

Rapid Prototyping & Customer Development

The Hacker's Guide To Software Design

John W. Long
Wiseheart Design

“Good design is exactly what my clients would do if they had my knowledge and skill set.”

My Assumptions

1. My clients know their business better than anyone else
2. The best way I can assist them is to help them bring their idea to life

“A startup is a business
formed to search for a
repeatable and scalable
business model”

Steve Blank, Lean Startup Guru

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Customer Development

An iterative process of finding customers and leveraging feedback to build a targeted product that will sell.

First learned about this
from @ntalbott. Ask him
about Lean Startups.

How It's Done

1. An idea
2. An assertion
3. An experiment
4. Customer feedback



This is *Agile* for Business

Rapid Prototyping

Aids customer development by giving you, your clients, and their customers something to talk about before a product is complete.

Prototypes allow you
to get a feel for the
actual product without
building the real thing

Our Goal:

Build the smallest thing possible that will validate or invalidate our core idea

Think **big.**

Don't underestimate
the value of research
and brainstorming

Build small.

“Take whatever you think your product should be and cut it in half. Pare features down until you are left with the most essential ones. Then do it again.”

Jason Fried, Getting Real

First Things First

What's the most important part of the application to get right to test our core idea?

“With Basecamp, we started with just the messages section. We knew that was the heart of the app so we ignored milestones, to-do lists, and other items for the time being. That let us base future decisions on real world usage instead of hunches.”

Jason Fried, Getting Real

Identify the heart
of the app

Start There

Build & Rebuild

Don't be afraid to throw things away. Prototyping is about learning.

“Tracer bullets don’t
always hit their target...
That’s the point.”

Dave Thomas & Andy Hunt, *The Pragmatic Programmer*

“Prototyping is a learning experience. Its value lies not in the code you produce, but in the lessons you learn.”

Dave Thomas & Andy Hunt, *The Pragmatic Programmer*

Move slow . . .

It's far easier to build a feature-rich product for a hypothetical customer, than it is to do solid customer development

Get Feedback. Early.

Good Design is about
Good Conversations

Rinse. And Repeat.

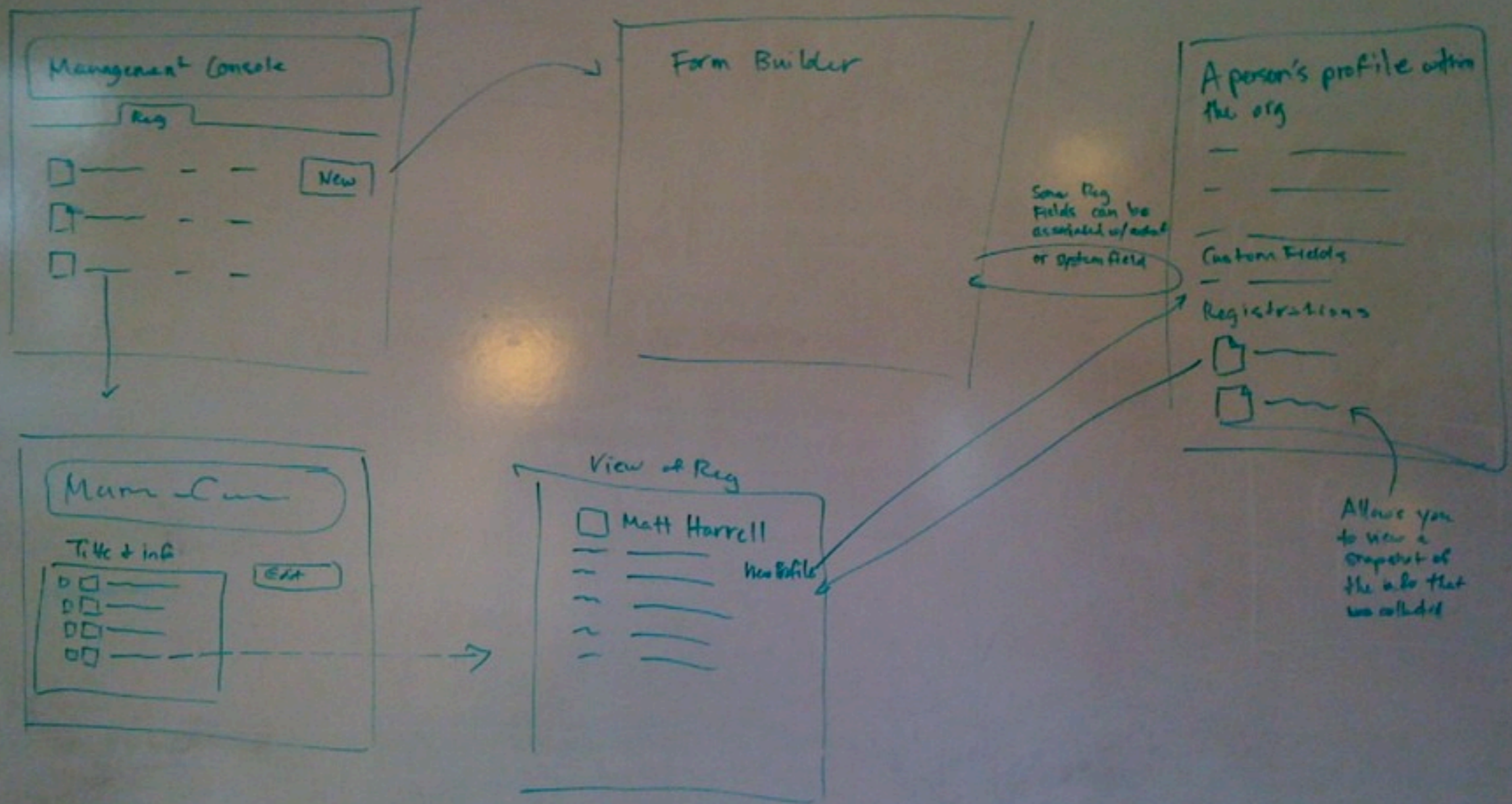
Different Strokes

1. Whiteboards
2. Wireframes
3. Hi-Fi Mockups
4. HTML Prototypes
5. Functional Prototypes

Whiteboards

1. Great for brainstorming with customers
2. Great for illustrating flow
3. Lightweight
4. Hard to take with you

Org Management Console



Wireframes

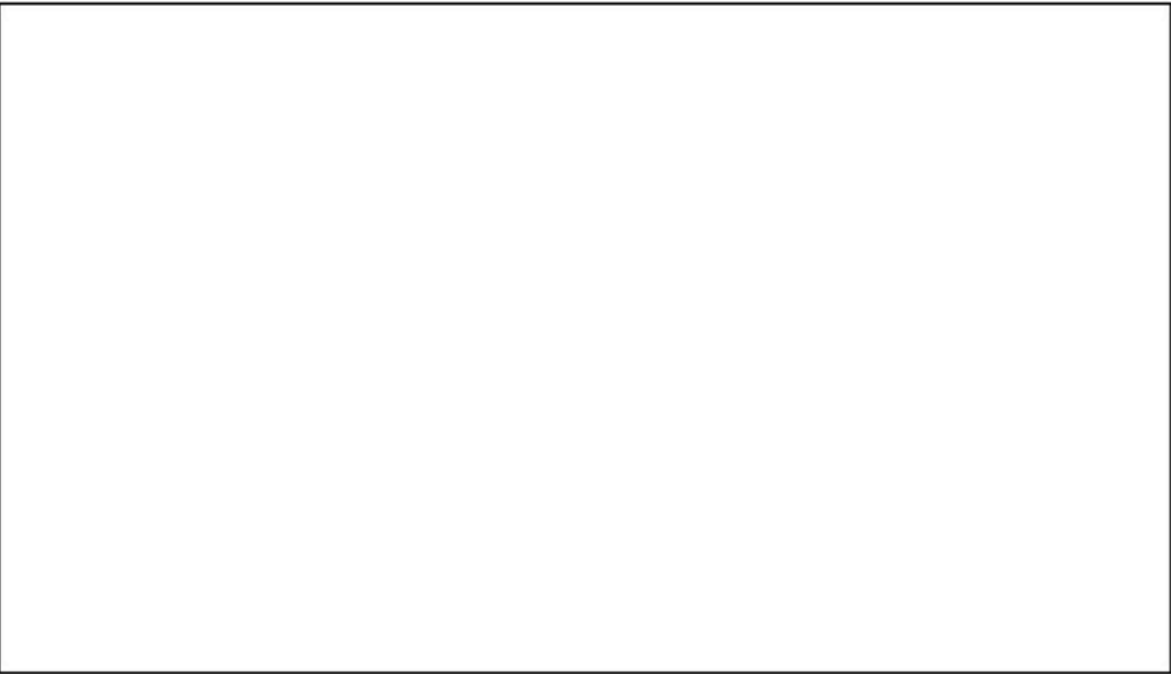

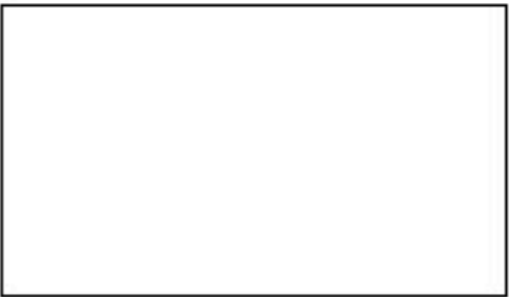
1. Moderately lightweight
2. Capture more detail
3. Easy to showoff to customers and stakeholders
4. Anyone can build them

Demo Paper Prototypes

Dreamstock Landing Page

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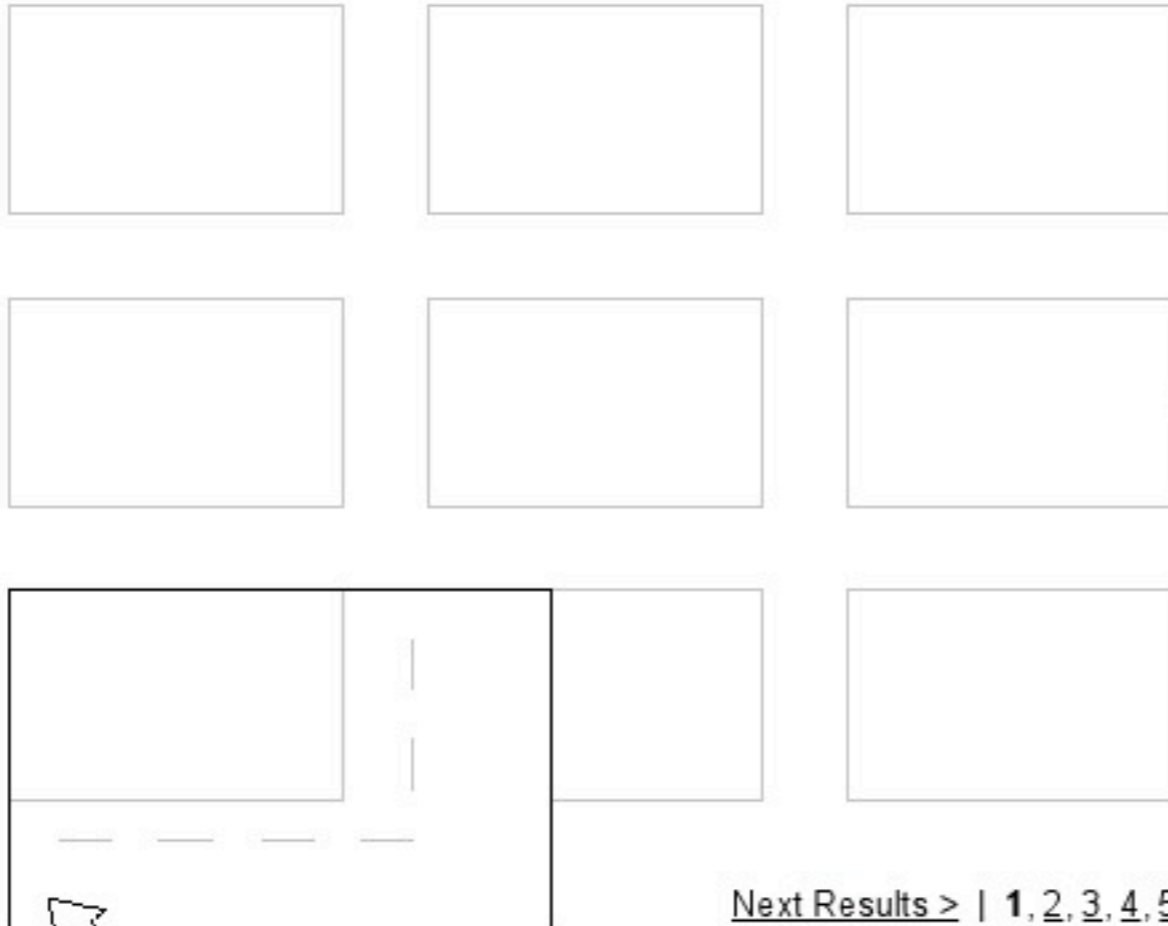
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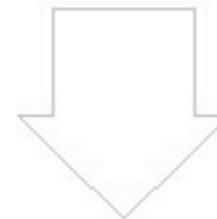
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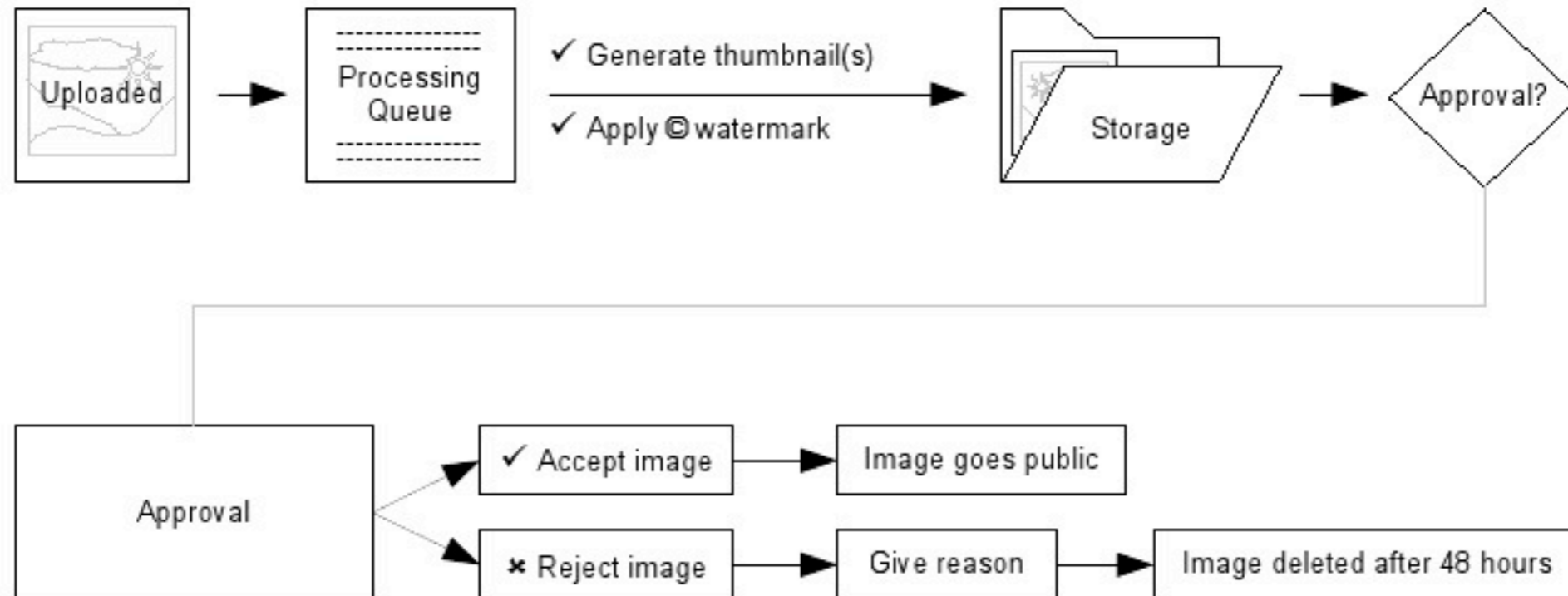
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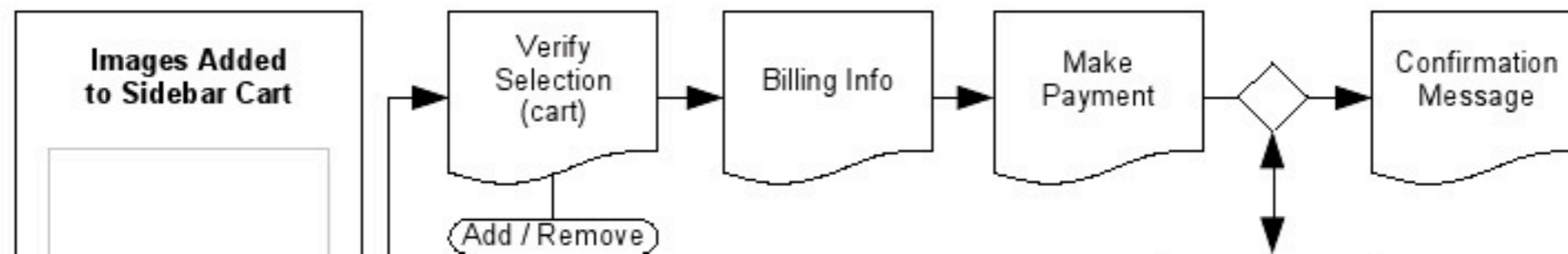
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Upload Process



Checkout Process



Hi-Fi Mockups

1. One step from HTML
2. Help establish look & feel
(also tone)
3. Typically require professional design help
4. Most potential for error

HTML Prototypes

1. Allow you to test flow
2. Can be improved over time
3. Great for client and customer conversations
4. Can be leveraged for actual application (1/4 the effort; makes estimating a cinch)

Functional Prototypes

1. Great for refining algorithms, user interactions, gestures, anything that is complex
2. Also great for client and customer conversations
3. Don't need to be written in/for target language or platform
4. May also be leveraged for the actual application

Your mileage may vary.

Use what works for you.
Throw away what doesn't.

Get Real.

Other Tools

1. Showoff (in-app prototypes)
2. Web App Theme (Rails template)
3. Compass (CSS meta-framework)
4. Little Snapper & Skitch

Questions & Comments

How do you do this? How do you encourage your clients to talk to their customers?

“Good design is a process whereby I help my clients engage their customers to build a product that sells.”

Resources

- LeanStartupPrimer.com/more
- WiseheartDesign.com/weblog
- [Serve Framework](#)
- [Radiant Prototype & \[Mockups\]\(#\)](#)