



Design Sprints

Applied Learning to Design Sprints

JUDITH CÁRDENAS, PHD.



STRATEGIES
BY DESIGN
Innovate - Create - Execute



An Introduction to Design Sprints

Any worthwhile product begins with the customer. Its purpose is to satisfy customers' needs. This is the starting point for any design or redesign project.

How do you know those needs? Does the product development team understand the customers? Has your team identified unmet needs of your customers? If this empathy doesn't exist – if it isn't concise and clear – the end products will be less helpful than possible and conceivably useless.

Design is meant to respond to a specific challenge, or big idea.

The right product is the product that delivers specific value to your customers.

The Design Sprint is a powerful approach for organizations facing specific challenges who need to find or create a product or solution. And do it quickly. Our proven framework saves time and money while embracing a human-centric approach.



Learn & Define

The Learn and Define module is the first step of the Design Sprint. Borrowing from Proctor and Gamble, this Design Sprint module introduces the experts on the team to the open question “How Might We...” . It provokes serious thought prior to jumping into a frenetic flurry of activity. This challenge becomes the opportunity for innovative design thinking.

How Might We... invites the group to participate in an exercise that results in finding appropriate opportunities and potential designs for more than one solution.

Using brainstorming and sticky notes that create short, succinct statements, posts are made on a wall or white board for the entire group to consider. Voting occurs with one vote per person and two votes for the Decider. The votes are based upon the closeness to the issue.

Once these key challenges are agreed upon, the group creates a story of the user’s journey. This map guides the group’s hypothetical production and allows additional challenges to be added to the storyboard/map as the group narrows its prototyping target.

This work is based on the premise illustrated in the website Jobs to-be-Done (<https://strategyn.com/jobs-to-be-done/>). This premise is that companies need to stop focusing on the specific product or the specific customer but should, instead, focus on the underlying process and job the customer is trying to complete. Based on the idea that people want to work more productively and inexpensively, this approach reaches a deeper understanding of these customer needs and values.

The questions, goals and statements derived in this step build the foundation for the sprint.



Ideate

The challenge is defined. The top questions are in place. Ideation begins building solutions. The goal in this step is quantity. Sticky notes are again used to identify the possibilities, as many as possible. (We go through a LOT of sticky notes!)

Each participant is given colored dots which are placed as “votes” on the various ideas. This captures the consensus around a narrower set of possibilities.

Research is then done for three or four comparative examples and models. The group is looking for real, live examples in other places that might help guide and further define its thinking.

Four- part sketching is the next step. This activity is done in a together-alone mode. Each member offers their best sketch for posting. There is no voting at this stage.

There are other tools that can be used as well. Doodling, “Crazy-eight”, three-step concept sketch and plain old note taking based on what is posted are frequently used.

Whatever combination of tools is used should result in sketches that are understandable by all the participants.



Decide

It is decision time! What exactly will the group prototype? To avoid lengthy discussion, members each write a single decision – what should be prototyped – and post that decision. Three rounds of voting narrow the choices.

This process occurs in silence. Each team member can place as many dots (votes) on a choice as they choose. If there is a question, another sticky note can be posted with the question and attached to that decision. Once all votes are captured, the author of any questioned decisions can provide an explanation. The Decider then reads all the concepts and questions, making special note of the concepts with the most votes.

Round two offers each member one vote. Without discussion, all members simultaneously place their initialed dot on their chosen prototyping concept. Once complete, each person is allowed time to explain their vote.

The Decider holds two votes and places them on the prototype they will support. This is Round three.



Prototype

All decisions have been made. The group is clear about what is needed in the final product. The storyboard illustrates the decisions and ideas in sequential order for the prototype. While it is feasible to create and complete the prototype on Day 4 of the Design Sprint, there are four final guidelines to follow.

- 1) The prototype is disposable. Testing is the crucible for the assumptions made.
- 2) The storyboard is the guide and should be followed carefully without personal editing, deletions or additions.
- 3) The Goldilocks Quality: the prototype should look like the real thing and not a façade. There are tools available to make a good product. Again, testing will verify it in reality.
- 4) Divide and conquer. Usually one person writes the prototype while other team members are there to assist in writing copy, collecting images, and doing other tasks that might arise.



Testing

Testing is where “the rubber meets the road” and is unavoidable. This provides real life feedback from people who will be using the product for the first time. In this process, assumptions and answers to the Sprint questions will be confronted and challenged.

Testing is the basis for and the heart of iteration and improvement.

The product testers should be identified prior to the start of the Sprint. Usually the initial number is five. If testing demands adjustments, this number can be increased.

This process is straightforward. One member of the group demonstrates the product. Two other members take notes, focusing on each section of the demonstration and the source of the questions and comments.

Note taking goes beyond verbal comments. Our human-centric design mandates that our group captures the feelings and emotions of the subjects testing the product as well as what they say and do.



Relearn & Iterate

This is the feedback loop required to complete the Design Sprint. The insights, suggestions and recommendations from the users and those involved in the Design Sprint group become invaluable inputs. These findings answer the questions: What went well? What could have been done differently? What could have been avoided or deleted? What should have been added?

The findings in this retrospective review determine how effective new iterations will be in improving the target product or in considering a completely different solution.