

PROTOTYPING



OVERVIEW

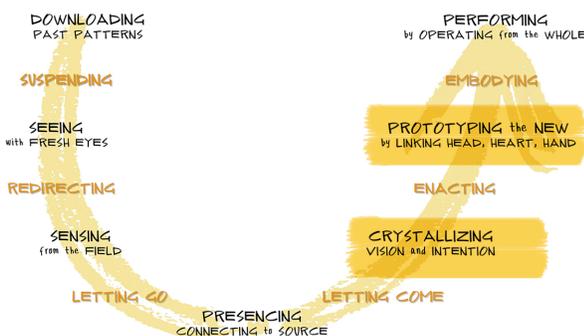
Prototyping translates an idea or a concept into experimental action. Having established a connection to the source (presencing) and clarified a sense of the future that wants to emerge (crystallizing), prototyping allows an individual or group to explore the future by doing.

PURPOSE

So far, we have presented tools and explained the principles that make them work. At this point, the process gets inverted. Use the following principles to determine what *you* need to do to stay connected to the future that stands in need of you to come into reality and translate this idea, concept, or sense of possibility into action.

PRINCIPLES

1. **Crystallize vision and intention:** stay connected to the future that stands in need of you to come into reality (Martin Buber). Create a place of silence for yourself every day. Clarify core questions that you want to explore with your prototype.
2. **Form a core team:** five people can change the world. Find a small group of fully committed people and cultivate your shared commitment.
3. **0.8: Iterate, Iterate, Iterate:** “Fail fast to succeed sooner”, as David Kelley from IDEO says. Do something rough, rapid, and then iterate. Design a tight review structure that accelerates fast feedback.
4. **Platforms and spaces:** create “landing strips” for the future that is wanting to emerge. The quality of the holding space determines the quality of the results.
5. **Listen to the universe:** always be in dialogue with the Universe. It is a helpful place. Listen to what is emerging from others, from the collective, and from yourself. Take a few minutes each day to review your quality of listening.
6. **Integrate head, heart, and hand:** when we prototype living examples by integrating different types of intelligence, we always navigate the process between two major dangers and pitfalls: mindless action and actionless minds.



Prototyping moves the group or individuals up the right side of the U-process.

USES & OUTCOMES

Prototypes are an early draft of what the final result might look like, which means that they often go through several iterations based on the feedback generated from stakeholders. This feedback is then the basis for refining the concept and its underlying assumptions. A prototype is a practical and tested mini version of what later could become a pilot project that can be shared and eventually scaled.

EXAMPLE

At Cisco Systems, a leader in networking equipment, the prototyping imperative begins with what that company calls principle 0.8: regardless of how long-term the project, engineers are expected to come up with a first prototype within three months—otherwise the project is dead. The first prototype is not expected to work like a 1.0 prototype—it is a quick-and-dirty iteration that generates feedback from all key stakeholders and leads to the 1.0 version.

In the context of social innovation, Social Presencing Theater is a very effective tool that we often use to explore emerging ideas through collective experimentation; that is, through co-sensing and co-creating (see the Social Presencing Theater part of the Presencing website).

RESOURCES

C. Otto Scharmer, (2009) Theory U: Learning from the Future as it emerges. Berrett-Koehler: San Francisco. Chapter 21

Ela Ben Ur, i2i Experience, www.i2iexperience.com

SET UP

The tools you use for prototyping depend on the nature of your idea or insight, as well as the needs and context in which you're operating. Prototyping is a "mini U" process and is specific to each idea and context. Some prototypes are concrete products; others are meetings, processes, services or experiments. Timing will depend on the context and differ depending on the project: a prototype can take a few days, weeks, months or years.

You might find it helpful to use one or several of the tools from other parts of the U process (dialogue interviews, sensing journeys, case clinics, etc.) while prototyping.

You might also find the following exercises helpful to align your prototype with the principles outlined above. Worksheet 1 includes questions to help you determine the *what* (clarify intention). Worksheet 2 includes questions that focus on *how* (moving intention to prototyped reality)

PROTOTYPING WORKSHEET I

Use the following questions to help clarify the intention of your prototype:

1. **Is it relevant?** Does it matter to all the key stakeholders involved individually (for the person involved), institutionally (for the organizations involved), and socially (for the communities involved)? Very often, the relevance for each stakeholder is framed in a quite different language and way.
2. **Is it right?** Meaning does it have the right size and scope. Does the microcosm that you are focused on reflect the whole (eco-system) that you are dealing with? For example, ignoring the patients' perspective in a health project, the consumers in a sustainable food project or the students in a school project misses the point.
3. **Is it revolutionary?** Is it new? Could it change the game? Does it address and change (some of) the root issues in the system?
4. **Is it rapid?** Can you do it quickly? You must be able to develop experiments right away in order to have enough time to get feedback and adapt (and thus avoid analysis paralysis).
5. **Is it rough?** Can you do it on a small scale? Can you do it locally? Let the local context teach you how to get it right. Trust that the right helpers and collaborators will show up when you issue the right kinds of invitations "to the universe".
6. **Is it relationally effective?** Does it leverage the strengths, competencies and possibilities of the existing networks and communities at hand?
7. **Is it replicable?** Can you scale it? Any innovation in business or society hinges upon being replicable and whether or not it can grow to scale. In the context of prototyping, this criterion favors approaches that activate local participation and ownership and excludes those that depend on massive infusions of external knowledge, capital, and ownership.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR PROTOTYPING:

Is your vision a...

- **Physical space?** Try using an existing space and "found" objects to simulate and evolve the experience you're trying to create, and to better understand what it needs to be and why - *then*, invest more to make it feel finished.
- **Digital experience?** Can you try a "paper prototype" that simulates the screens? Or quickly prototype it on an existing digital platform (simple website, PowerPoint, etc.)? Don't spend much time. Do it quickly.
- **Process that involves a lot of people?** Can you start by openly trying a small part of the process with a small group of people and iteratively co-evolve larger aspects with larger groups?
- **A service?** How simply can you start trying out the impact of the service? Even if you have to provide it first in a way you know you can't sustain in the long run?
- **Physical object?** Are your key questions about how it works, how people use it, and/or what the character of the object is? It's often much faster and easier to create separate, simple prototypes to explore those different questions than one sophisticated prototype. Reach for the fastest way to make something that answers those questions.

PROTOTYPING WORKSHEET 2

ASK	IMAGINE
<p>DEFINE</p> <p>1. Crystallize vision and intention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is wanting to born in my life and work right now? • What future do I want to create? • What questions do I want to explore? <p>Actually write or draw what you deeply know about your insight or idea. What is your sense of how this could ultimately unfold? What is the aspired impact it has, on whom? Why? How?</p> <p>As important, identify the critical questions about the idea. What do the voices of fear, cynicism, or judgment - from others or within you - say? What questions can you probe about the assumptions underlying those? About the potential in your idea that might enable you to overcome those?</p>	
<p>2. Form a Core Group:</p> <p>Who are the core people who could help me most bring my intention into reality? Starting small and then broadening the circle, who could be my:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • core team? • core holding group? • supporting network? <p>Identify the people who can best help create and communicate the first iterations of a prototype(s) that address your critical questions above. Then, in broader “rings” beyond this core, draw the individuals and/or groups who should experience the prototype, and with whom you should empathize around their experience.</p> <p>Share your vision and questions from #1 with the inner core team. Consider taking the next steps together if you can.</p>	

DESIGN, TEST, AND ITERATE

3. “0.8”: Iterate, iterate, iterate

How can I take a small (but essential) piece of my vision and quickly create a prototype that allows me to explore the future by doing through generating feedback from stakeholders that help me to evolve my idea?

Design in clear images and words a rough and rapid “0.8” prototype(s) of aspects of the new thing, service, space, or collaborative platform in ways that answer your critical questions from #1 with the least risk and resources, in a way that can be rapidly changed. Often, different simple prototypes for different aspects or questions are easier to create than one sophisticated prototype. These can include *functional prototype(s)* – that really test and learn about how the trickiest aspects could work. And, *experience prototypes* – that simulate the experience of your idea to explore your questions on how people do, and need/hope to, experience it. (Note: it may help to think about the platform/space below as you do this).

Clearly identify variables you can play with and how you’ll get the inputs to change them. What is the review cycle and what will be reviewed? Perhaps your prototype can actually enable others to help co-evolve it with you on the spot? Think of the first iterations as “play”, which will evolve considerably more sophisticated “prototypes” and eventually a more robust “pilot.”

<p>4. Platforms and Spaces</p> <p>How can I create safe and supportive spaces, platforms or environments that help me (or us) to “fail early in order to learn quickly” (Dave Kelly)?</p> <p>Identify the time(s) and place(s) that you will run the prototype that can offer safe, supportive “containers,” platform(s) or space(s) in which people can openly prototype together. These containers may be digital, physical, organizational, and/or social.</p>	
<p>5. Listen to the Universe</p> <p>What feedback is the universe giving me? How can I evolve my questions? When am I listening to the Universe, and when to my Voices of Judgment, Cynicism, or Fear?</p> <p>Take the time for a Dialogue Walk with people in your core team who have experienced and co-evolved your prototype, and capture what you notice. Be mindful of your level of listening - empathic and generative listening are important now.</p> <p>Listen to yourself as well and capture what you notice. What does your gut tell you about the potential and problems of your idea? Are they what you expected? How are they different? Allow yourself to be surprised.</p>	
<p>6. Integrating Head, Heart, and Hand</p> <p>How can I cultivate my “interior castle”, (that is: my capacity to create the reality that I want to see outside) in my heart first? How can I cultivate my capacity to avoid the tyranny of the head (actionless mind) or the hand (mindless action) by integrating them through the intelligence of my heart (creativity and playfulness)?</p> <p>Does your prototype embody your vision in some real, even if small, way? What changes might you need to make? If you need start this cycle again, so long as you learned something, you are on the right track!</p>	