

STAGES OF PROTOTYPING

Definitions vary for prototypes, but the Bullock Museum abides by the following definitions:

Paper prototype - Paper-based prototype used to show "how it works."

- Low-cost
- Easy to change and adapt
- A good way to communicate initial ideas
- Usually shown to and informally tested by main development team and stakeholders

Alpha - A proof-of-concept model. If digital, the experience has now moved from paper to digital and if a low-tech interactive, it now uses materials similar to the end product.

- Highlights core features
- Major changes are still expected
- If digital, start testing design and layout and make changes to user interactions
- If low-tech, start testing with different materials and locate suppliers for all components
- Try to recreate the end placement as much as possible, especially if it's in a unique spot
- Usually tested with staff outside the development team and visitors with a script

Beta - As close to the final as possible.

- Uses the final design and materials as the end product
- Usually tested in the actual installation space with visitors with a script
- Goal to identify glaring issues and identify any refinements

TESTING AND EVALUATION

It's important to test and evaluate your experience or product with outside audiences at key points. To be most thorough, these audiences should include the development team, staff outside of the development team, and visitors. Two of those key testing and evaluation points are: 1) Prototype testing, and 2) Installed experience testing. At both points, you will be making assessments about the experience you have created. Assessment is the process of documenting findings in measurable ways and interpreting them to make improvements and refinements.

In **prototype testing**, you are testing the concept, not the audience.

- Create a script of questions you would like to ask your audience about the prototype.
- Make sure to clarify to the audience that they are not the ones being tested. ("You are testing me. If you're confused, that is not your fault. You are helping me make this better.")
- Ask a test audience to think aloud as they navigate your prototype so that you can know what they see and feel and understand their experience.
- Take notes on the process.
- At the end, ask for any clarification, more particular thoughts ("Did you notice this progress bar?"), and welcome any additional feedback.

When evaluating an **installed experience**, you are evaluating the experience against metrics of success for the finished piece.

- Metrics could be learning goal takeaways, completion rates, or any other host of other options.
- These metrics should be decided upon prior to evaluation and measurable.
- You can evaluate an experience with analytics tracking, surveys, interviews, and other methods.
- The experience should be evaluated right after installation, and then at additional points to determine long-term sustainability and effectiveness.

With both prototypes and installed experiences, think about its whole life-cycle with an audience:

- Before an audience engages with the experience
 - Is the audience intimidated?
 - Do they notice the experience?
 - Are they eager to participate?
- While an audience engages with the experience
 - Are they confused at any point?
 - How does a group interact? How does an individual interact?
 - How long does someone or a group stay with the experience?
- After an audience engages with the experience
 - What were the takeaways?
 - Do they remember the experience 5 minutes later? When they're leaving?