearning Development, Graphic Design.

Tools Used: Articulate Storyline 360, Adobe XD, Affinity Designer, Canva

The Problem

CareUnited is a concept organisation dedicated to supporting women's issues in developing countries through training and investment in a diverse range of projects, such as micro-financing, community building, and education in gender empowerment.

The organisation have recently received some negative press attention because of a drastically low number of females in high-senior positions. This represents a notable incoherence with the organisation´s values and mission, and could threaten the organisation's relationship with financial stakeholders and funding partners.

Organisational psychologists identified a number of behaviour patterns that were negatively affecting career advancement for female identifying professionals, such as an over-valuing of expertise over networking. While unconscious bias against women was identified as a major factor, it was noted that many of the soft skills related to leadership could be improved. This eLearning project is part of a larger initiative to support the organisation´s female workforce in developing these skills.
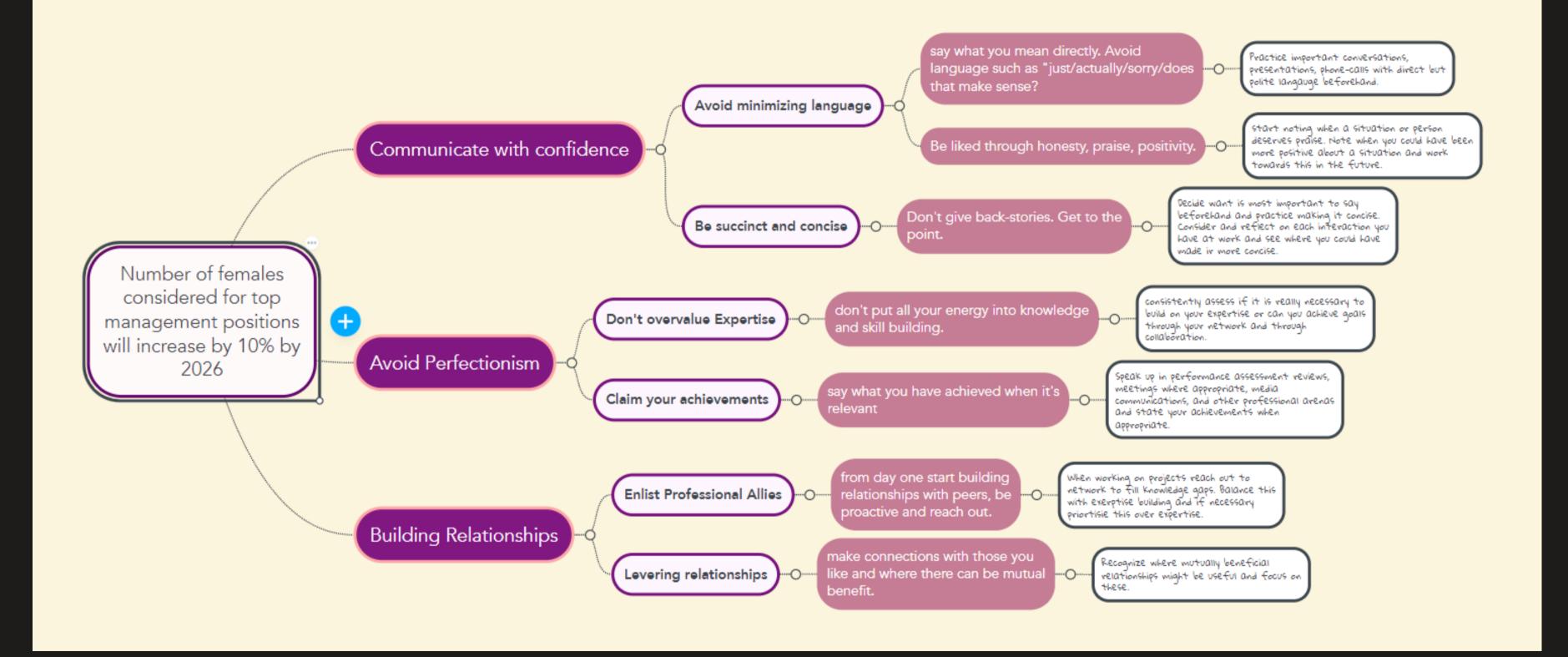
The Solution

The organisation developed a multifold strategy to tackle the issue. First a number of experts were invited to uncover the root of the problem. Using in-depth needs analysis, internal reports, focus groups, and interviews, these experts identified a number of issues at the root of the problem, including unconscious bias, and poor internal communication. Another root cause was female behavioural trends that negatively impact on career progression. They decided that a training program could help to tackle the issue.

Before looking at training specifically, we strategized possible broader solutions, including workshops, a mentorship program, and a female support network. Finally, based on the behaviour changes the organisation was looking to achieve, we decided that a set of branched scenario elearning experiences would be an effective part of the overall strategy. It is important to note, that since these are complex behavioural habits, the branched scenarios form just one part of an overall training and support plan.

Action Mapping

I created an action map with the SME (organisation psychologist) to identify what behaviours were impeding women's progression towards higher leadership positions. Once, we had set out a multifold overall strategy, we then focussed on the branched scenario aspect. We worked together to establish in what situations these behaviours were causing the most damage, and what behavioural changes could positively impact our goal. This served as the basis for the design of the scenarios. The following image shows the resulting action map.

Number of females considered for top management positions will increase by 10% by 2026

Communicate with confidence

Avoid minimizing language
say what you mean directly. Avoid language such as "just/actually/sorry/does that make sense?"

Practice important conversations, presentations, phone-calls with direct but polite language beforehand.

Be liked through honesty, praise, positivity.
Start noting when a situation or person deserves praise. Note when you could have been more positive about a situation and work towards this in the future.

Be succinct and concise
Don't give back-stories. Get to the point.

Decide want is most important to say beforehand and practice making it concise. Consider and reflect on each interaction you have at work and see where you could have made it more concise.

Avoid Perfectionism

Don't overvalue Expertise
don't put all your energy into knowledge and skill building.

consistently assess if it is really necessary to build on your expertise or can you achieve goals through your network and through collaboration.

Claim your achievements
say what you have achieved when it's relevant

Speak up in performance assessment reviews, meetings where appropriate, media communications, and other professional arenas and state your achievements when appropriate.

Building Relationships

Enlist Professional Allies
from day one start building relationships with peers, be proactive and reach out.

When working on projects reach out to network to fill knowledge gaps. Balance this with exerptise building and if necessary priortisie this over expertise.

Levering relationships
make connections with those you like and where there can be mutual benefit.

Recognize where mutually beneficial relationships might be useful and focus on these.

Text-based Storyboard

Once the action map was completed, I began working on a text-based storyboard that incorporates these key actions and behaviours into a cohesive narrative. I framed the scenario as a female professional's struggle to develop better leadership skills and move up the career ladder.

I chose common scenarios where female identifying professionals tend to struggle to put leadership skills into practice and default to more familiar tendencies in the workplace. These were identified as common missed opportunities for professional growth. Question prompts appear featuring correct choices and realistic distractors as the learner goes through the scenario. I incorporated a mentor in the form of a career coach to provide assistance and simulate the guidance in a realistic way.

Selecting an incorrect choice would require the learner to either try again immediately or lead them through an extended sequence where the main character sees the frustrating consequences of her actions at work, providing feedback. This approach highlights a variety of realistic outcomes, including the character becoming burned out from directing her efforts in the least productive direction.

Slide 1.9: Layla's New Project

Prompt

Layla has put herself forward to organise the 50th anniversary conference for CareUnited.
Button: Continue

Visual Notes

Picture of Layla in a meeting with her boss and co-worker. In a speech bubble, she expresses her interest in leading the project.
Animated lightbulb icon to represent Layla's idea.

Programming Notes

Jump to Slide 1.10 (Layla's Dilemma) when user selects Continue button.

Slide 1.10: Layla's Dilemma

Prompt
Later she realises she doesn't know a lot about the legal aspects of running this kind of large event.
Button: Continue

Visual Notes
Picture of Layla with a pondering expression.
Moving Animation of cogs to represent her thinking process.

Programming Notes
Jump to Slide 1.11 (Layla's First Choice) when user selects Continue button.

Slide 1.11: Question 1

Prompt
What should Layla do?

Choice A (not good): Put in extra hours to study what she needs to know and improve her expertise.
Choice B (ok): Email her boss and ask to be assigned a more knowledgeable co-worker for help.
Choice C (good): Brainstorm her contacts who might know about the matter and ask someone for help.

Button: Submit

Visual Notes
Ask Sam icon at top left corner.
Animated icons of a book, email, and phone represent actions for each option.

Programming Notes
If user selects Choice A and clicks submit, jump to Question 1 Choice A Consequence Part 1 (not good) slide.
If user selects Choice B and clicks submit, jump to Question 1 Choice B Consequence Part 1 (ok) slide.
If user selects Choice C and clicks submit, jump to Question 1 Choice C Consequence Part 1 (good) slide.
If user clicks "Ask Sam" icon, jump to Ask Sam Advice Choice 1 slide.

Question 1: Choice A Consequence Part 1 (Not Good)

Prompt

Layla puts in some extra hours to get really familiar with event organisation legislation. She spends so much time on this, she feels exhausted by the end of the week.

Button: Continue

Visual Notes

Layla looking upset, tired, and burned out at her desk.

Slider appears at top of screen, not yet moving.

Animated cog icons represent her over-working/anxious mind.

Programming Notes

Jump to Question 1 Choice A Consequence Part 2 slide when user selects continue.

Question 1: Choice A Consequence Part 2 (Not Good)

Prompt
She has no energy to attend an internal networking event. Her boss expresses disappointment that she couldn't attend, and begins to question her ability to cope.
Button: Begin Again

Visual Notes
Picture of Layla's boss and co-workers at an event. Boss expresses his disappointment in a speech bubble.
Animated music icons represent background music and social atmosphere.

Programming Notes
Slider moves left towards unhappy Layla's icon and icon lights up.
Jump to Question 1 slide when user selects begin again.

Visual Mockups

Once the text-based storyboard was revised, I began creating visual mockups for the scenario in Adobe XD. Adobe XD allowed me to experiment with visual elements and layouts in order to settle on something that felt polished and immersive.

I maintained a consistent visual style for each element, from the background to the characters. I also created a custom color palette based on my title slide's background illustration and got to work on editing each asset to match the color scheme and adapt the assets to express appropriate postures and expressions using Affinity Designer, a vector editing software. My colour palette was chosen to strike a balance female empowerment (purple), earthiness (green), and professional integrity (grey).

I used Canva to design animated icons and images for each slide to add movement and a more immersive feel.

Satisfied with the look and feel of my mockup, it was time to create the prototype in Articulate Storyline 360 to further refine the elements and implement interactivity. I tested this prototype with various users, and based on the feedback, corrected any errors and also added some further interactivity in the form of a moving icon which transitions from one slide to the next.

Begin Scenario

Continue

Go Back

Go Back

Title

Body Text

Features

Custom Visuals: I sourced each visual asset from an image repository and edited them using Affinity Designer to maintain an immersive and cohesive look. This included resizing, editing layers, recoloring individual elements, and merging assets.

Customed GIFS: I sourced and adapted GIFs for each visual scene to add a sense of motion.

Gamification - Layla progress slider: I incorporated the slider as light gamification to help boost learner engagement and contextualize the characters goals and progress. Seeing the slider increase or decrease alongside choices, provides immediate feedback while building toward the user's sense of achievement.

Prescriptive Feedback - Mentor: For each question, the learner can access a mentor named Sam, the main character's career coach, for advice and a nudge towards the right decision. This mentor helps steer the learner toward the correct behavior while providing explanations for why that choice is effective. I created the custom mentor button using Affinity Designer to incorporate the mentor cleanly into each question prompt.

Visual Paths: Throughout the scenario, there are visual paths in the form of a moving icon and slide transitions that move the prompts in various directions. I added the moving icon into the experience to create an animated look.

Underlying Learning Theory

Constructivism (Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky): Branched scenarios align with constructivism by allowing learners to make decisions and see the consequences, encouraging them to construct knowledge through experience

Situated Learning (Jean Lave, Etienne Wenger): Branched scenarios can be designed to simulate real-world situations, providing learners with a context-rich environment to make decisions and experience the consequences within a relevant setting.

Cognitive Load Theory (John Sweller): I needed to consider the complexity of decision-making and ensure that the cognitive load was manageable, allowing learners to focus on the learning objectives rather than being overwhelmed by the decision-making process.

Experiential Learning (David Kolb): This scenario provides learners with a virtual experience where they can actively participate, make decisions, and learn from the outcomes, aligning with the principles of experiential learning.

Problem Based Learning (Howard Barrows, John Seely Brown): The experience involves decision-making in a somewhat complex situation, and so aligns with the problem-solving focus of PBL.

Game-Based Learning & Storytelling (Kark Kapp): The scenario incorporates game elements into the learning process, including decision-making, consequences, and a light element of competition as the learner progresses or not. The interactive and engaging nature of the branched scenario through storytelling makes it akin to certain aspects of game-based learning.

UX design (Donald Norman) - Moments of delight: The use of the slider, relatable characters, and a mentor provide a positive emotional experience for the learner and user, which is a focus of human-centered design.

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