



WHITE PAPER

6 WAYS PROTOTYPING CAN TAKE THE GUESSWORK OUT OF PRODUCT STRATEGY

When employed correctly, rapid prototyping can be an invaluable tool in your product development process. It can provide feedback early to inform and drive product delivery and strategy.

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There's a moment in every product's lifecycle where product owners and stakeholders ask themselves three things: Does the customer want or need this? Should we do this? Can we do this? And while there are no guarantees in business (or in life), there is a way of gathering real-time data to properly define and iterate your product and remove anxiety from a launch. It's called prototyping. If you're not currently using it as a strategy, keep reading. We'll explain what you need to know and how it can benefit you.

What Prototyping Means for Your Organization

Prototyping can be used to assess and validate three things: desirability, viability, and feasibility. You'll want data to address each issue before you bring your product to market and prototyping can give it to you.

Gone are the days when a company would create a bunch of mockups, hand them over to the engineering department, and hope for the best. Prototyping allows you to quickly and iteratively test and validate your ideas before you build and deliver. That's big.

Prototyping is a fantastic tool for explaining and communicating what your product is, how it works, and the value it drives with internal and external audiences. Let's face it: business, IT, and marketing departments don't traditionally communicate very effectively. But with prototyping, you can better explain your ideas and concepts to all vested parties. This will allow your organization to focus on the most important stakeholder: the consumer.

Here are six tips on how you can use prototyping in your organization.

Leverage Prototyping as a Form Of Storytelling

A key way of thinking about prototyping is to view it as a form of storytelling. People are visual thinkers who like to see ideas in action to better understand context and intent. Prototyping can let you clarify your ideas, shape the narrative, and visualize the customer's interaction with the product.

Rapid and iterative, prototyping lets you envision how your product fits the life of your customer and can help validate that you have the right requirements. You can quickly confirm that your concept is truly going to solve customer pain by testing and evaluating customer interaction. You can then gather feedback and rapidly incorporate any necessary changes to your design to help ensure that your product can provide value and be a success.

Use It to Speed Up Your Process

Your goal is to bring your product to market as fast as possible. But slowing down and taking some time at the beginning of the product lifecycle is a strategic way to validate and define what *the right* product should be. By slowing down to speed up, you can use prototyping to answer the hard questions early in the process. Is this idea an app? Or should it be a website? How will it work? What will the experience be? Will it provide value? By illustrating, validating, and testing your idea with prototyping, you give yourself the best chance to bring the right product to your customers before you invest too much time and money building what might not be *the right* product.

The low cost of quick prototyping compared to development means teams that teams can reduce their project risk early with regular feedback from end-users and stakeholders. Problems that could derail the project down the line can be discovered and discussed before the business invests too much time and effort. Over the lifecycle of the product, that means moving fast toward what will work.

The key ingredient lies in the speed of each iteration. In a lean working environment, it allows for immediate feedback leading to improved cycle times, quality and efficiency, and letting teams focus on the consumer. It accelerates the speed at which you can develop an app. You will recoup your development costs quicker and will likely need to spend fewer resources on labor.

Consider It Intervention Design

Roger Martin of the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto wrote a [fascinating article](#) for the *Harvard Business Review* about the advantages of prototyping. As an example, he uses the relatable experience of designers hitting the “prove it” wall, which is when stakeholders are asked for evidence that the design will succeed. This is where rapid prototyping is invaluable. During each iterative test of a prototype, data is generated that the product owner can analyze. Martin compares the data to light: both a wave and a particle. It provides information about the immediate future, which becomes useful historical data by virtue of that future being experienced by the user. Martin refers to prototyping as “Intervention Design,” and says that, when deployed correctly, it informs not only your ideas but your business strategy.

Let It Help You Think like an Outsider

Prototyping can serve an outsider's perspective, which can be crucial to seeing all the variables of an idea's lifecycle and aligning them into a coherent and effective strategy. Every organization fights against status quo stasis: the instinct to talk in circles and stick with what's been done in the past. It takes a change agent inside the organization to break the pattern and move forward. Prototyping can help you serve as that change agent by having data at your disposal and treating projects as products. If your team does find problems, it can fix them during the prototyping phase, which costs far less than the development stage, or eliminate the project if feasibility isn't checking out. Prototyping takes the emotion out of your business decisions. You'll have hard data to make smart decisions.

Use It to Adopt to Market Needs Quickly

Companies that get left behind are ones that are late to adopting quick and iterative prototyping into their product strategy, and don't have a strong product owner who knows how to use it. Companies that don't get left behind embrace prototyping as part of a product-centric approach that incorporate lean UX methodologies and deliver consumer reward and functionality.

Rapid prototyping is essential for adapting quickly to changes because it uses short cycles to validate and improve a product's core design. It's not unusual to see cycles as short as a few days or a week. In the lifecycle of a product, that's fast. And fast is what you want.

There are tools like InVision to make this happen easily and comfortably. In the past a designer would have to draw each user interface, assemble a series of screens, and link them up, which would take time. The latest technologies allow you to make right in the tool, without delay, and start gathering qualitative data, which will help you later gather quantitative evidence.

Get Your Departments Speaking the Same Language

The trifecta of effective prototyping is when business, IT, and consumer interests are aligned and speaking the same language. This starts with clearly defined roles among team members. Prototyping can help an organization find this clarity. Prototyping can help you surface the data you need to cut through the noise and make a solid evidence-based decision. And when done correctly, it can result in a positive cultural shift throughout the organization.



“Collaborative design occurs when people work together so that their different points of view, bases of experience, and knowledge of the problem and its context can be blended together to yield actionable solutions,” writes Langdon Morris [in his article](#) “How To Master Rapid Prototyping.” That is the goal.

Ultimately this collaboration will help your team focus on the end user starting at the beginning of the project. This early feedback helps refine the design and reduces the risk of delays. It also means that projects will lead to results that are closer to the customer's desires.

Looking Ahead — With Magenic

Magenic focuses on educating our clients to understand the value of what they own and what it does so they can define business goals and properly invest in order to move forward with speed. We can get you started with prototyping as part of your approach and will meet you anywhere on your journey. [Contact us](#) to learn more about our Product Design and Prototype Quick Start.



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