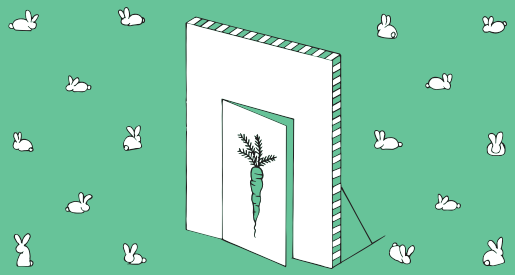
PROBLEM, MARKET DEMAND 1

Fake Door Testing



Pretend to provide a product or feature without actually developing it

HOW Instead of setting up expensive custom integrations and partnerships, fake it! Build only what is absolutely necessary to advertise your product to real users while faking the rest.

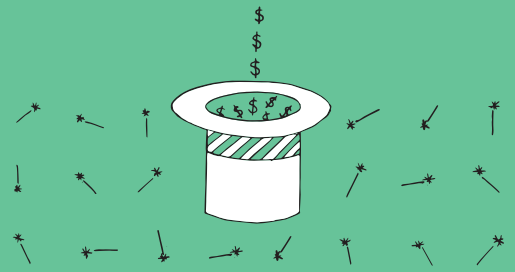
WHY This is a quick and easy way to validate interest in a feature without actually building it, but implementing exactly enough for it to seem real.

EXAMPLE When the online store Polyvore tested their "outfit sales" feature, their most uncertain assumptions were if people were interested in shopping for outfits and whether customers would buy more if they got a bigger discount. They faked the clothing brand and the product team handled payment and shipping themselves.

SEE ALSO Feature Stub[36], Dry Wallet[34]

MARKET DEMAND, WILLINGNESS TO PAY 5

Collect Pre-orders



Allow users to place an order for an item which has not yet been released

HOW Set up a one-page website, product page, or Kickstarter campaign where customers can pre-order your product before you have spent any time developing it or hiring people to make it happen. Nobody likes a scam, so explain and build trust that you will deliver the product you promise or return the money if the project is scrapped.

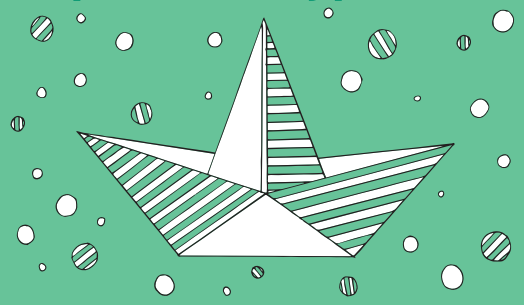
WHY Gauge demand for a product before building it and hence also the size of initial product runs.

EXAMPLE VR company, Oculus Rift, launched a pre-order page for its development kit before they began production.

SEE ALSO Crowdfunding[6], Crowdsourcing[7]
ALSO CALLED Pre-order page, Pre-sales

PRODUCT 11

Paper Prototype



Rapidly sketch and lay out interaction design concepts on paper

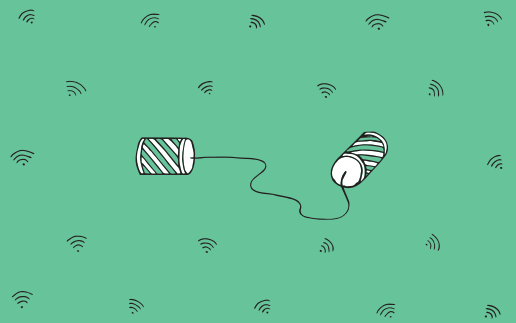
HOW Sketch a quick and rough drawing of a static user interface or model of a design on a piece of paper. Consider using cut-outs to create a design system of movable components or simulating animations and interactions with folded paper.

WHY A cheap tool that is easy to understand and fast to use for anyone inside and outside a team to demonstrate a product and its proposed user experience before writing code or beginning development. While paper prototyping seems simple, it can provide great, quick, and useful feedback that can validate your product fast.

SEE ALSO Clickable Prototype[12], Working Prototype[13], Lego Prototype[14]
ALSO CALLED Paper Mockups, Sketches, Wireframing

PRODUCT 13

Working Prototype



Build just enough of a feature to test its intended behavior

HOW With the least effort possible and without much regard to scalability or internal quality, build just enough of a feature to be able to test it with your target audience. Identify the epicenter and core of your product and implement just enough for users to understand its value and purpose.

WHY Disregarding scalability, code quality, and even design quality will allow you to build a simple but working version of the feature you want to test faster than building the real product.

SEE ALSO Clickable Prototype[12], Paper Prototype[11], Lego Prototype[14]

Validation Patterns Preview
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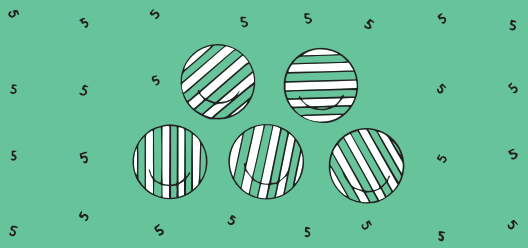
PROBLEM, PRODUCT 24

Five People Who Are In



If you cannot find five, your market is too small or too hard to reach

HOW Find 5-10 potential customers who agree with your proposed problem or see your product as solving significant pain points.

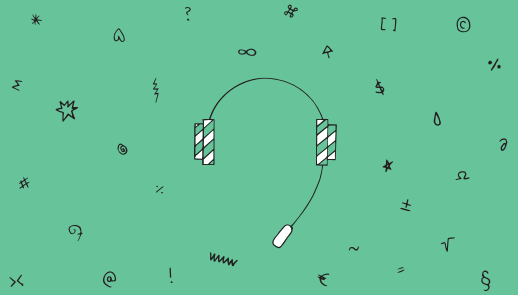
WHY Finding at least five people acknowledging their keen interest in using your hypothetical product provides a sensible indication that you have a problem worth solving.

EXAMPLE Rob Walling, founder of email-marketing tool Drip, initially sought out 10 people who were willing to pay for his final product. It forced him to distill the idea down to its core value proposition. Emailing 17 people in his network, he found initial customers who could provide feedback on how the future product should be developed. He used the early base of revenue to start growing the product.

SEE ALSO Cold Calling[25]

PROBLEM, PRODUCT 27

Customer Service Logs



Listen in on customer service to understand user problems firsthand

HOW Obtain access to customer service logs if they exist, see if you can listen in on calls, or even take a call yourself. If that is not possible, brief stakeholder interviews with customer service team members are also an option.

WHY Customer service personnel are on the front lines with users and are constantly learning how users see and use your product as well as the frustrations they encounter. Even though typically negative in nature, customer service logs can provide excellent data for validation.

SEE ALSO Read App Reviews[26], Industry Forums[28]
ALSO CALLED Help Center Logs

Validation Patterns Preview
Learn more at ui-patterns.com

a product from UI Patterns

PRODUCT

33

Impersonator

Serve a competing product to your customers as if it was your own

HOW If competing products already exist, repackage them as your own as a simple way to gather quick feedback or ask customers to sign up and give feedback on a competitor's website as if it was your own.

WHY Why commit to expensive partnerships or spend time building a prototype when plenty already exist to test. Investigate whether repackaging a competing service in a new form will yield significant results.

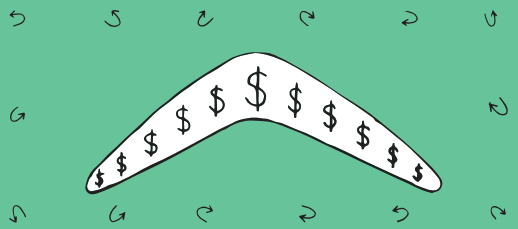
EXAMPLE To test their business idea fast and cheap, Zappos initially purchased shoes from local shoe retailers as orders came in instead of investing in and stocking their own inventory.

SEE ALSO Wizard of Oz[3], Concierge[10], Pretend to Own[44]
ALSO CALLED Imposter Judo, Boomerang, Re-Label, Repackage

WILLINGNESS TO PAY

34

Dry Wallet



Simulate a "pay now" experience

HOW Simulate a "purchase now" experience in the form of a simple e-commerce checkout or a pricing page leading to a "We're not ready yet" page, "out of stock" message, a letter of intent, or a similar elegant way of letting the user finish without actually billing them.

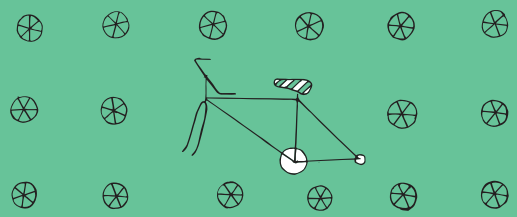
WHY It takes significantly less time to validate willingness to pay by creating a setup that lets users show their intentions through click behavior than implementing an entire payment system or checkout flow.

EXAMPLE Before developing Buffer, a spoof landing was created to explain the future product. Clicking its Buy button led to a "We're not ready yet" page and revealed a conversion rate that helped validate willingness to pay. Later, pricing plans were inserted in the middle of the flow to test what pricing point performed best.

SEE ALSO Fake Door Testing[1], Feature Stub[36]

PRODUCT 50

Takeaway Test



Remove or disable a feature to see if it is valued

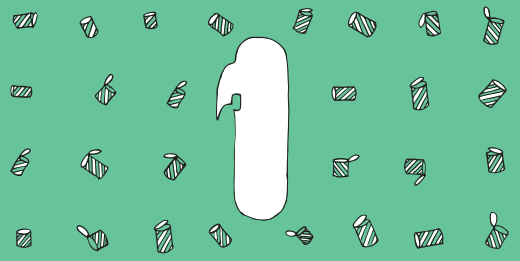
HOW Purposely remove or disable a product feature or function without notifying your existing customers. If it is a valued feature, you will hear from your customers – if not, it was probably a good idea to remove it after all. Consider removing the feature for a specific segment of users.

WHY The primary purpose of the experiment is to eliminate unnecessary features that may distract the user or otherwise add complexity to product maintenance without adding value. If you are unsure whether an existing feature or function of your product is valuable to your customers, this is the most effective way to find out. While some users may be particularly vocal and complain about a change, that does not necessarily indicate that removing the feature is negative for the larger user base.

ALSO CALLED Disable a Feature

MARKET DEMAND, PRODUCT 53

Single-Feature Product



A reduced product solving one specific problem for one specific niche

HOW Build a product that only solves one specific problem that your customers are having – typically a tool with one single feature.

WHY Building just a single feature is a powerful way to start, as you are focused on solving one very specific problem for a very specific niche group better than anyone else. Chances are your early adopters will give you valuable insight into how your product should eventually evolve into a platform.

EXAMPLE Some exist in the form of browser extensions or a WordPress plugin or widget.

SEE ALSO Offer a Sample[52]
ALSO CALLED Single-Feature MVP

Want to see more?

I've spent too much time and money on building stuff that nobody wants. Too often, I've witnessed products and features burned as the launch and finally face the hard facts of the real world. I thought there was a smarter way to go around developing successful products.

To solve the problem, I got into Product Discovery and especially product experimentation – everything that could help me find the errors before we started writing a single line of code.
We started A/B testing, but were still going too slow. As I researched what else we could do to up our learning velocity, the field of product experimentation revealed itself. I documented what I found and what we learned in the Validation Patterns card deck.

There is no silver bullet that will help you predict what design will work and what won't. It always depends on the context. That's why I created the Validation Pattern card deck – a collection of 60 of the most common lean product experiments. Essentially, it's 60 clever (and easy) ways to test whether your idea will bear fruit or not.

Products often fail – but an experiment doesn't.

Get the full card deck
You can buy the full 60-card printed deck at shop.ui-patterns.com.

Help spread the word
Twitter. Facebook. Mailing Lists. Please let other people know about this project!

- Anders Toxboe