Tool 43: Prototyping

Aim of the tool
Quickly and cheaply make ideas tangible so they can be tested and evaluated by others.

When to use it?
The convergence stage, when decisions need to be made about which ideas could work.

What is Prototyping?

At the convergence stage of a MSP, the focus is on creating a shared understanding, and a common sense that progress is being made towards solutions. A lot of ideas and options are circulating that need specification and testing.

Prototyping tools make it possible to generate insight into the pros and cons of each idea before a lot of time, energy and resources are invested in making the proposal picture perfect. They offer an option to quickly experiment and get feedback on the essential elements of a proposed idea earlier in the process.

According to IDEO, prototyping has three main elements:

- Build to think: creating a solution so that it can be communicated to others and making the idea better.
- Rough, rapid, right: Prototypes do not need to be perfect, it is about learning fast by creating a quick and cheap way of experimenting.
- Answering questions: It is essential to identify which question you want to answer with a prototyping tool.

If you like to take advantage of prototyping, facilitators can fall back on a wide variety of prototyping tools. Groups can, among others, build models, create storyboards, do a role play, or make a diagram to show their ideas to others.

Whatever the tool you select, it is crucial that participants experience a sense of play: trying things out, without fear of failing, while being curious for feedback on how things can be improved.

Example: how to use a storyboard in a MSP

A storyboard is basically a simple sketch that quickly visualizes a process or idea. This could be a product or service that the MSP plans to develop and offer. It serves as a brainstorming tool to transform ideas into a presentable (linear) format. The process of visualization can help in thinking the idea through. A comic book format is often used for this process.

If you use the storyboard as a way to quickly test some ideas, the group can be divided into several smaller teams, which each work on their own storyboard.

A facilitator informs the group about the basic elements of a storyboard and makes sure all participants understand that the drawings do not need to be detailed or beautiful in order to present a clear message. Once the storyboards are made, the facilitator organizes a plenary feedback session.
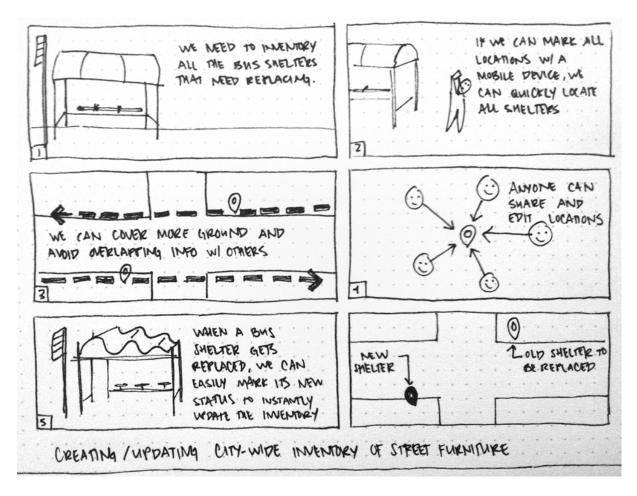
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<u>Materials needed</u>: pen, paper or drawing board

<u>Time</u>: about 60 minutes

<u>Storyboard instructions for the assigned teams</u>:

- Determine which key elements of your idea you want to visualize.
- Take 30-45 minutes to visualize the story in a comic book format.
- Present the storyboard to the group and ask for feedback.

Example of a storyboard by Design Studio Ux:

Learn more

IDEO (2015). The field guide for human-centred design. 1st edition. Available for download at http://www.designkit.org/resources/1/

IDEO (2013). Human-centred design toolkit. 2nd edition. Available for download at http://www.ideo.com/images/uploads/hcd_toolkit/IDEO_HCD_ToolKit.pdf (UPLOAD)

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