

# Test *and* Shape

## ***Repeatedly learning and refining to improve solutions.***

Share what you're working on early and often. The current mantra in software startups is "No concept survives its first contact with the customer." That's because new ideas need to be seen and tested by those you're designing for. The feedback will help you make the concept better by shaping it in response. You don't need to agree or disagree with any of the feedback—you just need to hear it. People who are unable to receive all kinds of feedback to make their work better will struggle with the process of innovation. Don't make the mistake of keeping your work a secret. Learn to share rough ideas early and freely, striking up conversations with others, asking what they think, how they might improve it, or what they would advise. You'll get great support for your effort because you engage and listen to others' ideas.

# Test *and* Shape

Continuously learn to improve and refine your solutions.

## GET STARTED

- 1** Select a piece of work or prototype you'd like to improve and learn more about. It could be anything; a concept, presentation story flow, user research plan, marketing poster.
- 2** List what you want to learn in your test. Get hyper focused, dissect large concepts into specific testable elements and pin point 2 or 3 acute points to explore. Trying to cram too much into a single test will slow you down and result in low quality feedback. It's much faster, easier and fun to do multiple small tests than try to cover everything at once.
- 3** Prepare a 1 min introduction for your prototype and a short set of open-ended questions.
- 4** Listen. Ask probing questions to dig deeper and uncover what lies beneath each comment.  
*When someone ask questions such as "How does this work?" respond "How would you want this to work?" Continue to ask "why" up to 5 times to uncover deep seated insights.*
- 5** List the top 3-6 takeaways from the interview and the corresponding implications for further development of the prototype.
- 6** Iterate! Continue to shape your prototype by repeating this process many times.

## TEST AND SHAPE IN A NUTSHELL



Gather qualitative user feedback to uncover how to better meet the needs of your user and minimize barriers to adoption.

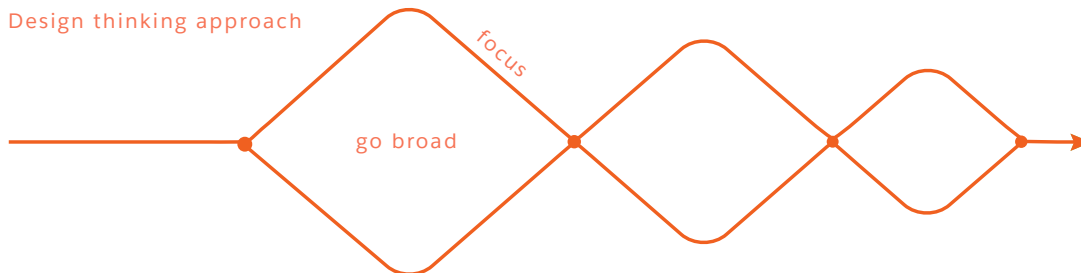
Put ideas that are in-development in front of people as early and as often as possible to learn, test assumptions, surface unknowns and unforeseen opportunity.

Make each test very specific and as lightweight as possible to move forward quickly and efficiently.

Incorporate feedback and insights from tests quickly and iteratively to shape the work for greater value.

## DAY-TO-DAY PRACTICES

Design thinking approach



To kickoff, draft 2-3 different problem statements and test out with your team, customers and peers to understand reactions, emerging questions and what is or isn't resonating.

Bring 2-3 low-fidelity prototypes to initial user research and use feedback to inform later ideation.

*e.g. interfaces, packaging, experience storyboards.*

To gather feedback about your story or business case, create a rough draft of a presentation using only 1 sentence or headline per slide and pitch to a small group. Repeat.

When debating an idea with peers—whether a feature, function or entire solution—pause and quickly prototype the key elements and show to someone else or simulate. Use what you learn to inform decision and next steps.

Use a prototype to simulate implementation steps to understand what communication or processes may be needed to support adoption.

# User Feedback with Prototypes



*Put paper, service, and interactive prototypes in front of customers and other stakeholders to get their reaction to your solution concept.*

## HOW TO

- 1 When you have a prototype of a concept, even if it's just paper, have someone else try it.
- 2 Recruit a participant, provide them with context for the idea, and ask them for their honest opinion.
- 3 Ask them to do something specific with the prototype—give them a task it supports.
- 4 As they try, have them talk out loud about what they are thinking, looking for, and trying to do.
- 5 Be helpful, but don't lead them in a direction you want to see. Observe how your prototype does or doesn't support your intended user tasks or experience.
- 6 When they stumble or can't move on, ask them what they are trying to do and what would be helpful.
- 7 After they've tried the prototype, talk more about what you're trying to do and solicit their advice.

## TIPS + TRICKS

Design your prototypes to support user activity. It's okay for them to be simple and low fidelity—they should work like good props.

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## PAIRS WELL WITH

- Paper Models
- Observation
- Service Prototypes

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## TIME

*30-120 minutes for multiples*

## TEAM SIZES

*1-2 people*

## MATERIALS

*Paper, prototypes, service prototypes, cardboard models*

# Rapid Experiments



*Early and often, try out ideas in the real world in simple ways to learn from your users. You're not validating, but rather, testing and shaping your ideas quickly.*

## HOW TO

- 1 First, articulate your insights, vision and idea on paper.
- 2 Identify the riskiest assumptions in them and brainstorm a list of potential solutions to those assumptions.
- 3 Brainstorm experiments that can be run quickly (starting today or tomorrow). Narrow down to one or two and describe what you're trying to learn.
- 4 Perform the experiment in the real world. Bring in multiple users to get feedback.
- 5 What did you learn about your hypotheses? Based on what you learned, what would you keep the same and what would you do differently?
- 6 Modify or completely change the experiment and try again to keep learning.

## TIPS + TRICKS

Be scrappy and use what you have on hand. That includes the materials, locations, and potential users you already know.

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## PAIRS WELL WITH

- Paper Models
  - Service Prototypes
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## TIME

*60-90 minutes, multiple rounds*

## TEAM SIZES

*2-4 people*

## MATERIALS

*Paper and service prototypes, cardboard models*

# Business Model Canvas



The BMC is a set of key dimensions used by startups to track the definition of their offering. The canvas is updated regularly after running tests with customers.

## HOW TO

- 1 Print a blank BMC template.
- 2 Use sticky notes to brainstorm five or more possible elements for each area of the canvas.
- 3 Step back with your team and discuss the most important elements. Debate which ones should be kept or eliminated and why. Note what you haven't thought much about.
- 4 Use this discussion to determine the next actions your team will take to test hypotheses or get other feedback from customers.
- 5 After completing each experiment or activity, update the BMC with what you've learned and determine your next experiment.
- 6 Share your business model canvas with leadership and ask for their advice and suggestions.

## TIPS + TRICKS

Don't have too many elements in each area. Treat the BMC as a live document, using it to assess where you're at and drive experimentation.

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## PAIRS WELL WITH

- Solution Maps
- User Feedback with Prototypes
- Pitch Deck

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## TIME

30-90 minutes for first version  
30 minute revisions

## TEAM SIZES

1-2 people

## MATERIALS

BMC template, sticky notes, pens

# Lo-fi Digital Stimuli



*Thinking that a mobile app might be part of your concept? Does your solution involve a website or a kiosk? Use lo-fi digital prototyping to get your ideas out and start making decisions immediately. By making it interactive, you can test it out with stakeholders or potential customers.*

## HOW TO

- 1 Begin by thinking about a primary use case. What would you like your user to do? Map out each step and decision they need to make using stickies.
- 2 Group the stickies into steps– does it make sense to select color and size at the same time? But shipping and payment should come later.
- 3 Start sketching each step in the process on a template (you can find one here– <http://bit.ly/1QpC3iq>). Draw lines to divide the space, boxes for buttons and images, and add color to draw the user's eye. Each member of the team can choose a step to draw, but look over each other's shoulder to make sure you are consistent.
- 4 Download “Marvel Prototyping” or “Prototyping on Paper” from the Google Play or Apple App Store on your smartphone or tablet. This app allows you to take photos of your interface and string them together to make them interactive. It'll guide you through simple process to set up your new app.

## TIPS + TRICKS

Find the essence of the tool and sketch that. Take inspiration from your favorite apps and websites. Search for the interaction you are looking for and try to sketch it out.

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## PAIRS WELL WITH

- Packaging Prototyping
- Storyboarding
- Concept Sheets

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## TIME

60-90 minutes

## TEAM SIZES

1-4 people

## MATERIALS

Sharpies and pens, smartphone or tablet, interface sketch template