

Insights from Sprint by Jake Knapp, John Zeratsky & Braden Kowitz

7 Profound Problem-Solving Techniques

Used in the Sprint Method

1. Map the Problem

Determine the steps required to get the **users/customers** to a **desired result**. Find someone that has experience with this problem (so called ‘**expert**’) and ask them to verify your map.

The goal of developing a map is to reveal **ONE event** between the user and the end result that is more important than any other event *at this particular time*.

2. Ask “How might we...?”

List all the possible failure points on your map and then convert them into “**How might we...?**” questions.

Example: A ‘site crashes from too much traffic’ issue turns into “How might we prevent the site from crashing when traffic is high?” Converting an issue into a “How might we...?” question converts a problem into an **interesting challenge**, thus making your problem-solving more enjoyable.

“When we tried it, we came to appreciate how the open-ended, optimistic phrasing forced us to look for opportunities and challenges, rather than getting bogged down by problems or, almost worse, jumping to solutions too soon. And because every question shares the same format, it’s possible to read, understand, and evaluate a whole wall full of these notes at once.” – Sprint book

3. Gather a Team and Vote w/ Dots

WHY?...When each person votes with dots, visual patterns emerge. When all the dots (5 per person) are placed on the board containing various options, important issues start to emerge. Dot voting is a great way of limiting the endless back and forth discussion and discovering the biggest issues in less time.

HOW?...Give team members an equal collection of dot stickers to place on the wall of ideas.

4. Conduct Lightning Demos

Use a **timer** to search for and sketch examples. Reveal a new example every **3-5 minutes**. Look inside and outside your domain/industry. Find out what other people have done to solve the problem you’re dealing with.

5. Silently Sketch

Some people have the ability to persuade others to adopt their solution with a great presentation (even if the idea is bad!). The final solution selection should be based on the quality of the solution, not the charisma of the presenter. To ensure the best idea wins every time, everyone needs to **sketch** their ideas:

“Everyone can write words, draw boxes, and express his or her ideas with the same clarity. If you can’t draw (or rather, if you think you can’t draw), don’t freak out. Plenty of people worry about putting pen to paper, but anybody—absolutely anybody—can sketch a great solution.” – Sprint book

6. Elect a Decider

Select **one person** to make all the final decisions.

WHY?...Doing so limits the endless discussion surrounding a decision and allows the team to **move forward** confidently and swiftly. Since you should be testing your solution long before it is fully developed, it’s OK if the decisions aren’t perfect!

7. Validate w/ 5 People

According to data from 1000’s of user tests, **85% of the potential issues** of your proposed solution are revealed after testing the solution with JUST 5 people.

Testing your solution on more than 5 people yields **diminishing returns**.

“Lurking beneath every goal are dangerous assumptions. The longer those assumptions remain unexamined, the greater the risk.”

- Jake Knapp, John Zeratsky & Braden Kowitz