Guide to Prototyping

Prototyping is an integral part of the design process—it allows us to think by making, to generate and refine ideas, and to communicate ideas to others in a tangible way. Prototypes allow us to try ideas quickly and gather feedback easily.

Regardless of the form, your prototype should:

1. Be tangible or interactive: This way your users can give relevant feedback.

2. Help you learn by doing: You do not want to prove that your idea works, you want to see what's working and what's not working. The best feedback makes you go back and redesign your solution, or even reconsider your challenge.

3. Answer these questions: Is it valuable for people? Are people excited about it? Does this create the feeling and behaviors we want? Is it viable? Are we on the right track?

4. Test your solution on a small scale: With less people, less expensive, shorter term, and lower stakes.

5. Be rough: A prototype is not perfect or precious. The point is to learn from your first round of testing! Then you iterate on it to make it better with every iteration.

6. Be quick: The faster you test your solution, fail, succeed, and get feedback, the faster you get to a fantastic solution!

7. Get easier with practice: Your learning curve will be steep—it will be hard at first, but once you get used to the process of experimenting, your learning will take you to new heights.

8. Be captured: By documenting your experience, you will also be able to look back on the decisions you made, what worked and didn't work, and what you have learned.

9. Gather support for creating change: Once you get results from prototyping (both of what works and what doesn't work), you'll have proof to share with others to support their buy-in.

TD4Ed | BIF SXL STUDENT EXPERIENCE LAB

Types of Prototypes

Typically, when we think of prototypes, we think of a physical product or tool. We can also prototype solutions that are more intangible—such as processes, services, interactions, and experiences. Even if the solution isn't tangible, the prototype should either be tangible or interactive so your user can have a basis to give feedback.

Choose a prototyping method that you feel best fits for your idea (use the concept description that you developed during the Imagine phase). You will be using this prototype to gather feedback.

Models
Put together a rough, simple three-dimensional representation of your idea. You can use materials readily available to you—such as paper, cardboard, pipe cleaners, fabric, and whatever else is on hand.

Mock-ups
Create sketches or simple designs of digital tools and websites on paper. Try to make it as life-sized as possible to help assess the usability. Make each new sketch a different screen to get at the flow of the interaction.

Storyboards
Visualize the complete experience of your idea over time through a series of photos, images, sketches, or even just text blocks. You don't have to be an artist—stick figures work well.

Experience map
Map out the journey or process of your idea - from before people engage with your idea to after the experience. Include what happens (the activities), how it happens (the capabilities), and who is involved (key players). Use the Experience Map worksheet provided.

Scenario/Story
Tell the story of your idea from the point of view of a user. Describe what the experience would be like for that particular person.

Video prototype
Create a short video clip that demonstrates how your solution works, and how people interact with it.

Examples of Prototypes
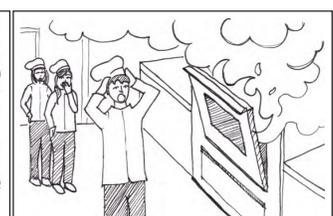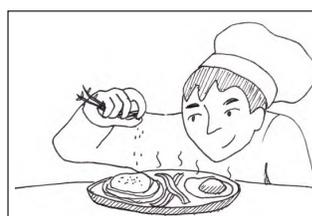
Model prototype

Mock-up prototype

From http://wireframesketcher.com/
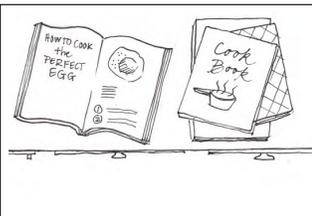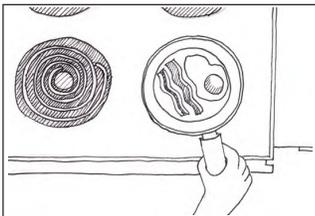
Storyboard prototype

WHEN I GROW UP   pg 1
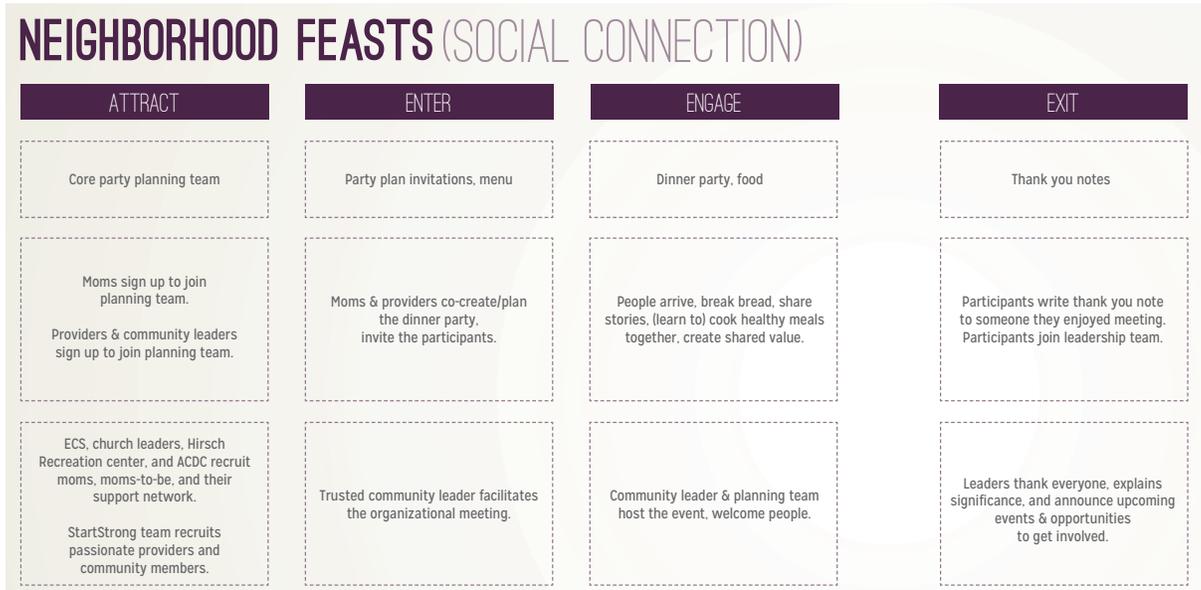

Imagine spending your whole teenage life | knowing exactly what you want to do when you grow up, | only to find out it's nothing like what you expected.

Examples of Prototypes

Experience map prototype (simplified)

NEIGHBORHOOD FEASTS (SOCIAL CONNECTION)

ATTRACT	ENTER	ENGAGE	EXIT
Core party planning team	Party plan invitations, menu	Dinner party, food	Thank you notes
Moms sign up to join planning team. Providers & community leaders sign up to join planning team.	Moms & providers co-create/plan the dinner party, invite the participants.	People arrive, break bread, share stories, (learn to) cook healthy meals together, create shared value.	Participants write thank you note to someone they enjoyed meeting. Participants join leadership team.
ECS, church leaders, Hirsch Recreation center, and ACDC recruit moms, moms-to-be, and their support network. StartStrong team recruits passionate providers and community members.	Trusted community leader facilitates the organizational meeting.	Community leader & planning team host the event, welcome people.	Leaders thank everyone, explains significance, and announce upcoming events & opportunities to get involved.

Scenario prototype

Meet Angela, a part-time clerk at a grocery store. She, and her husband Roy, have a tight-knit family of 4, where hardships in the past have only brought them closer together. Angela and her family have lived in Dallas for 6 years now, and have slowly grown their support network through getting to know some of their neighbors, being part of their church community, and taking on leadership roles within their community. One Sunday, their pastor gave an announcement about a new wellness program (1) that is personalized to fit each family who participates. After the sermon, Angela spoke with Nicole, the Wellness Promoter at her church (2). They both worked in the Youth Ministry, so Nicole already knew about their family's struggle to find good housing and their desire to eat well-balanced meals. Angela scheduled a time with Nicole (3) to come over for dinner to talk to them about the program and about their lifestyle, priorities, and goals for improving their wellbeing. In the meantime, Nicole gave each member of their family a few fun exercises (4) to get them thinking about these topics, and the info they need to register on the WIE.

Video prototype

BIF SXL
STUDENT EXPERIENCE LAB
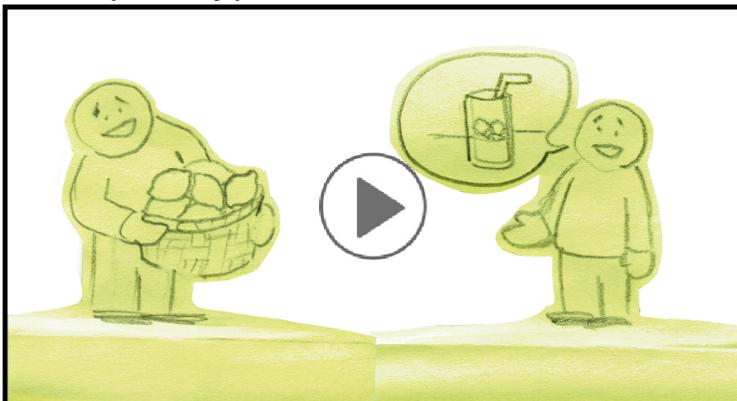
Experience Map Template

Fill in the boxes to help you reimagine the new experience people will have with your solution.

WHAT
What is happening? What's your user doing? What is the interaction? What does it feel like?

WHO
Who is your user or who are your different users? Who plays supporting roles? Who makes it happen? Who do you need buy-in from?

HOW
What processes or technologies are needed to support the experience? Where will it happen? When will it happen?

BEFORE
How do people hear about your new solution? How do they become excited about it? How do they decide to get involved?

DURING
What is the main event? What is the primary action or interaction between people? What's making people be engaged?

AFTER
What happens after the experience to keep users engaged? How can you set people up for future or futher engagement? How do people decide to help or take on responsibility? How does your solution scale?

Storyboard Template

Use this template to create a visual story of the new experience people will have with your solution.

1

2

3

4

5

6

TD4Ed

BIF SXL
STUDENT EXPERIENCE LAB