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Fake It

A square-jawed cowboy stands outside a saloon. He adjusts his hat and squints across the dusty street, where five men in black suits sit on horseback, rifles clutched in their hands. Farther down the street, the townspeople huddle near the general store. A tumbleweed blows by. Nobody speaks, but everybody knows: There's about to be some trouble in this town.

If you've ever watched an old Western movie, you're probably familiar with this scene. Good guys in white hats, bad guys in black, plenty of melodrama. The town is often the most realistic part of the film: clapboard buildings, wooden boardwalks, and saloons with swinging doors.

Of course, those Old West scenes were never quite as real as they appeared. Sometimes, the director found an existing location that looked about right: an abandoned ghost town or a picturesque Italian village. But most films were shot on a set on some Hollywood backlot.

That saloon behind the cowboy? Just a façade—an exterior wall with nothing behind it.

It makes no difference to the audience. For the few minutes we see the town, we get lost in the story. It all appears real. Whether it's a façade or a ghost town, the illusion works.

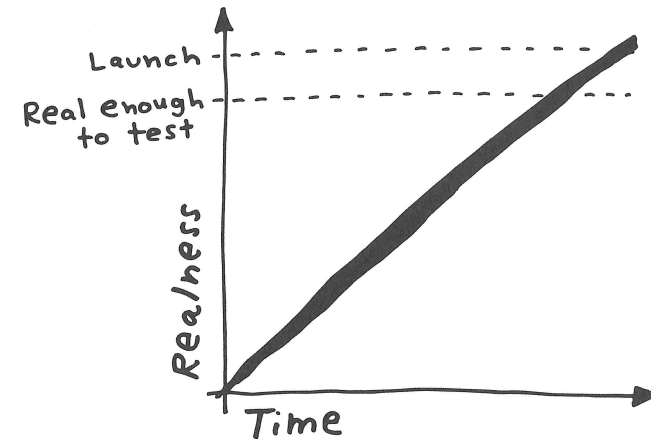
Thursday is about illusion. You've got an idea for a great solution. Instead of taking weeks, months, or, heck, even *years* building that solution, you're going to fake it. In one day, you'll make a prototype that appears real, just like that Old West façade. And on Friday, your customers—like a movie audience—will forget their surroundings and just react.

Façades are easier to build than you might think. Let's say you're working on a project that will take a hundred days. And let's say that 90 percent real is real enough to test. Simple math says it'll take ninety days to get to that 90 percent real level, so you should be ready to test in about three months. But we've found that if you only build a façade, you can get to 90 percent on day one.

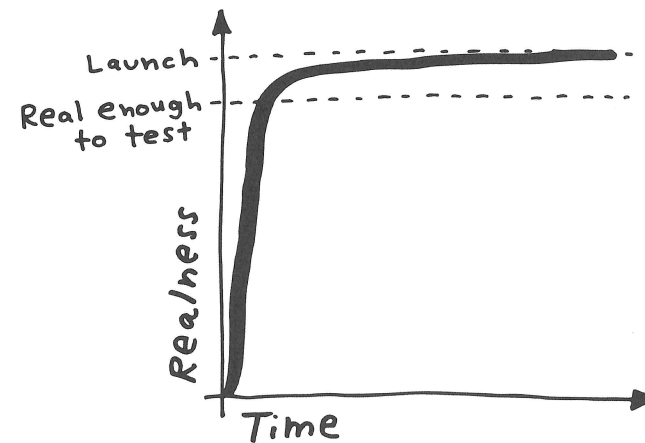
"Whoa, pardner," you're thinking. As of Thursday morning, you'll have nothing but whiteboard drawings and paper sketches. Do we expect you to create a realistic prototype in just one day? Isn't that impossible? It would be impossible, except that you've already done the difficult part on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. The storyboard removes all guesswork about what to include. The solution sketches are packed with specific text and details. And you have the perfect team, with all the right skills to create your prototype.

Sure, you could take a longer time to build a more perfect prototype—but doing so would only slow down the learning process. That may not matter if you're on the right path, but let's face it—not every idea is a winner. Whether you're taking a risk on a bold idea, or

Building a real thing

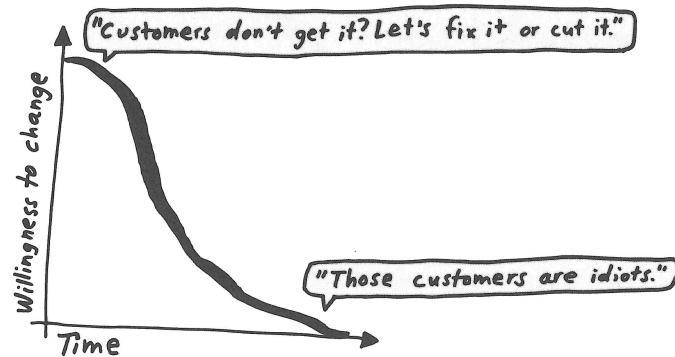


Building a façade



you're just not sure, it's better to find out early. Wasting time on the wrong thing is a major bummer.

But perhaps the biggest problem is that the longer you spend working on something—whether it's a prototype or a real product—the more attached you'll become, and the less likely you'll be to take negative test results to heart. After one day, you're receptive to feedback. After three months, you're committed.



At the beginning, you're in the sweet spot of all these charts (which, to be fair, we made up). You're not attached to your ideas yet, so if they don't test well, you'll be flexible enough to fix or cut them. You're in the perfect position to take advantage of that fast curve to 90 percent real, if you limit yourselves to building a façade. No plumbing, no wiring, no structural engineering. Just a façade.

The prototype mindset

Building a façade may be uncomfortable for you and your team. To prototype your solution, you'll need a temporary change of philosophy: from *perfect* to *just enough*, from *long-term quality* to *temporary simulation*. We call this philosophy the "prototype mindset," and it's made up of four simple principles.

1. You Can Prototype Anything

This statement might sound corny, but here it is. You have to believe. If you go into Thursday with optimism and a conviction that there is *some way* to prototype and test your product, you will find a way. In the next chapter, we'll talk about specific methods for prototyping hardware, software, and services. Those methods may work for you, or you may have to be resourceful and invent your own. But if you stay optimistic and adopt the prototype mindset, there is almost always a way.

2. Prototypes Are Disposable

Don't prototype anything you aren't willing to throw away. Remember: This solution might not work. So don't give in to the temptation of spending a few days or weeks getting your prototype ready. You'll have diminishing returns on that extra work, and all the while, you'll be falling deeper in love with a solution that could turn out to be a loser.

3. Build Just Enough to Learn, but Not More

The prototype is meant to answer questions, so keep it focused. You don't need a fully functional product—you just need a real-looking façade to which customers can react.

4. The Prototype Must Appear Real

To get trustworthy results in your test on Friday, you can't ask your customers to use their imaginations. You've got to show them something realistic. If you do, their reactions will be genuine.

How real is real enough? When you test your prototype on Friday, you'll want your customers to react naturally and honestly. Show them something flimsy—a "paper prototype" made up of drawings, or a simplified wireframe of your design—and the illusion will break.

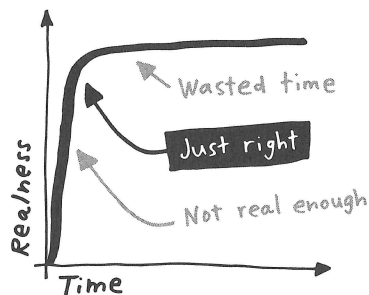
Once the illusion is broken, customers switch into feedback mode. They'll try to be helpful and think up suggestions. In Friday's test, cus-

tomers *reactions* are solid gold, but their *feedback* is worth pennies on the dollar.

Goldilocks quality

This distinction between feedback and reaction is crucial. You want to create a prototype that evokes honest reactions from your customers. You want it to be as real as possible, while sticking to your one-day timeline. As our partner Daniel Burka says, the ideal prototype should be “Goldilocks quality.” If the quality is too low, people won’t believe the prototype is a real product. If the quality is too high, you’ll be working all night and you won’t finish. You need Goldilocks quality. Not too high, not too low, but just right.

Goldilocks quality



Of course, “Goldilocks quality” looks different for each product. Next, we’ll show you some examples: five teams, prototyping everything from iPad apps to a medical clinic. As you read their stories, you’ll see how each team applies “Goldilocks quality” and the prototype mindset to their unique challenge. We’ll begin with FitStar, a company that had to build an elaborate prototype—and do it without the most important person.

FITSTAR

Question: How can we explain a new kind of fitness software?

Format: Simulated App Store and iPad app.

Tools: Keynote (presentation software), acting, iPhone videos, iPad.

“People are getting the wrong idea. They download the app. They try it. But they think it’s something else.”

Mike Maser sat back in a plastic chair in our San Francisco office. The brim of his baseball cap was shredded from years of wear, and his plaid lumberjack shirt was faded. Not the look we’d expected for a guy who palled around with professional athletes and spent half his time at video shoots in Los Angeles.

Mike was the CEO of a startup called FitStar. In 2013 and 2014, FitStar’s iPad apps would win Apple’s coveted Best of the Year awards. In the App Store, FitStar would rank among the top of the charts in the health category, and in 2015, the fitness technology company Fitbit would acquire the startup.

But this afternoon was before all of that, back in 2012, when nobody—except for Mike and his cofounder, Dave Grijalva—quite knew what FitStar was all about. GV had invested in the company, and Mike and Dave spent a week with us. The goal of our sprint: Find a better way to explain their new app.

Mike and Dave had a vision for bringing personal fitness training to the masses. Personal trainers are expensive and tricky to fit into busy schedules. “Most people just can’t do it,” said Mike. Thanks to Mike’s connections in the entertainment industry, FitStar had brought on the best personal trainer they could think of: Tony Gonzalez, a fitness guru and star player in the National Football League. They’d filmed hundreds of hours of Tony giving instruction for different exercises, at all kinds

of ability levels. And Dave—a programmer with a background building video games—had created algorithms that stitched together video clips of Tony into custom workout sessions.

They had created an automated personal trainer. It could tailor each workout so it was suited to the customer's fitness level and goals. As he or she progressed, the workouts would adapt and get more difficult. The app had just launched, but FitStar was waiting to promote it until they knew customers could understand how it worked.

So far, people were confused. The message about customization and personalized training wasn't getting through. Most of their early customers thought it was just a workout video, like the old VHS tapes and DVDs hawked on television. "Once you have that mental model, it's tough to break," said Dave.

By Wednesday afternoon of their sprint, Mike and Dave had a slate of promising ideas for improving the initial experience of the iPad app, everything from better descriptions in the App Store to new animations between exercises.

Unfortunately, Mike's favorite idea appeared impossible to prototype. He wanted to record videos of Tony Gonzalez asking the customer questions as he or she set up the app. In real life, when you start working with a personal trainer, the trainer is right there, talking with you. Mike was betting that a back-and-forth conversation would give FitStar the opportunity to explain—in Tony's own words—how customized the software could be.

But Tony wasn't in the sprint with us. He was on the other side of the country, playing football for the Atlanta Falcons. Plus, it would be impossible to build a new version of the iPad app in just one day. And even if we could, we would never be able to get it launched to the App Store in time for Friday's test. We only had one day before the customers came in, and a seemingly impossible prototype to build.

But all we had to do was fake it. On Thursday morning, we divvied up the prototyping tasks. Dave grabbed his laptop and started writing

the script for Tony's video introduction. Mike volunteered to stand in for Tony as the on-screen talent. He put on some workout clothes, set up an iPhone to record video, and read lines from the script.

What about the software? FitStar couldn't reprogram and re-release their iPad app in time for the test. But we didn't need a real app. We just needed something that *looked* like a real app. We remembered that you can run Keynote (Apple's presentation software, like PowerPoint) on an iPad. A slideshow running full-screen would look just like an app. It could even play videos.

We divided the storyboard into sections—one for each of us to work on. Then, using both the storyboard and the solution sketches as our blueprint, we built the prototype, screen by screen. We found a template kit online with realistic iPad buttons and icons that we could copy over. We added photos and illustrations from the actual FitStar app to make it more realistic. We dropped the videos from Mike and Dave into the slides.

To complete the illusion, we added screenshots from the iPad App Store to the beginning of the slideshow. These screenshots showed FitStar's app in the health category, and even showed the installation process. When we'd finished making all the slides, John took on the job of "stitcher": going through the whole deck, making sure everything looked consistent from slide to slide.

By the end of the day, it looked just like real software—even though there was *no* software at all. FitStar's prototype was just like one of those Old West façades: The illusion only worked for a few minutes, from a certain angle. But that was enough to answer Mike and Dave's big question for the sprint: Can we better explain our app to new customers? After Thursday, FitStar was ready for their test.

Some solutions worked. The videos of Mike explaining the software were effective. Right away, customers could explain the app in their own words ("Kind of an automated personal trainer"), and they were willing to pay for it ("Can I sign up right now?"). Other solutions

failed. After the introductory conversation, there was a clip of Dave wearing a lab coat. He introduced himself as “Doctor Algo Rhythm” and went on to explain how the software was programmed. But by that point, customers understood (“I get it.”), and they were ready to exercise. They found Doctor Algo unnecessary and even obnoxious (no knock to Dave’s acting).

For FitStar, success in the market depended on quality. But in their sprint, success depended only on being real enough to answer their key questions. They got the information they needed to identify the right solutions—and shut down the wrong ones—with a prototype that only took seven hours to build.

SLACK

- Question:** What’s the best way to explain Slack to non-tech customers?
- Format:** Two competing websites with interactive software.
- Tools:** Keynote, InVision (prototyping software), the real Slack software, and some acting.

Slack had two competing ideas to prototype. First was “The Tenacious Tour,” a step-by-step explanation of the software. Just as with Blue Bottle Coffee, this idea could be faked with a series of slides that looked like a website. No sweat.

But the other idea, “Bot Team,” was tricky. It involved a team of computer-controlled “bots” who would send messages back and forth to one another, and even respond to messages typed by the user. To be realistic, the bots should respond to a variety of questions and comments from the customer, an experience impossible to fake with slides.

Merci had the solution: We could pretend to be computer-controlled characters ourselves. During the test, we’d send messages to the user, and—like bots—reply in a not-too-intelligent way. Of course, if the idea proved successful, Slack would have to write computer software to control the bots. They could never have teams of people sending messages to every customer who visited their website. They’d need a staff of thousands, or millions! But for our test, for just five customers, it would work.

FOUNDATION MEDICINE

Question: What essential information do oncologists need to make treatment decisions?

Format: Paper medical report with first page only.

Tools: Keynote, realistic test data, printer.

Earlier, you met Flatiron Health, a company dealing with the complexities of getting cancer patients into clinical trials. Boston-based Foundation Medicine, another GV investment, was working on a different problem in cancer care: using DNA analysis to suggest possible treatments for patients.

In 2012, Foundation Medicine had developed a test called FoundationOne. The company's lab could analyze a single tissue sample and give doctors a report on every known genomic alteration associated with cancer, along with a list of potential treatments.

The test was groundbreaking. FoundationOne's diagnostics provided a wealth of information, often leading to surprising treatment options. But all that information presented a challenge: It could be overwhelming, even to expert oncologists. In those early days, the FoundationOne results were delivered on paper, and the team at Foundation Medicine was determined to make those sheets of paper as easy to understand as possible. So they ran a sprint with us to try out some new ideas.

The team decided to focus on the front page of the paper report. It was, of course, the first thing a doctor would see when she reviewed the test results. But if the doctor was in a hurry—and oncologists usually are—it might be the *only* page she had time to process. Foundation Medicine wanted to deliver as much information as possible on the top sheet.

In our sprint with Foundation Medicine, we had three competing ideas for the test report. To implement these ideas would require

months of work in the lab and a serious quality-assurance effort. After all, medical reports have to be 100 percent accurate. But for our prototype, we only needed to learn which approach was most promising. We didn't need to meet the same accuracy standards that applied to the real report. And we didn't need to alter anything about the lab analysis itself. All of that could come later. For now, our question was about those crucial minutes as the oncologist reviews the front page.

As you might guess, we used Keynote to mock up the reports. We split into three teams of two. On each team, one person was responsible for designing a slide formatted to be the same size as an 8.5-by-11-inch sheet of paper. (A paper prototype is appropriate when—and only when—your final product will also be made of paper.) The other person was responsible for making the information—the genomic data, the recommended therapies, and the rest of the oncology details—realistic and accurate.

If we wanted honest reactions from oncologists, the data had to look legitimate. Of course, testing with real patient data would be unethical. But Foundation Medicine had some realistic-but-not-real test results on hand that they used internally. And the sprint team included experts who could make up more realistic details when needed.

By the end of the day, we had three prototype reports. Each was just one or two pages, printed out from Keynote, on top of a stack of pages from an old, pre-sprint report—a new façade, with an old village in the background. When Foundation Medicine showed the report prototypes to oncologists during the test, they looked just like the real thing.

SAVIOKE

- Question:** How will hotel guests react to a robot with personality?
- Format:** Physical robot with iPad touch screen.
- Tools:** Keynote, sound effects library, iPad, robot, remote control, hotel room, acting.

Savioke was one of the most complex prototyping challenges we've encountered. We were testing the Relay robot's behavior and personality as it made a delivery: the touch-screen interaction on the robot's face, its movements, its soundtrack of beeps and chimes, and even the timing and script of an automated phone call. That's a lot of moving parts, and some of them were *literally* moving parts.

When a team has an extraordinary prototyping challenge, they often have the extraordinary skills and tools to make it happen. Savioke already had the robot, and most of the behaviors and components already worked. We could build our prototype on top of what they already had. It's like filming a Western in a picturesque ghost town instead of a backlot.

However, there were still four important elements for us to prototype on Thursday. First was the robot's happy dance. Writing code for the perfect choreography would take too long, so CTO Tessa Lau and engineer Allison Tse decided to use remote control instead. On Thursday, they practiced the delivery by driving the Relay robot around using a PlayStation video game controller.

The second challenge was the robot's screen, but Adrian Canoso, Savioke's design lead, had the answer. We could temporarily replace the robot's screen with an iPad mini. The robot's eyes and several simple touch-screen interactions could be faked with a series of slides.

Next, the robot needed a new soundtrack. Adrian had experience

as a sound designer. He put on a pair of giant headphones and went to work, using a library of free sound effects.

Finally, we needed to fake an automated phone call when the robot arrived at the guest room. Eventually, this call would be triggered by sophisticated software that tracked the robot's location. For our test, Allison could just watch the robot, then duck out of sight and place the call herself. She just needed to use a stilted voice that *sounded* like a recording.

Now, most teams can't prototype a working robot in a single day. But most teams don't need to—because they aren't in the robot business at all. With the fully operational Relay robot, Savioke had a foundation for their prototype. They needed to make some challenging additions to it, but they had all of the engineering and design expertise required to get it done. By the end of the day, the robot could dance, whistle, and smile.

ONE MEDICAL GROUP

- Question:** Can a doctor's office for professionals adapt to families with kids?
- Format:** A medical clinic that's only open for one night.
- Tools:** Doctor's office, medical staff, bananas, crayons.

One Medical was off to a great start on a bold mission: to offer better health care to everyone. They'd established a network of primary care clinics with locations across the United States—in San Francisco; New York; Boston; Chicago; Washington, D.C.; Phoenix; and Los Angeles. Same-day appointments, treatment via mobile app, more time with patients, and beautiful office interiors had earned them thousands of dedicated patients.

Most of those customers were young, tech-savvy professionals—the kind of folks to whom “treatment via mobile app” sounds like a good idea. That customer base was growing fast, but One Medical wanted to open their service up to more kinds of patients. With plenty of customers starting to have children, the company figured the sensible next step was family care—for the babies, children, and teenagers of its existing patients.

One Medical hoped to serve both families and grown-ups in the same locations. They already had many physicians on staff who were trained in family medicine. But before the first of these new clinics opened, they wanted to be sure patients would have a great experience.

How do you prototype an entire doctor's office? Like Savioko and Slack, One Medical built on top of what they had. Chris Waugh, One Medical's vice president of design, hatched a plan: For one evening, One Medical would simulate a real family clinic in one of their existing offices.

At 6 p.m., the Hayes Valley office in San Francisco closed its doors. Chris and his team went to work. They had several ideas for setting

up the office so that it would keep its sophisticated aesthetic—popular with the grown-ups—while adding appeal for children.

They brought in crayons and paper. They set out bananas, apples, fruit bars, and coconut water. They also had a treasure chest filled with toys, but, not wanting to make the lobby feel too childish, they tucked it behind the desk. Two family care physicians were on-site, and two more One Medical employees took charge of the lobby. Everyone had a script to follow. It was time for the prototype.

Then the children started to arrive. Chris had recruited five families to come in for visits. Right away, the test ran into a bump—literally. The doorway at the Hayes Valley clinic had a small ledge that was navigable by wheelchairs but tricky for strollers. “Kids were nearly bouncing out of their seats,” Chris said.

The next surprise was how much was *in* those strollers. “Families come prepared. They've got toys, they've got extra clothes, they've got snacks. They bring siblings, grandparents, nannies.” The lobby, optimized for individual adults, became crowded. The One Medical team realized they'd need a slightly different lobby design for the family clinic.

The One Medical team had also underestimated the importance of the front desk staff. Kids were nervous as they came in. The clinic was a new place, and young children associate the doctor's office with painful vaccination shots. “We lucked out with our prototype staff. Taleen and Rachel [two of One Medical's office managers] switched into this super-welcoming mode, greeting kids, putting them at ease. It wasn't in the script, but it saved the day.”

The exam rooms provided their own challenges. One Medical has their doctors sit behind a desk, encouraging a more natural conversation with the patient than the usual exam bed and rolling chair. But with kids in the room, the desk became an obstacle. “Everything the kids could touch, they touched. Every drawer was opened.”

Still, the kids were having fun, so the desks didn't seem like a huge problem. Then Chris and his team interviewed the families. It turned

out it was the parents—more than the kids—who were bothered by the exam room setup. The parents themselves needed reassurance from the doctor, but the exam room chaos made communication difficult. It was a subtle point, but crucial for putting parents at ease. Luckily, it was easy to fix.

When One Medical opened their first family clinic a few months later, they could see both adults and kids in the same location, and they could staff the office with family medicine doctors from the One Medical team. But there was more room in the lobby, no awkward desks in the exam rooms—and no ledge in the doorway.

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Prototype

Thursday is a bit different from other parts of the sprint. Every prototype is different, so there's no exact step-by-step process we can share. But after making hundreds of our own prototypes, we've come up with four exercises that always set us on the right path:

1. Pick the right tools
2. Divide and conquer
3. Stitch it together
4. Do a trial run

We'll explain why each exercise is important, and show you how we do each one.

First, we need to talk about your tools—the objects and devices your team uses every day, the software and processes and methods they

use to create high-quality experiences for your customers. Here's the challenge: You probably can't use them for your prototype.

Sorry. It doesn't matter whether you work with designers, engineers, architects, marketers, or other creative professionals—or whether you run a store, provide client services, or build physical products. There's a good chance that your team's regular tools are *not* the right tools for prototyping.

The trouble with your team's regular tools is that they're too perfect—and too slow. Remember: Your prototype isn't a real product, it just needs to *appear* real. You don't need to worry about supply chains, brand guidelines, or sales training. You don't need to make every pixel perfect.

The good news is that we were in this same situation not long ago. As designers of software such as apps and websites, we were comfortable with tools like Photoshop and programming languages like HTML and JavaScript. And then we discovered Keynote. Originally intended for making presentation slides, Keynote is a perfect prototyping tool. It has easy-to-use layout tools, so you can quickly make things look pretty nice. It's organized around "slides," which are a lot like frames in a storyboard. You can put in text, lines, and shapes; paste in photos and other images; then add clickable hotspots, animation, and other interactivity. You can even drop video and audio into Keynote when necessary.

We know it sounds crazy, but we're 90 percent sure you should use Keynote to make your prototype. How can we suggest that when we don't even know what you're prototyping? Good question. Of course we can't be *completely* sure—but in our 100+ sprints, Keynote has only come up short a handful of times.

(And yes, if you're on Windows, PowerPoint also makes a fine prototyping tool. It's not quite as nice as Keynote, but a quick web search will yield a number of template libraries you can use to make realistic prototypes in PowerPoint.)

Granted, most of the time, we're prototyping software products

such as apps or websites. For these prototypes, we use Keynote to create the individual screens. Sometimes, we run those slide shows full screen, and that's good enough. Sometimes, we use specialized prototyping software* (yes, there is such a thing!) to string the screens together and load them in a web browser or on a mobile phone.

But it's not all software. You read on page 176 about Foundation Medicine, a cancer diagnostics company whose product is a paper medical report. We designed their report in Keynote, then printed it out and showed it to oncologists. (Again, *this* kind of paper prototype actually makes sense.)

For physical products, Keynote will be less useful. You may need to use 3D printing or make modifications to your existing product. But then again, many hardware devices have a software interface. Recall the story of Savioke, where part of our prototype involved attaching an iPad to their robot. And what, you may ask, was on that iPad? Keynote. The hits continue.

Plus, for many physical-product sprints, you may not need to prototype the product at all. One of our favorite shortcuts is the Brochure Façade: Instead of prototyping the device, prototype the website, video, brochure, or slide deck that will be used to *sell* the device. After all, many purchase decisions are made (or at least heavily informed) online or in a sales call. This marketing material will give you a great start on understanding how customers will react to the promise of your product—which features are important, whether the price is right, and so on. And guess what: Keynote is the perfect tool for prototyping that kind of marketing.

We'll admit we're not experts on how to prototype *everything*. And Keynote is not always the perfect tool, especially if you're working on industrial products or in-person services such as One Medical's family

*Software changes fast, so check out thesprintbook.com for links to the latest and greatest prototyping tools.

clinic. But we have picked up some shortcuts over the years. Here's a quick guide you can use to pick the right tools.

Pick the right tools

If you're not sure how to build your prototype, start here:

- If it's on a **screen** (website, app, software, etc.)—use **Keynote, PowerPoint**, or a website-building tool like **Squarespace**.
- If it's on **paper** (report, brochure, flyer, etc.)—use **Keynote, PowerPoint**, or word processing software like **Microsoft Word**.
- If it's a **service** (customer support, client service, medical care, etc.)—write a **script** and use your sprint team as **actors**.
- If it's a physical space (store, office lobby, etc.)—modify an **existing space**.
- If it's an **object** (physical product, machinery, etc.)—modify an **existing object**, **3D print a prototype**, or **prototype the marketing** using **Keynote or PowerPoint** and photos or renderings of the object.

Building a prototype in one day sounds daunting, but when you put together a diverse sprint team you'll have all the right expertise in the room. Chances are, a few people in your sprint will do most of the work, but we've found time and again that there's a role for everyone. Once you've selected your tools, it'll be time to assign some jobs.

Divide and conquer

The Facilitator should help the sprint team divvy up these jobs:

- Makers (2 or more)
- Stitcher (1)
- Writer (1)
- Asset Collector (1 or more)
- Interviewer (1)

Makers create the individual components (screens, pages, pieces, and so on) of your prototype. These are typically designers or engineers, but they could include anyone on your sprint team who likes to feel the force of creation flow through his or her fingers.

You'll want at least two **Makers** on Thursday. We've told you some wild stories about robots and medical reports and videos, but just remember—the people on your team probably already have the skills to make prototypes for your business.

The **Stitcher** is responsible for collecting components from the **Makers** and combining them in a seamless fashion. This person is usually a designer or engineer, but can be almost anyone, depending on the format of your prototype. The best **Stitcher** is detail-oriented. He or she will probably give everyone some style guides to follow in the morning, then start stitching after lunch as the **Makers** complete their components.

Every sprint team needs a **Writer**, and it's one of the most important roles. In Chapter 9 on page 103, we talked about the importance of words in your sketches. And earlier in this chapter we told you that your prototype must appear real. It's impossible to make a realistic prototype with unrealistic text.

A dedicated **Writer** becomes extra important if you work in a scientific, technical, or other specialized industry. Think back to Foundation Medicine's prototype of a cancer genomics report: It would have been

tough for just anyone to write medically realistic text, so we relied on a product manager with domain expertise to act as Writer during the sprint.

You'll want at least one **Asset Collector** on Thursday. It's not a glamorous role (although "asset collector" does *sound* glamorous), but it's one of the keys to rapid prototyping. Your prototype will likely include photos, icons, or sample content that you don't need to make from scratch. Your Asset Collectors will scour the web, image libraries, your own products, and any other conceivable place to find these elements. This speeds up the work of your Makers, who don't have to pause and go collect every bit and piece they need for the prototype.

Finally, there's the **Interviewer**, who will use the finished prototype to conduct Friday's customer interviews. On Thursday, he should write an interview script. (We'll go into detail about the structure of this script in Chapter 16 on page 201.) It's best if the Interviewer doesn't work on the prototype. This way, he won't be emotionally invested in Friday's test, and won't betray any hurt feelings or glee to the customer.

After assigning roles, you should also **divide up the storyboard**. Let's say your storyboard calls for a customer to see an ad, visit your website, and download your app. You can assign one Maker to create the ad, one to mock up the fake website, and a third to handle the app download screens.

Don't forget the opening scene—the realistic moment that happens before the central experience begins. Be sure to assign a Maker and a Writer to your opening scene, just as with every other part of the prototype. For Blue Bottle Coffee, the opening scene was an article in the *New York Times*, and we needed someone to write a plausible article. (We're not up for any Pulitzers, but faking one short article isn't so hard.)

It's important to give your opening scene enough time to be credible and set the stage. Don't spend half your day working on it, but do make it believable.

As individual sections of the prototype near completion, the Stitcher moves in. It's the Stitcher's job to make the prototype consistent from beginning to end—and ensure that every step is as realistic as possible.

In FitStar's sprint, John was the Stitcher. To ensure consistency, he pasted everyone's Keynote slides into the same file, and then tweaked the fonts and colors so that the slides appeared to be one seamless app. To turn up the realism, he added detail to the sign-up screen, adding a slide with a screenshot of the iPad's on-screen keyboard, to make it look as though the user was really typing.

Stitch it together

Your Stitcher will make sure dates, times, names, and other fake content are consistent throughout the prototype. Don't mention Jane Smith in one place and Jane Smoot in the other. Look for typos and fix any obvious errors. Small mistakes can remind customers that they are looking at a fake product.

The Stitcher's job can take many forms, but no matter what you're prototyping, it's a critical role. When you divide work, it's easy to lose track of the whole. The Stitcher will be on the hook to keep everything tight. He may want to check on progress throughout the day, to see if the various parts of the prototype look coherent. And at the end, the Stitcher shouldn't hesitate to ask the rest of the team to help out if more work is needed.

Trial run

We like to do our trial run around 3 p.m., so that we still have enough time to fix mistakes and patch any holes we find in the prototype. Have everyone pause work and gather around, and then ask the Stitcher to walk through the entire prototype, narrating as he goes.

As you go, you should double-check against the storyboard to make

sure everything made it into the prototype. The trial run is also a great time to revisit your sprint questions. It's one last check to make sure your prototype will help you get answers.

The primary audience for the trial run is the Interviewer, who will be talking with customers on Friday. The Interviewer needs to be familiar with the prototype and the sprint questions so he can get the most out of the interviews. (We'll explain how to run these interviews in the next chapter.) But the whole team will benefit from watching the trial run. If the Decider isn't a full-time participant in the sprint, now is another good time for a cameo appearance. The Decider can make sure everything matches what she was expecting.

In our normal work routines, there are few days where we begin with a big task, follow a precise plan of action, and end the day finished. Thursday is that kind of day, and it's pretty darn satisfying. When you're finished with your prototype, don't be surprised if you start to wonder when you can do it again.