

PROTOTYPING

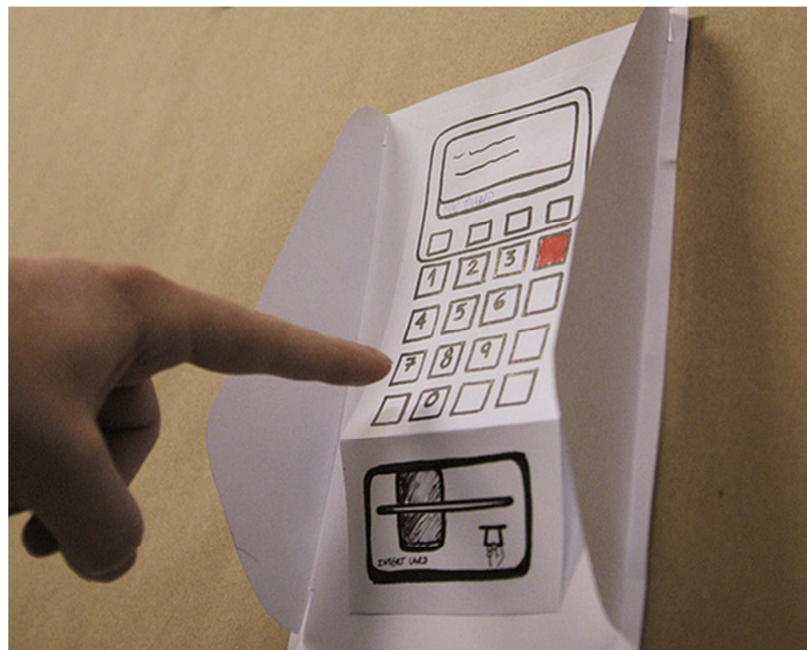
When developing prototypes, it is important to keep in mind that you should do this as efficiently as possible. If you are reading this, chances are that you are not a corporation with plenty of cash to spend, but an entrepreneur who wants to get the most out of scarce resources, be it money or time.

If you know what you want to test, or which questions you want to have answered, you know which details deserve your focus. Other than that, different kind of prototypes obviously suit different kinds of purposes. Furthermore, a prototype is not a finished product, and should thus not be presented in this way to potential customers. Explain your audience that you are looking for feedback regarding certain aspects.

In their book “The smart entrepreneur” (2011), authors Bart Clarysse and Sabrina Kiefer distinguish between different stages and types of prototypes. We listed a few of them here that we considered relevant for market research:

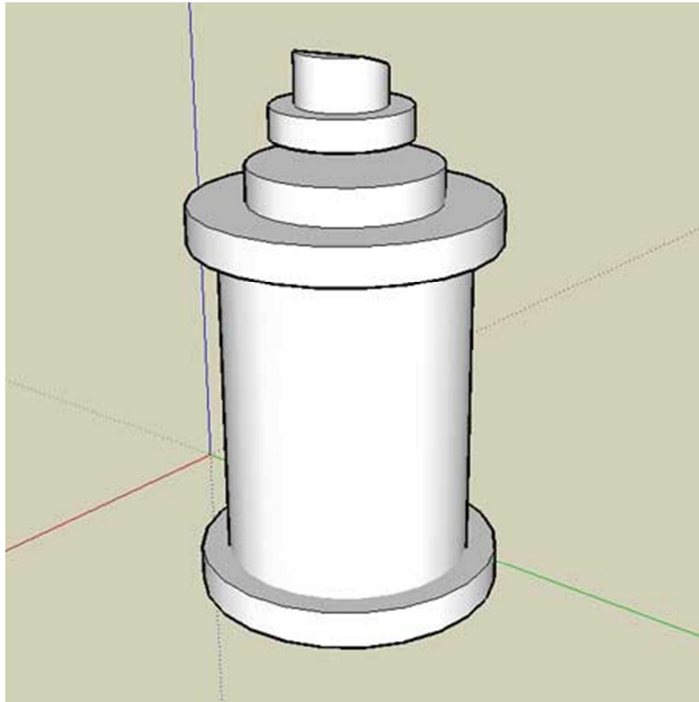
Early stage and lo-fi prototyping: important for gathering early data from potential users:

- “Paper” prototyping: Simulating a product or service experience through much like a monopoly game simulates the idea of buying property. Another example could be simulating a website on paper in order to avoid development costs. Not necessarily made of paper, but the term is used to denote the idea of low-cost.
 - <http://www.paperprototyping.com/> is a website entirely dedicated to the concept.
 - <http://speckyboy.com/2010/06/24/10-effective-video-examples-of-paper-prototyping/> provides you with great movies on paper prototyping of websites



Example of physical and paper prototyping (taken from Prototyping: A Practitioner's Guide)

- Virtual prototyping, using CAD or Video: Predominantly useful for presentation. This may not get you far in terms of user feed-back per se, but helps you tremendously in communicating the product or service. If you are not familiar with designing in 3D on a computer: use Google Sketchup (www.sketchup.com) to get a first impression. It's free and very easy to use with plenty of tutorials.



Example of a simple Sketchup drawing of a spraying can

Physical prototypes, the classical domain of prototyping:

- Concept models: give a basic idea, simply meant to render a basic impression of the product. An example could be a plastic cast of the design of a sports car.

Non-physical prototypes, the new way of prototyping, especially useful for services :

- Storyboarding: provides an illustration of the customer journey, from first contact to aftersales.
- Role play: an interesting way to get unforeseen customer responses if you allow for improvisation when testing the service
- Pilot test: If your product or service is easily translated into a real pilot, then you should not miss out on this opportunity. Select a small sample of potential customers test your product or service for real.
- The website <http://www.servicedesigntools.org/> has a great array of tools that can help you test your service. Enjoy!

