

May 25, 2023

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March - April Reader Feedback



A Choose Your Own Adventure Story With Survival, Sub Plots and Surprise

Greetings *|FNAME|*,

My Lead Instructional Designer Melissa loves creating branching simulation games, which aren't altogether different from the classic [Choose Your Own Adventure](#) books that my sons enjoyed reading as children. Written in an uncommon second-person point of view, the approach differs dramatically from the common first-person "I did this" and third-person "she did this" conventions. But the key focus of the stories is typically choices, which revolve around survival, sub plots and surprise... an interesting allegory to living a purposeful life.

Survival.

An adventure is an undertaking usually involving danger and unknown risks. It is an unusual and exciting event, or series of events, that typically includes a hazardous activity. There is no "for-sure" happy ending in an adventure. And sometimes these challenges take years upon years to resolve, so we can see the full arc of the story come to a satisfactory conclusion. In a very real sense, then, each of our lives is an adventure.

Early May 2022, at the beginning of treatment and based on the full cancer diagnosis, I was given a 67% chance of living 5 years. As is the case with adventures, I know that dangerous cancer cells may still lurk in my body, a risk which more Keytruda (my immunotherapy drug) might destroy. But Keytruda has caused some paralysis in my face and torso, and could do so with my heart, lungs, or any other organ in my body... making it too dangerous to continue. To mitigate risks generated by my decision to cease using the Keytruda, I've chosen to eat healthfully, continue to chip away at stressors through therapy, sleep enough each night, and exercise with zeal. Which ultimately means that May 1st was the start of my survival countdown to 5 years. This Cancer adventure's prologue is over and now it is time to turn the page to see where the next chapter of the quest for life leads.



Sub Plots.

One of my favorite authors is [Louise Penny](#), whose numerous books have been a reliable companion on this quest. It is thrilling how she makes the stories and experience feel so real, with at least three sub plots going on simultaneously. And although they may tie together at the end, along the way, you aren't quite sure how it is going. I just love a good surprise ending!

Instructional designers understand on a visceral level the target audience's key characteristics, the process(es) we are modeling in the training, and what decision-making looks like each step along the way. For each branch of a scenario, we present a good choice, a fair (or distractor) choice, and a poor choice. Then we show learners what happens as a result of each of their choices, so they can make a subsequent choice that leads them further from their goal, or closer to it. While branching simulations require a lot of deliberate thought and planning to design authentic experiences, they help us deliver exceptional changes in target learner behaviors, because we build them in alignment with best practice.



Surprise.

One of the reasons I enjoy watching SciFi television shows and movies is their tendency to focus on future "what-ifs." Sagas like the [2004-2009 Battlestar Galactica series](#) provide a dramatic exploration of human nature, bringing innovation, invention and ingenuity alive through creativity, dialogue and performances. Not to mention delivering an outstanding gut-punch, "who'd-of-thought-it-possible" surprise ending that makes this series one of my all-time favorites because I could have never foreseen it.

Well-crafted stories activate our entire brains because we have mirror neurons. When we care about a character in a book, movie or game in any significant way, our brains fire as if we are actually the ones who are in the story. We 'see' the experience and it is engrossing. That is one of the reasons why entertainment is such a profound double-edged sword. It can feel just as real as real life, and we make choices that temporarily transport us away from immediate suffering. Yet it is still simply a temporary replacement for our real adventure: life. The life-altering choices presented through family, faith, friends, work and health deliver all the danger and bliss that any fictional adventure fan can stand. But in this non-fictional adventure, each of us is the hero of the story, and the future is unwritten.



Who knows what might be around the bend for me? Who knows if the choices I make now will have a positive long-term effect, or not? For now, it is time to live and enjoy my life. Each day is an opportunity to continue to pursue my dreams, with some surprises along the way. I can celebrate today, as can you.

Adventurously yours,



Sue

Sue
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Transforming Customer Service Through An Evidence-Based Customer Satisfaction System

By: Sue Ebbers, Ph.D.



There is time-honored wisdom in business that it's far better, and less expensive, for you to keep your clients happy than attempt to constantly attract new ones. This adage also holds true for your employees, because constantly training and re-orienting new hires because of attrition is far more expensive than performance improvement interventions with existing team members. One technique for mitigating the risks for loss includes deploying and maintaining an evidence-based customer service and satisfaction system that can quickly identify any internal issues, both large and small, that undermine your organization's performance.

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