How to Create Wireframes

WHAT ARE WIREFRAMES AND WHAT ARE THEY USED FOR?

Think of wireframes as essentially the design "blueprint" for your project. They are used to help communicate the details of your screens, without explicitly specifying visual design, to everyone involved, such as Designers, Developers, Product Mangers, and Business Stakeholders.

Wireframes explain both the general structure of the UI, and its intended behaviors, and are meant to help answer the following questions:

- What is the overall framework, structure, and flow of the design?
- What content will be displayed?
- How is it organized?
- What are the features?
- How does the interface work, and how do users interact with it?

HOW DO WIREFRAMES DIFFER FROM HAND-DRAWN SKETCHES?

While technically a hand-drawn sketch is also a wireframe; in general, wireframes are used to communicate the concepts generated during sketching in a more detailed and refined manner. They are usually created using any number of software tools ranging from standard presentation software, to dedicated professional drawing or information design tools such as Balsamiq, Omnigraffle, or Axure.

Wireframes often contain additional text and notations – they are really living, changing, artifacts; used to explain design concepts in an iterative and collaborative way as the project progresses.

HOW CAN DESIGN PATTERNS AND GUIDELINES HELP ME?

User Interface Design Patterns are recurring solutions that solve common design problems. For example; if your design needs a shopping cart experience, a photo gallery, or a calendar,

it is highly likely a design already exists which can be re-used. A best practice employed by designers is to eliminate wasted time spent "reinventing the wheel" and use existing patterns, page layouts, and controls for common solutions. This helps provide a consistent and predictable user experience across one or many different design solutions.

The Fiori Design Guidelines are a great resource for learning more about Fiori principles, page layouts reference applications, reusable controls, downloadable high-definition stencils, and more. You can also find Fiori examples, plus drag-and-drop controls in SAP's BUILD prototyping tool.

WHAT KIND OF WIREFRAME SHOULD I CREATE?

Although wireframes can often vary greatly in terms of fidelity, they usually fit into one of the following categories:

1 Navigation, Task, or User Flow Diagram

Before jumping into the details of a specific screen, it's helpful to create and define a simple, high-level overview of the screens in your application... the big picture. Or, if the app is more complex; break it down into several smaller, logical pathways you would expect users to take in order to meet their goals. Add lines, arrows, and connectors to indicate movement between screens. Think of this diagram as your roadmap, showing the entire trip or journey, and the screens within as destination points along the way.

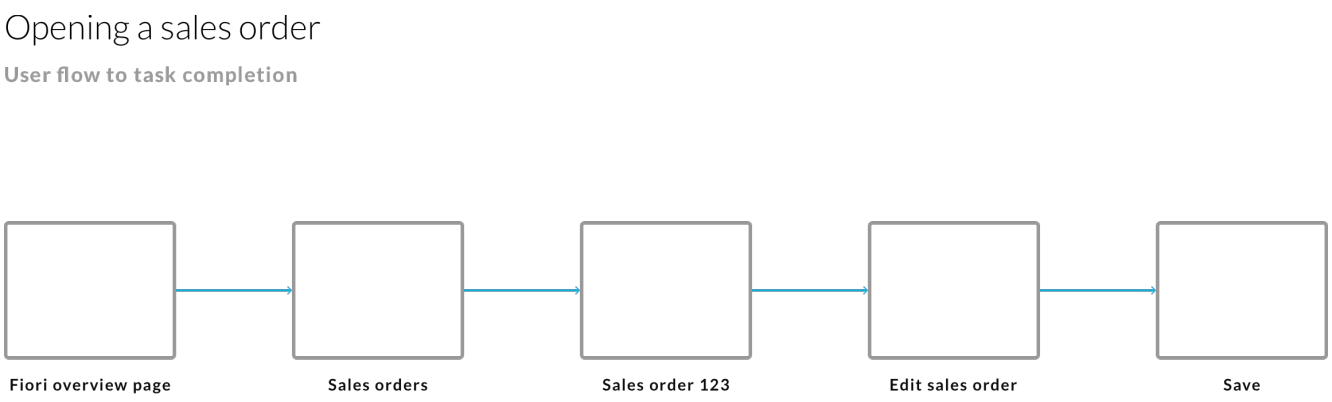

Fig. 1: Example of a navigation flow diagram.

2 Content Blocks

Content is displayed as a series of blocks using boxes and labels – a very minimal and

high-level view of information. Rather than diving into specific screen details, a good approach is to first define what information should be shown, and its level of relative importance. While often a transient phase, it is quite helpful to first focus on identifying and placing the general information for each screen, and confirming the content with stakeholders. The layout and details come later.

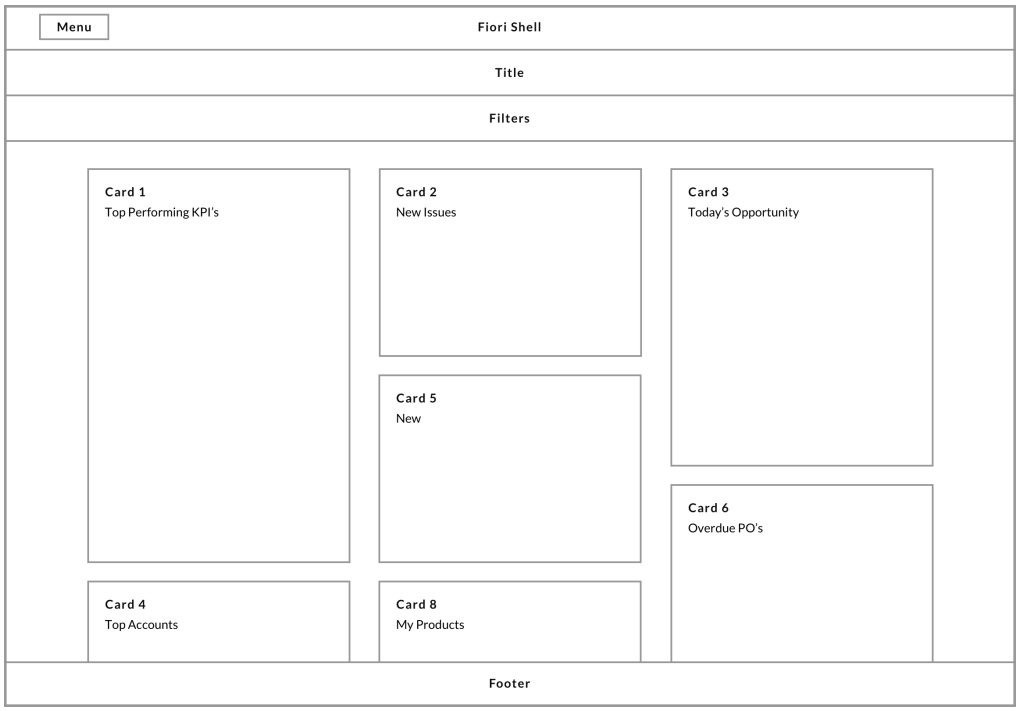

Fig. 2: Basic building blocks of content

3 Detailed Wireframes

A clear, well-defined depiction of the intended interface design. Contains more details and often displays some of those details in high-fidelity: such as showing actual text, specific fonts and sizes, highlighted areas of grayscale or color, images, UI controls, and detailed interactions. Annotations are used to provide relevant written details describing clicks, taps, zooms, data inputs, animations, behaviors, hardware or browser constraints, etc. The quality of the detailed wireframes as an end result, reflect the earlier work put in to define the content, validate with users, and iterate on the final design.

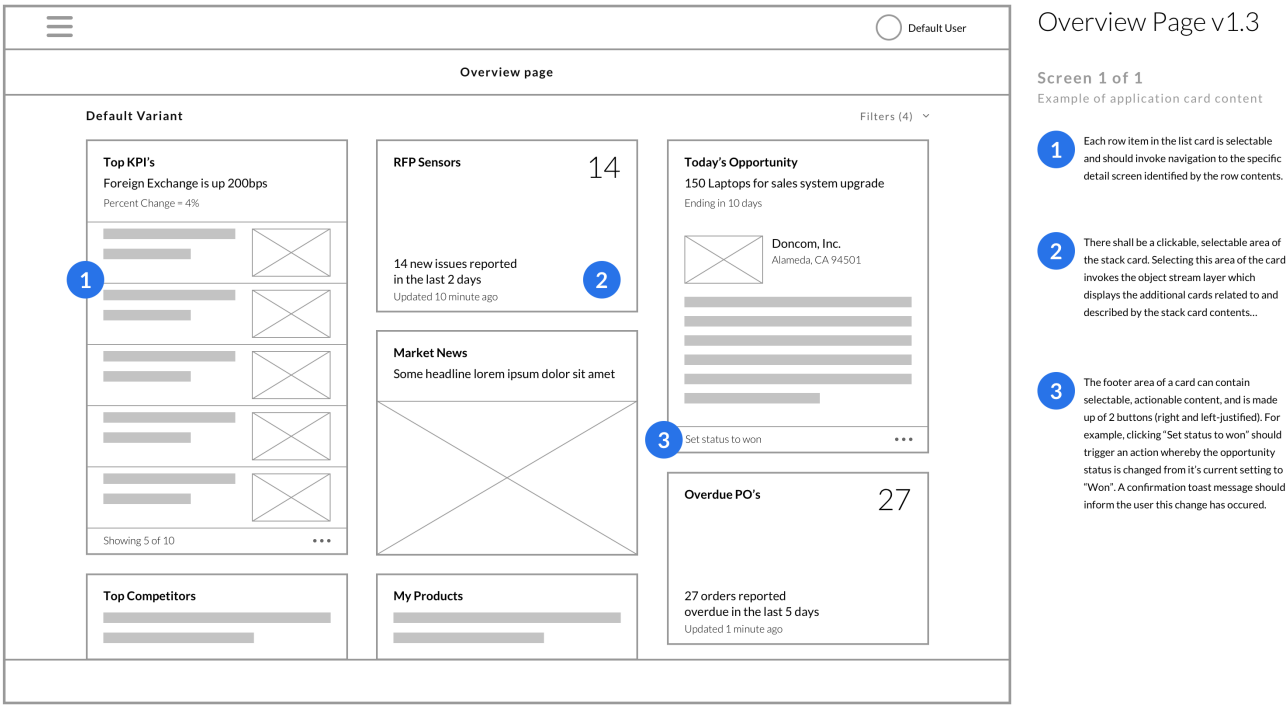

Fig. 3: Example of a wireframe with more details.

The following tips are good, best-practice advice for anyone creating wireframes:

- **Start simple!** Before diving into detailed design, begin by drawing simple boxes to define areas of content, and map where they should go on the page.
- **Ask for feedback.** The simplest wireframe can help you validate the content with users. It's also a good idea to check with development to see if your intended design can be implemented.
- **Iterate.** Good wireframes are created by building up levels of information, verifying, and then adding more content. Expect to make numerous changes as you work through your designs.
- **Low fidelity is your friend.** Research shows excessive visual polish early-on can discourage honest feedback from your users, due to a natural reluctance to criticize a "finished-looking" product.
- **Go for it!** You may want to simulate the real target design. Add-in actual copy, fonts, color, and images. Use detailed notes and callouts to clarify the UI behaviors. A hi-fidelity wireframe or mock-up also implies the branding and visual style. Most visual design specifications are heavily influenced by their wireframe examples.

WHAT TOOL SHOULD I USE?

Wireframes can be created using anything from a hand-drawn sketch to professional, digital design tools. For small applications, it may be easier to simply sketch the basic design. However, the design process usually involves a great deal of collaboration and multiple iterations on the original designs. A good, digital wireframing tool is an indispensable help for creating and revising wireframes, and producing great-looking examples to share with your team and end-users.

Some good digital tools are:

- PowerPoint, Illustrator, Balsamiq, Sketch
- Interactive (Axure, InVision)
- BUILD, using Fiori templates

Some design tools like Axure, and InVision, are capable of extending static wireframes, making them "clickable", or interactive, and able to simulate onscreen behaviors. The ability to experience an interaction via a working prototype, is a powerful method allowing users and team members to quickly and easily understand the intended design.

If you desire interactive wireframes or hi-fidelity prototypes, consider using BUILD; where prototypes with working code can be created easily, taking advantage of premade SAP Fiori templates, and a gallery of application examples. BUILD also allows you to easily share your prototype with users to get quick feedback for concept validation.

SUMMING IT UP

You may feel you never truly get to a "final" version of the design. That's OK. However, the goal of creating wireframes is to communicate the details of your design ideas to others, and get feedback. Your wireframes, with added notes describing the features and interaction behaviors of the UI, will serve as the single source of truth about the design for all stakeholders.