In *Sprint: How to Solve Big Problems and Test New Ideas in Just Five Days*, author Jake Knapp, along with his former Google colleagues John Zeratsky and Braden Kowitz, show readers an efficient and effective 5-day sprint process that brings a company's product or closer to its customers' needs. The book highlights the cost-effective techniques and exercises used to implement a new idea to solve an important problem at a company. Every step in the process has been tested and tried and has a specific purpose and meaning. "It's a 'greatest hits' of business strategy, innovation, behavioral science, design, and more - packaged into a step-by-step process that any team can use."[1] This process has been successfully executed by companies such as Slack, Airbnb, and Facebook. In the following paragraphs, I'll explain the preparation of a sprint, each weekday of the 5-day process, and my overall thoughts and reflections on the book.

Summary

Before beginning a sprint, the company must "**set the stage**." First, they have to choose a big challenge such as Savioke's problem of how a helper robot should interact with a hotel guest or Blue Ribbon Coffee's problem of how to make a coffee subscription website appeal to first-time visitors. Next, the company has to choose a team of 7 people or less who fulfill important roles. (More than 7 people have produced less effective Sprints.) The first role that must be filled is the Decider. The Decider is the person with the final authority of all decisions which is typically the CEO of the company or their chosen delegate. The rest of the team then is usually composed of other experts including finance, marketing, customer, tech/logistics expert, and/or design experts. Fulfilling each role is not required especially if individuals fulfill multiple roles. Once the team is set, each team member must clear their schedule for a whole work week to be fully dedicated to the sprint. Finally, a room with two whiteboards and proper supplies such as sticky notes, whiteboard markers, and healthy snacks must be procured. Each day is set

[1] pg. 9

to begin at 10 AM (except for 9 AM on Friday) and ends at 5 PM so everyone has an optimum amount of energy and can use the earlier part of the day to take care of other work responsibilities. Through over 100 sprints, Knapp and his colleagues have found all these prep elements to be needed for a successful sprint.

Monday's sprint day is designed to set a long-term goal, create a list of sprint specific questions, make a roadmap with the completed goal in mind, talk with the field experts to optimize the process, and pick a specific target moment aligned with the long-term goal. Setting a long-term goal answers why you are doing a certain project and how this will lead the business to where it wants to be in 6 months, 1 year or even 5 years from now. Next, creating sprint-specific questions makes potential problems "easier to track and easier to answer with sketches, prototypes, and tests."[2] It also shifts the issues from uncertainty to curiosity which encourages a growth mindset. The next important step is creating a map that has the completed goal on the right and the key players and customers on the left. In-between is a flowchart that lists each interaction between the players the product or service.[3]In the afternoon of this day, the team asks experts for any potential pitfalls or misunderstandings to ensure an optimal product. Finally, the team creates "How Might We" notes (HMW) to reframe all problems to opportunities, voting on the most important HMW's, and picking the one that has the most important customer and target moment in mind.[4] For Savioke's Relay robot, this target moment was when the robot delivered the requested item for the hotel guest. This first day creates the path to success for the sprint.

Tuesday consists of "remixing and improving" and sketching out parts of the map. The morning is spent reviewing similar working products and services and other tangential businesses to find good ideas to build upon what the company currently offers. This "remix and improve" session concludes with demos of team member's favorite ideas which are captured on the whiteboard for later review. A quick huddle before lunch decides which team members will sketch out different portions of the already created

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[2] pg. 57-58
[3] See *Monday* in Appendix
[4] Ibid.

map ("divide") or everyone privately draws their idea for the solution ("swarm"). Sketching your ideas is important because "abstract ideas lack concrete detail, [so] it's easy for them to be undervalued (like your idea) or overvalued (like the boss's idea).[5] It also allows the team to "critically and fairly" evaluate the idea without a sales pitch. This is typically how a product is viewed by the customer. The rest of the afternoon is spent by each team member drawing their sketch.[6] Also, at the end of this day, someone will want to start the process of procuring the 5 target customers needed for Friday's interviews. Typically, a Google form is created to put on Craigslist with the promise of compensation such as a $100 gift card for the person's time or known customers in the company's network are asked to participate. These actions set up the rest of the week's activities.

Wednesday of the sprint week involves choosing the strongest solution using a 5-step technique and then making a storyboard to plan your prototype.[7] First, the team creates an "art museum" by taping all team members' sketches to the wall in one long row.[8] A process called "heat mapping" is then performed by silently reviewing all the sketches with each team member placing 1 to 3 small dot stickers on every part they like. The ideas with the most stickers are the "hottest" or most popular. 3-minute speed critiques on each sketch are then performed by everyone *except the sketcher* to "save time, remove redundancy, and allow for honest discussions."[9] The sketcher can add anything details they missed after the time is over. A "straw poll" or silent vote takes place for everyone to choose their favorite idea. Each team member places a large sticker on their favorite sketch with the Decider having 3 large dot stickers with their initials on it to signify their "supervote." Either a clear winner is established, the winning ideas can be combined or the Decider makes the ultimate choice. After a lunch break, the storyboard process begins by placing 15 blank printer-paper-size squares on the whiteboard. The opening scene is chosen

[5] pg. 107
[6] See *Wednesday* in Appendix
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] pg. 136

which is typically how the customer hears about the business first - "web search, magazine article, store shelf, etc.."[10] Once decided upon, the rest of the storyboard (typically 5-15 squares) is filled out with the existing sketches and other important information so the team can make a prototype for Thursday.

Thursday is the day you make a prototype of your idea. The prototype is a simple *facade* or imitation of what the company will actually offer the customer because there is not enough time or money to build a real prototype in a day.[11] As long as the team can simulate the experience of the idea for Friday's interviews, they are golden. To do this efficiently, the technique of "divide and conquer" is used to assign the roles of maker, stitcher, writer, asset collector, and interviewer. The maker creates "the individual components (screens, pages, pieces, and so on) of your prototype."[12] The stitcher ensures the style and format is seamless and coherent. The writer makes the text look real enough for the interviewee to not identify the prototype as fake. The asset collector scours the web, image libraries, the company's products, and any other place to provide the photos, icons, or sample content needed. The interviewer produces the script to interview the carefully selected customer's from the Google form created on Tuesday. Tools normally used to produce the prototype are Apple's Keynote PowerPoint, Microsoft Powerpoint, Microsoft Word, an existing space, or a 3D print of the product. Once all the prototype is created, a trial run is performed at the end of the day to tie any loose ends and fix any obvious errors. The idea is now ready to be tested.

Friday is when the company learns whether their idea is effective or not. There are 5 one-hour interviews with the designated interviewer doing the prototype walkthrough with the target customer. Knapp and the other authors found dedicating a day for the whole team to observe the results was more efficient than hearing the results from a 3rd party due to timing and trust issues. The team is split into two rooms - 1 for the interview with the target customer and the rest of the sprint observing in another room.

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[10] pg. 244
[11] See *Thursday* in Appendix
[12] pg. 187

Before all the interviews, the observing team draws 5 columns for each interviewee with a row for each prototype or each section of the prototype. When the interviews begin, at the start of the interview, the target customer has to consent to be streamed for observational purposes. The rest of the team is watching and taking notes on each interview in another room to place in the grid later on. The interviewer first builds rapport with small talk, mentions that they didn't design the product so the customer can be more forthright, and asks open-ended questions to get critical customer insight. The observing team takes notes and puts them on the different columns for each interviewee. Once all the interviews are done, they look for patterns in the customers' responses and get an answer to their sprint question.

Discussion Topics

Why might a team need to run a design sprint?

A team might need to run a sprint when they have to solve big problems, test a new idea, or answer a crucial question. Savioke ran a sprint to answer the question of whether hotel guests would be unnerved or frightened by their Relay robot. Blue Bottle wanted to test their idea of a new online coffee store and how their targeted audience would respond. Flatiron used a sprint to solve their big problem of getting cancer clinical trial information available to doctors and their eligible patients. A sprint became the quickest, cheapest way to get answers to all of these problems.

Why is it important to ask open-ended questions during the interviews on Test day?

Open-ended questions during the interviews on Test day cultivate honest, insightful feedback from the customer. Asking leading questions can tilt a customer's opinion toward a certain direction which isn't a true out-of-the-box customer experience of the product or service. By asking open-ended questions, they receive an explanation of why something does or doesn't work. This kind of feedback companies pay large sums of money for and is critical to improving the customers' experience and keeping them as paying clients.

How can a team measure the success of a design sprint?

There are three types of "wins" the team can achieve from the sprint - "efficient failure", "flawed success", or simply a success. An efficient failure is when the business discovers "that one solution didn't work, saving months of engineering work and extraordinary cost."[13] For example, Slack's founder Stewart Butterfield had a track record of successful hunches and thought the "Bot Team" would work well, but it failed to excite customers. Time and money saved. A flawed success is when the prototype shows some promise, but needs to be refined to meet the customer's satisfaction. Slack's other prototype "The Tenacious Tour" resonated with the customers to some degree, but there were some areas needed for improvement. A good idea ready to be improved upon and made great. The last potential "win" is simply a success. Savioke's Relay robot answered all the sprint questions from Monday and achieved the desired outcome of having positive interactions with hotel guests. Customers loved the robot and the hotel now didn't have to send staff to fulfill simple room requests such as an extra toothbrush or shaver. A great idea born in 5 days. So no matter what a sprint will be insightful and successful in some shape or form for the company.

Opinion

This book provided many concepts and techniques to use for my personal development and in future group projects. The first technique I am going to use going forward is the "Note-and-Vote."[14] This process requires everyone silently writing down ideas for a few minutes and then picking the top 2 or 3. They are then put on a whiteboard and silently voted upon. After the vote takes place, each person picks their favorite and a decision is made from there. There have been many times where people within my group have it an impasse and simple way of deciding things is needed. This is the technique to use. Another technique I will use is "How Might We" notes. Reframing the project problems to opportunities by stating each issue as "how might we" get the creative juices flowing and leads to even better ideas

[13] pg. 223
[14] See *Wednesday* in Appendix

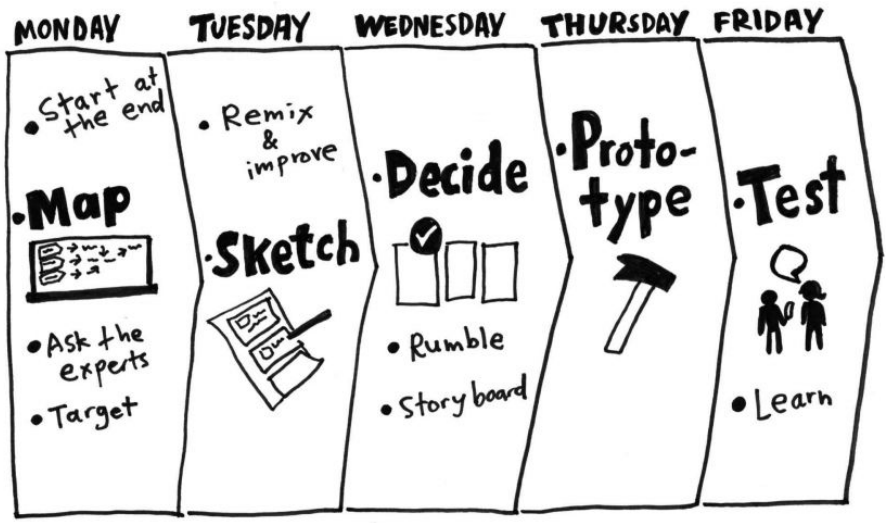
being generated. Finally, the concept of creating a prototype, and testing it with your target audience makes a lot of sense. Receiving and observing feedback helps you to know whether you are on the right track or whether you should stop and reconsider your path. By creating a simple prototype, you can get quick feedback without the time and/or money costs. I plan on using these techniques and even the possibility of doing an entire sprint at my future company.

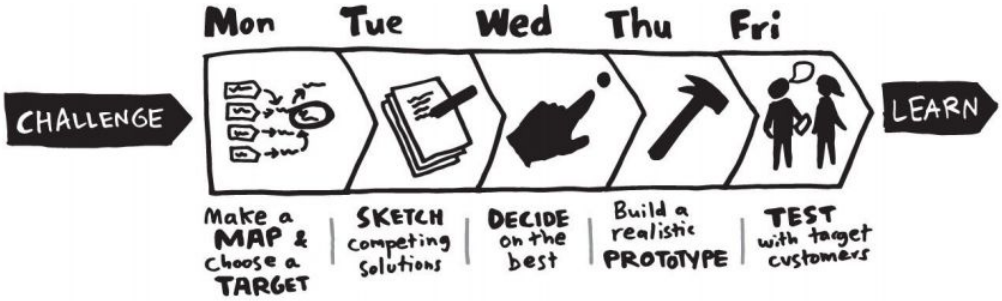
Conclusion

Sprints are the most efficient way to solve big problems and test new ideas. In 5 days, a company can refine and implement internal ideas and see how their customers respond. What this book shows is a fundamental truth of business - listening to the customer is everything. If you want a successful business, then you must listen to your customers and adapt to what they like and dislike. It's hard to predict what a customer wants or needs, but with the sprint methodology, you can better understand what works and what doesn't. The process also reveals another fundamental truth about successful businesses - teamwork. As shown in the various sprint stories, every team member in a project has a piece of the puzzle or experiences/expertise to share. The process considers all business perspectives and enhances the idea by having the team members share their input. All-in-all, the Sprint methodology works because it listens to the customers and their needs and receives important contributions from all stakeholders.

Appendix

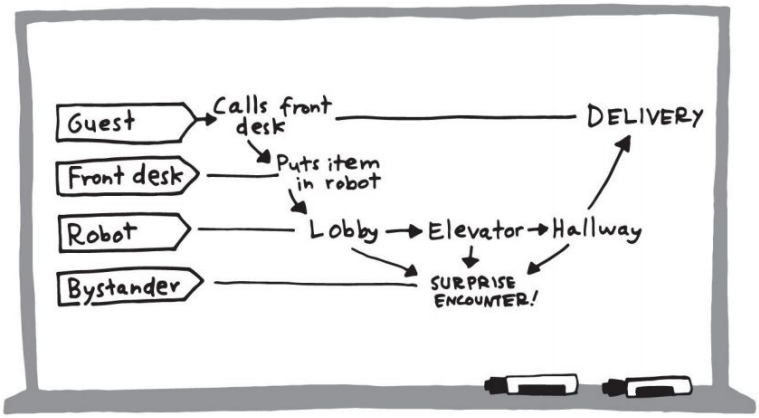
2 Graphs of the Overall Sprint Process





Monday

- **Map Example**



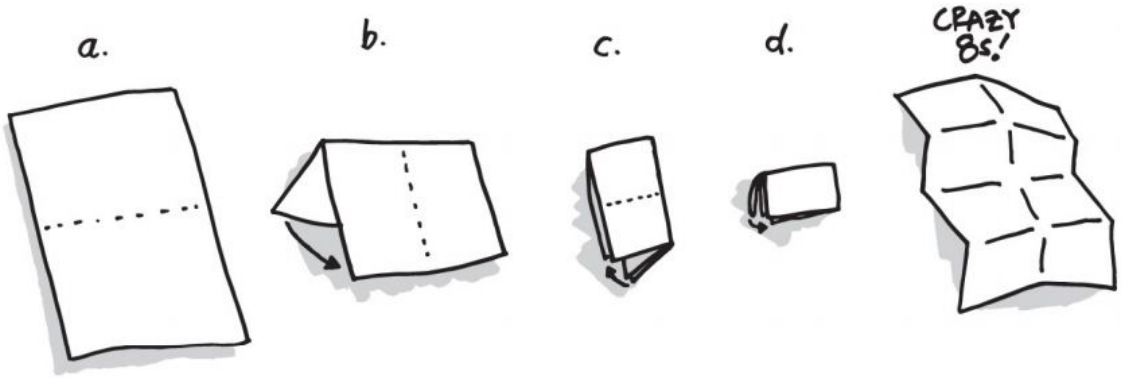
Savioke's robot delivery map.

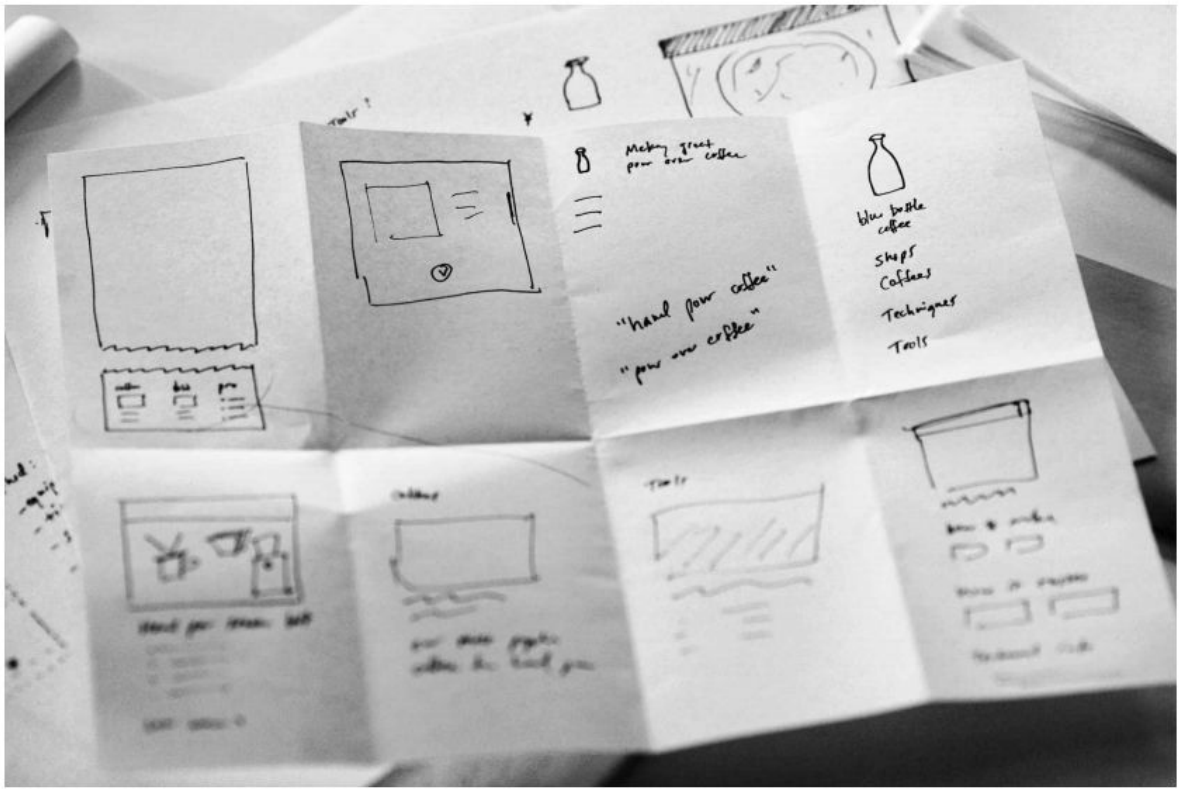
- **Blue Bottle Coffee's "How Might We" Notes**

Some of Blue Bottle Coffee's How Might We notes.

Tuesday

- **Crazy 8's - How to Fold and Example**

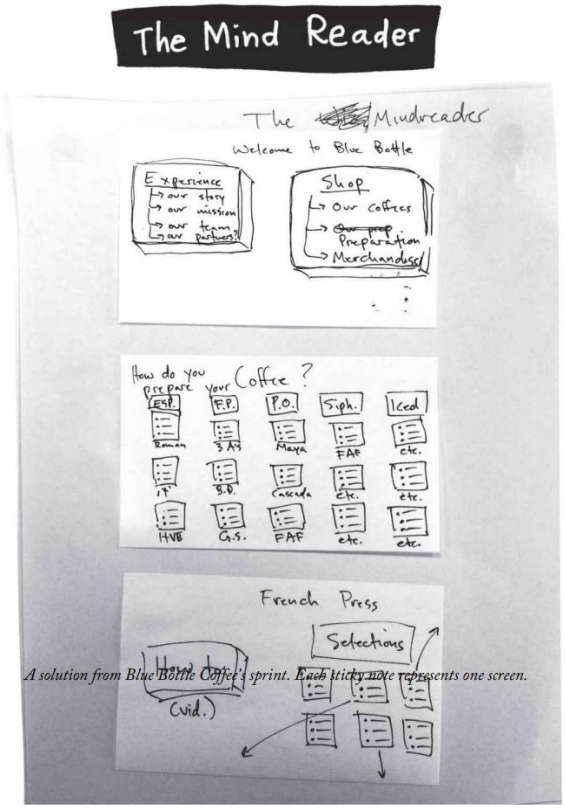




Crazy 8s from the Blue Bottle Coffee sprint. The frames show experiments with phrasing ("hand pour coffee" vs. "pour over coffee"), navigation, and page layout.

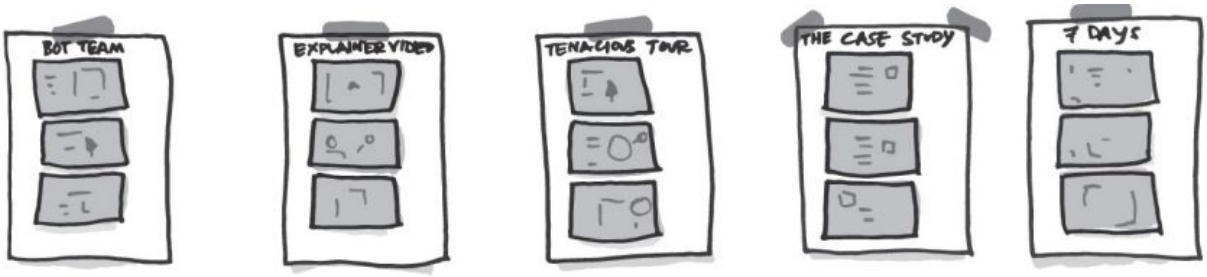
Wednesday

- **Sketch Example from Blue Bottle Coffee sprint**

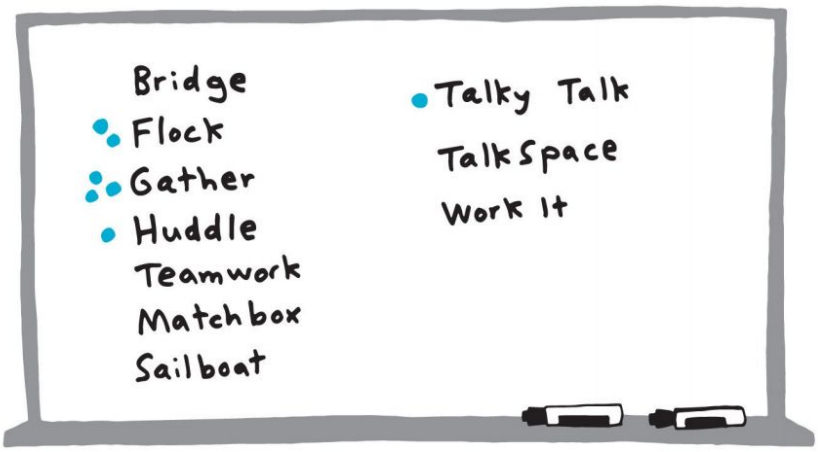


A solution from Blue Bottle Coffee's sprint. Each sticky note represents one screen.

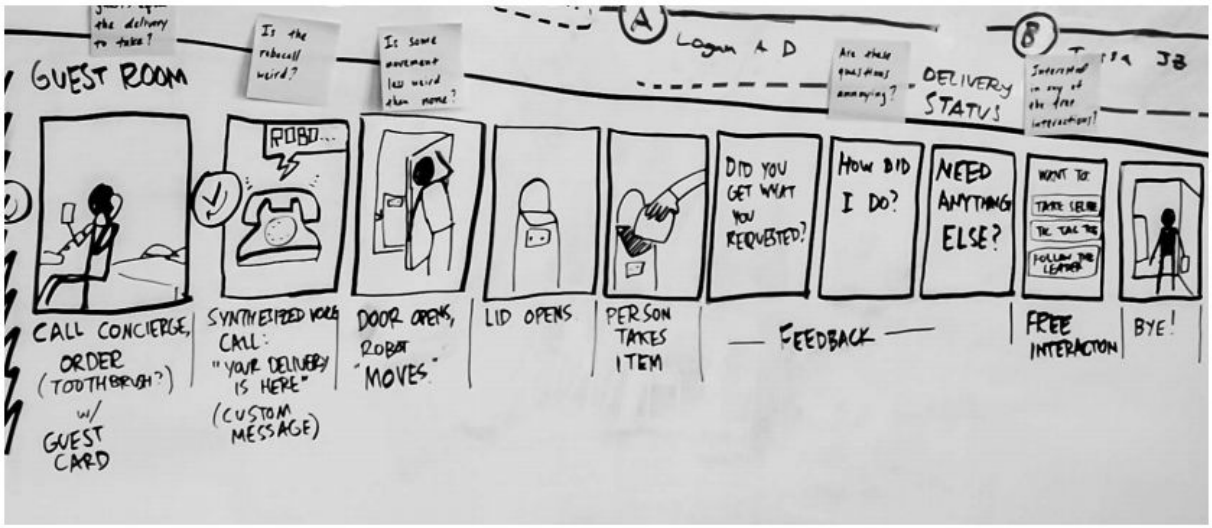
- **Art Museum Example**



- **Note-and-Vote Example**



- **Savioke's Relay Robot Storyboard Example**



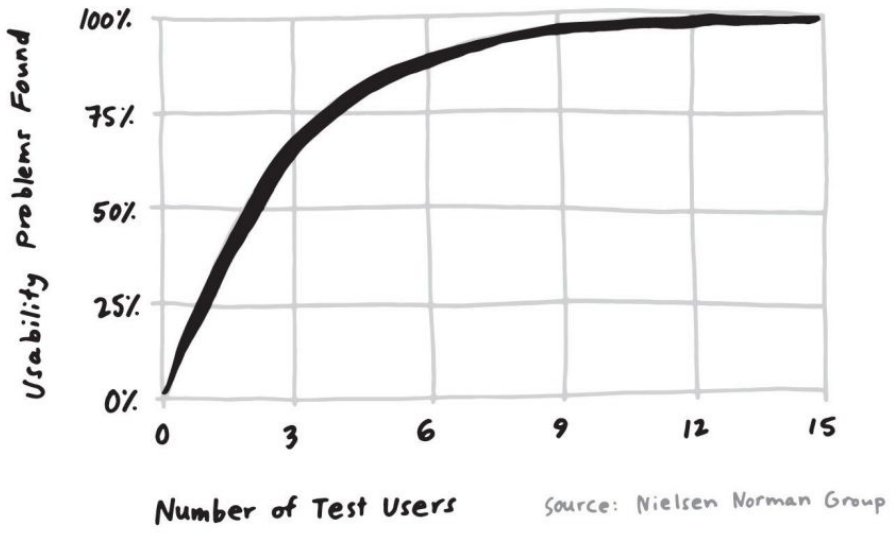
Detail from Savioke's storyboard, showing the robot delivery at the guest's door.

Thursday

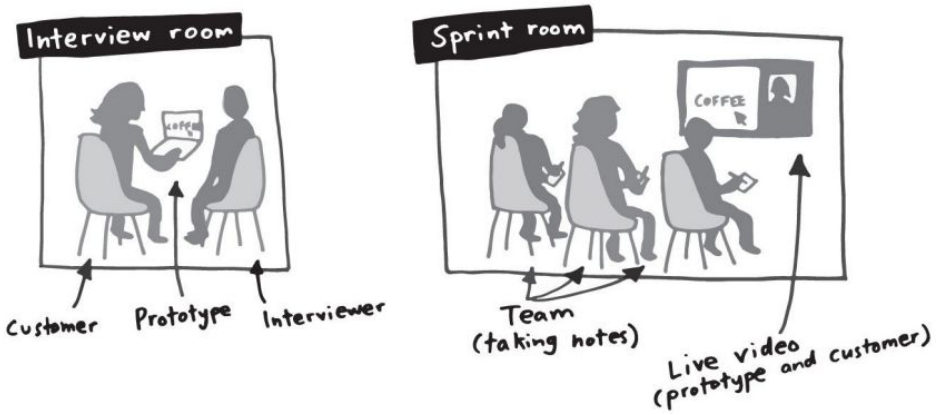
- **Blue Bottle Coffee “The Mind Reader” Prototype Example**

Friday

- **5 Test Users Diminishing Returns Graph**



- **Sprint & Interview Room Examples**



- **Interview Grid Example to Find Insightful Patterns**