

# Imagine *and* Model

## *Making ideas tangible to share and inspire.*

Michael Polanyi, the Hungarian polymath said, “To have a great idea, you have to have lots of ideas.” The Dyson vacuum was the culmination of more than 4,000 prototypes. As for vacuums, so for innovation! Imagining lots of different ways to address a problem is called “populating the solution space.”

No problem or situation has a single solution. Great solutions often have hundreds of new ideas in them. Brainstorming and thinking up ideas any time of the day ultimately helps you create a solution that succeeds. And don't be deceived by verbal descriptions of ideas. Visualize and model them.

At first a sketch and then a paper model. Make a prototype to try. At each iteration you'll better understand your idea and get much more meaningful feedback from others.

# Imagine *and* Model

Make your ideas tangible to share and inspire.

## GET STARTED

- 1 Identify a topic to brainstorm new ideas around.
- 2 Write ideation prompts that point to a specific opportunity area, but allow for different types of solutions.  
*e.g. how might we empower frontline staff to resolve basic issues?*
- 3 Gather pieces of inspiration to stimulate your brainstorming—design attributes, user quotes, other products or services.
- 4 Generate and document lots of ideas (15+)! Visualize each idea, share with others and post where everyone can see.
- 5 Organize and prioritize ideas.  
*Have individuals vote for their top 3-5 ideas independently before discussing.*
- 6 Discuss top ideas, what's most interesting and what you need to learn more about. Agree on next steps to further explore solutions and when to reconvene.

## IMAGINE AND MODEL IN A NUTSHELL



Generate a diverse set of potential ideas to select from in order to develop the most valuable and effective solution.

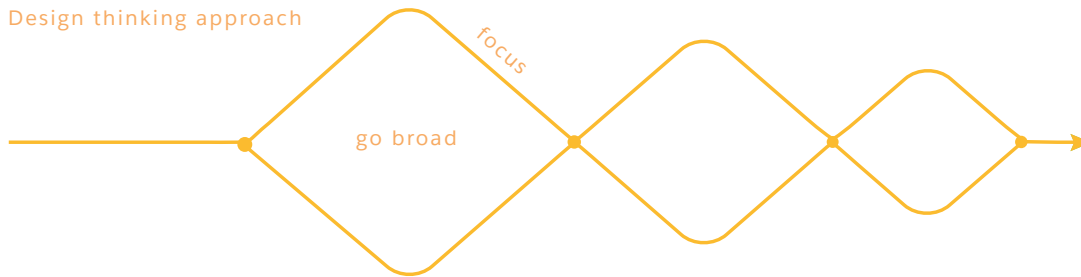
“An idea” is complex. Visualize ideas to push specificity, develop your thinking and recognize value in parts of the solution.

Use novel stimuli and include different perspectives to stimulate new ideas (it’s scientifically proven as necessary).

Use visual models to effectively communicate, facilitate collaboration and inspire others.

## DAY-TO-DAY PRACTICES

Design thinking approach



During team goal planning, have each member imagine potential goals to share and prioritize as a team.

As the work begins, have every team member document their existing ideas to help the group move past the first imagined solution.

Build a storyboard of the user experience to illustrate key pain points and use to stimulate brainstorming.

When discussing the solution to pursue, have the team generate and visualize 10+ variations before prioritizing directions.

Prototype prioritized concepts in the lightest way possible—try sketching a marker on paper—to push development and facilitate collaboration with others.

With your prototype, simulate using your solution to surface any overlooked assumptions.

# Storyboards



*Storyboards are a great way to show existing or future customer experiences. They put problems and solutions in context and make them easier to communicate and assess.*

## HOW TO

- 1 Select an aspect of a customer experience you'd like to storyboard. Often this is informed by observation or an ethnographic interview.
- 2 Use sticky notes to brainstorm key steps of the customer experience. Draw a simple picture that captures key steps. Stick figures work great!
- 3 Organize the steps into three parts: setting the stage, exposing a problem, and showing its outcome.
- 4 If you have too many, reduce the number of steps to get at the essence of the experience.
- 5 Draft a script taking the viewer through the storyboard. Refine it until it's clear and concise.
- 6 Share the storyboard with others to get feedback. Use it to brainstorm ideas or evaluate a proposed solution.

## TIPS + TRICKS

If the storyboard gets too long, break it into smaller sequences. Keep storyboards posted as an easy way to share customer experiences with each other and to foster conversation.

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## PAIRS WELL WITH

- Show and Tell Interview
- Concept Sheets
- Journey Mapping

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## TIME

30-60 minutes

## TEAM SIZES

2-5 people

## MATERIALS

Sharpies, sticky notes, half sheets

# Concept Sheets



*Capture ideas with a quick sketch and a provocative title. A concept sheet gets ideas out of your head and into a form that's easy to sort, share, and document.*

## HOW TO

- 1 Always have concept sheets around your project. Made from a half sheet of letter-sized paper, it should include a place for a title, sketch, name, and date.
- 2 During a brainstorm, get a stack of concept sheets and assemble a team of 5 to 7 people.
- 3 Create a focus for your brainstorm. Ways of Statements are great for this. They require ideas in response!
- 4 Get everyone going. Ask that all ideas be produced on a concept sheet.
- 5 Participants should “sketch out” a concept sheet and then hold it up to share with others.
- 6 Pin the concept sheet up on the wall after sharing.
- 7 After the brainstorm, review the concepts and group them according to similarity, difficulty, value, etc.

## TIPS + TRICKS

Concept sheets, as opposed to a personal notebook, allow ideas to be shared with others and talked about. Making concept sheets is habit-forming and improves your visualization and ideation skills.

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## PAIRS WELL WITH

- Affinity Clustering

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## TIME

*2 minutes each*

## TEAM SIZES

*1 or 5-7 people*

## MATERIALS

*Sharpies, half sheets*

# Paper Models



*Any idea you think has merit should be modeled in a tangible way as soon as possible. Paper models are a surprisingly easy and fast way to make your ideas real.*

## HOW TO

- 1 Use a core set of basic tools and materials: white paper, white cardboard, white tape, inkjet printer, scissors, and thin and thick markers.
- 2 Think about what demonstration and discussion the model should support. Work at an appropriate size and detail only what's necessary.
- 3 Think through how you could make it before jumping in. Do little experiments to see if the approach would work.
- 4 Try to create the model from as few parts as possible, assembling smaller sections, rather than making a "house of cards."
- 5 For web and app interfaces, use simple symbols to lay out content and details. Switch screens by replacing paper screens in sequence.
- 6 Demonstrate the concept with your paper prototype.

## TIPS + TRICKS

Use all white materials. Forgo needless detail. You're not trying to make the real thing out of paper, only represent key aspects. Work quickly, but don't be sloppy. Craft matters a lot.

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## PAIRS WELL WITH

- Concept Sheets
- User Feedback with Prototypes

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## TIME

30-120 minutes

## TEAM SIZES

1-2 people

## MATERIALS

Paper, cardboard



# Service Prototypes



*Service prototypes make the touchpoints of a new service offering tangible and allow you to test it with customers and other stakeholders.*

## HOW TO

- 1 Services are not intangible! We all interact with the touchpoints of a service: a website, a phone tree, a mobile app, a brochure, a place, etc.
- 2 To prototype a service, identify the ways users would discover, understand, and engage with it.
- 3 Make these different touchpoints using your paper prototyping skills. Web and app interfaces can easily be sketched.
- 4 If your service involves a place, arrange a room with tables, chairs, and paper signs to model that environment.
- 5 Demonstrate the service to colleagues, or better yet, have an outsider try to use an aspect of the service with your prototype.
- 6 Refine the prototype based on user feedback and try different versions to see how people react.

## TIPS + TRICKS

Prototype one aspect of the service rather than the whole thing. Maybe it's just the sign-up process or another key part of the experience.

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## PAIRS WELL WITH

- Paper Models
- User Feedback and Prototypes
- Analogous Examples

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## TIME

*90-120 minutes for multiples*

## TEAM SIZES

*2-3 people*

## MATERIALS

*Paper, cardboard, furniture, easel pad, sticky notes*

# Packaging Prototyping



*Use a variety of materials (paper, plastic, styrofoam, etc.) to create packaging solutions. With packaging prototyping, you are developing ideas for functional package structures that offer multiple benefits to the user and/or the retailer or distributor.*

## HOW TO

- 1 Start with some hypotheses, ideas and sketches of your package based on user needs and pain points.
- 2 Pinpoint how your prototypes will answer the questions or hypotheses you are seeking to answer (e.g. dispensing, ripping open, re-sealing, etc.).
- 3 Experiment with different types of materials (e.g. different paper thicknesses or plastic types) to prototype certain parts of or your package, or if it makes sense, the entire package structure.
- 4 Create a few prototypes that can be used to spark future conversation, and don't worry about perfecting or refining the package too much.

## TIPS + TRICKS

Hack existing packaging to make the prototyping process more efficient, and use found and familiar objects as a starting-off point for your prototypes. Look at packaging in other categories for inspiration.

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## PAIRS WELL WITH

- Storyboarding
- Concept Sheets

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## TIME

60-90 minutes

## TEAM SIZES

1-3 people

## MATERIALS

Paper, plastic styrofoam, etc.