TOOL INSTRUCTIONS

Testing Your Prototype

Best to print on:

8.5 “x 11.0”

All too often, people jump into building their ideas without even stopping to ask whether users will find it useful, usable, and desirable from a product, technology or service sense and viable, feasible, and desirable from a business sense. This often results in wasted resources and frustration.

Iterative prototyping improves the probability of catching problems earlier in the process. It does so by introducing users to sketches rather than final renderings of your ideas. Use this tool to help you walk through the prototyping and testing process.

STEPS

1. As you use this tool, you should have some kind of prototype at hand to test out with various users. Note: a prototype need not be a physical and tangible thing - any new design idea for a novel process, service or even experience, can benefit greatly by having a prototype in the form of a draft or sketch. Sometimes, it’s a literal sketch of a new process.

2. Sit down by yourself or a team and start to fill out the “PLAN & ARTICULATE” part of the Testing Your Prototype tool. If you need more space to answer the questions or to sketch multiple concepts for your prototype, use scrap paper or a whiteboard. The important thing is give your idea some embodied form so that it is not simply inside your head. With that publicly visible form, i.e. a prototype, you can begin to get feedback from others such as potential users or beneficiaries of your prototype.

3. Ask someone or a group to try your prototype. Let them experience the raw form or format as-is. As they are doing so, parts of the “TEST & ITERATE” section to capture their actions, thoughts and feelings to the best of your ability. If your prototype is a thing, document how people are using it - what works, what doesn’t, what’s frustrating or delightful? If it’s a process, ask the same questions but in the context of unfolding human activity. Use as many pages of this tool/template as necessary to capture actional, verbal and emotional feedback.

4. Reflect alone or with your team to review each of the items captured. Based on feedback, determine what changes might make your idea better and/or your solution stronger. Use the “TAKEAWAY” section to document ways to improve your idea based on feedback. Repeat the entire process as you see fit. Prototyping typically ends due to practicality; there may be a hard project deadline or a sense of diminishing returns after many improvements have been made.

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TESTING YOUR PROTOTYPE

① I want to try out my solution before making a full-fledged investment in it or rolling it out. ② I want to know if users find this prototype useful, usable, and desirable. ③ I want to improve the experience where it is currently weak and amplify where it is strong.

PLAN & ARTICULATE

What solution or hypothesis do you want to test?

Build a rough model of your idea using paper, cardboard or other simple materials. Sketch out ideas of how you will construct the prototype. If the idea isn't tangible, write out the testing process.

Who will test the idea?

Whose feedback is helpful?

Where will you test the idea?

TEST & ITERATE

Have your test-users try out the prototype (in addition to something tangible, a prototype can also be a draft of a new process, service or experience). As they are interacting with the prototype, ask them to talk out loud what they are thinking and feeling. This helps identify in real-time what some of the issues and opportunities for improvement are. Repeat this process as needed.

FEEDBACK VIA ACTION

What is the user doing as he/she uses your prototype?

Record the steps you observe.

VERBAL FEEDBACK

What is he/she saying? Consider the feedback of opinions and thoughts.

EMOTIONAL FEEDBACK

What is he/she feeling? Do you sense negative (e.g. confusion, aggravation) or positive ones (e.g. delight)?

TAKEAWAY

What changes will you make to this step for the next iteration, based on the feedback above?