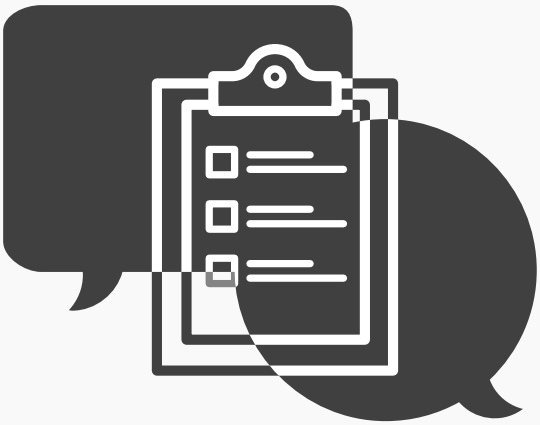

Six Best Practice Tips for Gathering Feedback on Your Prototypes

Gathering feedback is a crucial element in the Design Thinking process – and in all other human-centred design processes. In order to maximise the benefits of gathering feedback, however, you need to be purposeful about it. Here are some pointers to take note of when thinking about gathering feedback from your users.

1. Ways to Solicit Feedback

How you solicit feedback from your users (or team-mates, if you are doing preliminary testing with your prototypes within your team) depends largely on what type of prototype you have built. For instance, if your prototype were a role-playing session, the experience of acting out the roles would be a valuable source of observations and feedback in itself. On the other hand, paper interfaces and physical models might require additional interviews with users to get them to talk about their thinking process while using the prototype.

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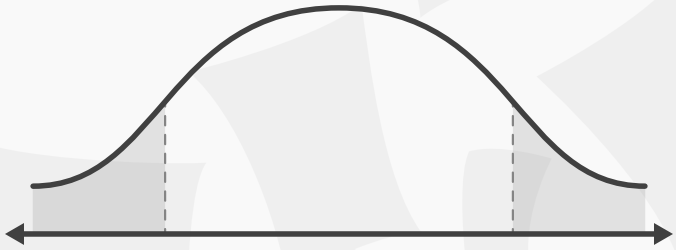
Nevertheless, there are some general rules of thumb you can rely on in order to solicit better feedback. First, you can consider testing out **several versions of your prototype** on users to gather feedback. This helps to solicit critical feedback — because people tend to hold back on overtly criticising prototypes. When you present your users with alternatives, you allow them to compare the various prototypes and tell you what they liked and disliked about each version, and so you will get feedback that is more honest.

You can also consider using the **"I Like, I Wish, What If"** method to solicit honest feedback in testing sessions. This method provides scaffolding for your users to voice their opinions in a critical but positive manner. We will cover more on this method, and provide a downloadable template for it, further down.

2. Test Your Prototypes on the Right People

Whom you test your prototypes on will affect the usefulness and relevance of their feedback. If you are in the early stages of your design project and just want some simple and rough feedback, testing prototypes on your team-mates would be good enough. Towards the end of your project, when the prototypes get more detailed and closer to a final product, however, you might want to consider testing on a wider range of users so as to get the most relevant and helpful feedback.



Consider testing your prototypes on **extreme users**, on top of regular users. In order to find extreme users, you will first need to define a dimension that is relevant to your prototype. If you are working on an idea related to a supermarket, for example, your extreme users could be people who shop at supermarkets every day, and — at the other end of the scale — people who *never* shop at supermarkets. Testing your prototypes on extreme users will often help you uncover some problems and relevant issues that affect regular users, because the extreme users tend to be more vocal about their love (or dislike) of doing things related to your prototype.

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If your product or service is cross-regional or international, you should also test your prototypes across **regions and countries**. Differences in cultures and customs might affect how people living in different areas use your prototype.

Towards the final stages of your project, you should also get feedback on your prototypes from **stakeholders** other than your users. Internal stakeholders in your company, manufacturers, retailers and distributors will each have their own criteria for building, making or shipping a product or service, and can have an impact on the success of your idea. Gathering feedback from these stakeholders will thus prevent your team from receiving a nasty shock when you realise that you won't be able to implement the product or service you have been developing as feasibly as you had believed.

3. Ask the Right Questions

Each prototype that you test should have a few core questions you want answered. Before you test your prototypes and gather feedback, you should therefore be sure about what **exactly you are testing for**. For instance, if you have built your prototype to gather feedback about the usability of your product, then you should gear your testing session towards teasing out *how usable* the prototype is to the user. Subsequently, in a post-testing interview session with your user, you should then focus on finding out the positive and negative feedback relating to usability.

Remember to **keep an open mind** when testing your prototypes, even though you have a few core questions you want to focus on. Many times, testing sessions can reveal key points on issues that your team did not even know to focus on. After testing, you should evaluate the feedback and decide if there are new questions that you should ask during future testing sessions.

4. Be Neutral When Presenting Your Ideas

When you present your prototypes to your users, try to be as objective as you can. Highlight both the positive and negative aspects of your solution, and refrain from trying to sell your idea. Remember that prototyping and testing is about finding ways to improve your idea, and overly selling your idea can be detrimental to that goal.

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When your users voice negative feedback about your prototype, **refrain from trying to defend it**. Instead, probe them further to **find out what exactly is wrong** with your proposed solution, so you can go back and improve your ideas. **Avoid becoming too attached to your idea**, and always be ready to dismantle, change, or even abandon it when the need arises. Remember, this stage is like a rehearsal, not the real "show"; you're *not* being cut to pieces in the marketplace — in fact, any careful corrections you can make that stem from negative feedback will greatly help your chances of success later on.

5. Adapt While Testing

When you conduct tests on your prototypes, try to adopt a **flexible mindset**. For instance, when you realise that certain components of your prototype are drawing attention away from the core functions of the prototype, you can remove these or change them in order to bring the focus back to the key elements of your idea. In addition, if you think that your planned script for the testing session does not work well, feel free to deviate from it and **improvise during the testing session** in order to get the best feedback from your users.

6. Let the User Contribute Ideas

During your testing session, you should allow your users to **contribute ideas** that build on your prototypes. You can ask your users how the product or service could be improved for them, for instance. Doing so would encourage users to provide useful critiques as well as help improve your solution.

You can also turn some questions that your users ask during the tests around, and ask the users what *they* think. For example, if your user asks you how to charge an electronic product, you can turn it around and ask them what would be the best charging method for the product. Even if you do not adopt their ideas, their feedback would likely give you insights about the key areas of concern that your users have while using your product or service.

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