

# How to present Service Design work in an exhibition?

**In short:** Have a poster that has three levels of informations (little visible from far, medium visible from 2 meters, lots visible from 1 meter) and put your main prototypes on a table (each on his own sheet of paper that contextualizes it and shows the key learnings).

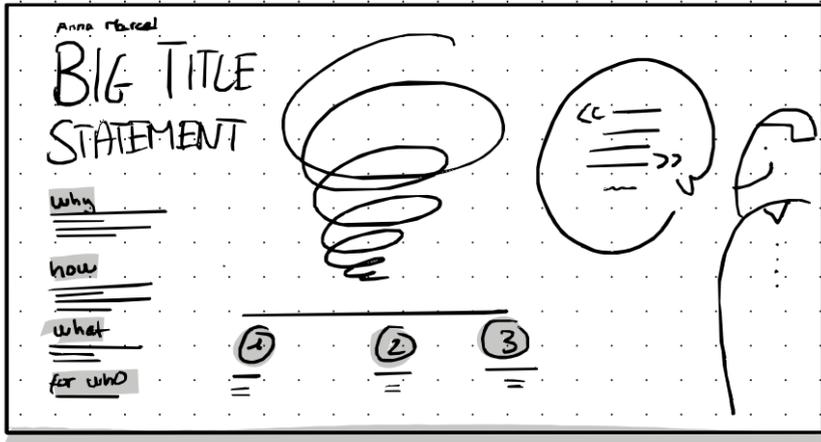
## The context

Within the Master Service Design of the HSLU we have from time to time intermediary exhibitions where learners have to share the state of their project in a exhibition format. This means they have to present clearly what is their service idea, in which context they work; what is the problem they solve, and all of these key ideas. But they have to do it in a way that is understandable without oral presentation, and that has to fit three audiences. The guy who just spends 15 seconds, the person who is curious and is okay to stay for a minute, and the very invested person (a friend, a supervisor) who will watch it all.

## The poster

**Limited space to clarify your concept.**

To me having a poster that describes your service concept is a great exercise for any service design professional. It forces you to really prioritize what you want to share because the space is limited. You can't just add another slide. You have to make it work within the limits of your poster.



**Don't over index on the spatial stuff.**

A poster is also a very nice tool because it puts the focus on what's really important for the service designer: not making a lovely exhibition and spending hours on the exhibition stuff but focusing on having and sharing a clear idea.

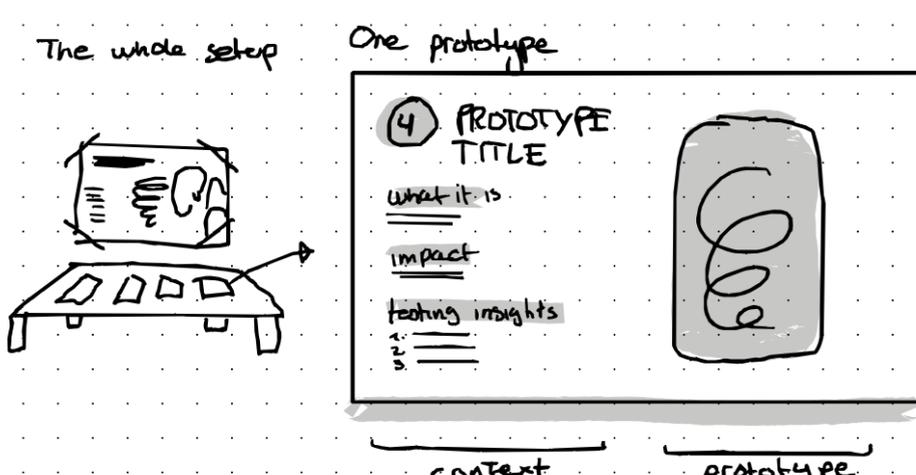
**Structure three levels of pitch.**

Whenever we have to pitch our service design work the pitch really adapts to our audience. To a C-level guy you have to pitch the big idea and the impact. To a manager some process elements. And to direct colleagues who need to live with the consequences or implement it you need to share many more details to reassure them. A poster helps you to formulate these three levels of pitch in one format. To do so you design the poster with three levels of engagement, time invested and physical distance.

1. From far: share the title, concept and impact. This is in big size.
2. From 2 meters: share the key findings and guiding principles. This is in medium size.
3. From 1 meter: share the details and reassure. This is in small size.

## The table

On the table you can share more details for the very engaged people. This is the place where you can share prototypes of key elements of your service.



One approach that works really well to present prototypes is to place them each on a big sheet of paper. On this sheet of paper you then have two zones:

1. **context zone:** this one gives key information to understand what the prototype is about and what was learned from it. This could include things like:
  - a. title
  - b. insights it's based on
  - c. testing results
  - d. implementation considerations
  - e. where and when people interact with it
  - f. etc.

Obviously, the art is in choosing what are the three to four things that you find the most important to share here.

2. **prototype zone:** this is the place where you put the prototype. Just make sure that the color of the paper your prototype sits on and the prototype itself don't have the same background color.

# How to present Service Design prototypes in a mini exhibition format?

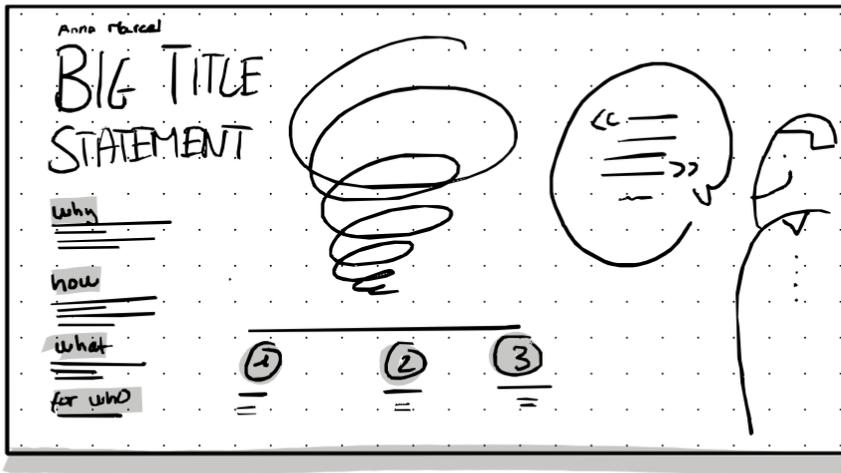
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## The poster

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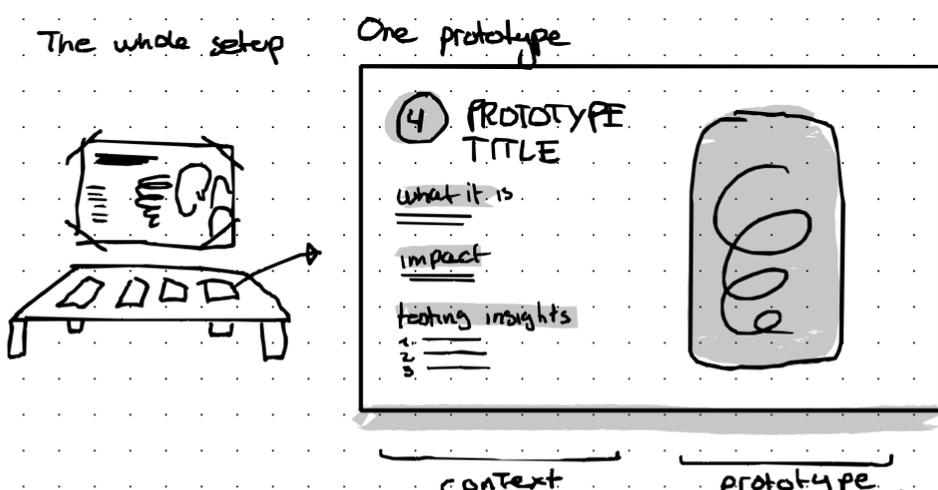
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1. **From far:** share the title, concept and impact. This, in big size on the poster.
2. **From 2 meters:** share the key findings and guiding principles. This is in medium size. share the details and reassure.
3. **From 1 meter:** This is in small size. The table.

On the table you can share more details for the very engaged people. This is the place where you can share prototypes of key elements of your service:

## Prototypes on the table



One approach that works really well to present prototypes is to place them each on a big sheet of paper. On this sheet of paper you then have two zones:

### Context zone

This one gives key information to understand what the prototype is about and what was learned from it. This could include things like:

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### Prototype zone

This is the place where you put the prototype. Just make sure that the color of the paper your prototype sits on and the prototype itself don't have the same background color.

## Examples

Here a few examples of learners and how they present their Service Design projects in an intermediary exhibition context:

## Q&A IDEAS

- Who uses simulations for prototyping?
- ✗ What is a rebriefing and why does it matter?
- What are the journeys people had before arriving to SD?
- ✗ What does it take to make a workshop?
- ✗ What's the bare structure of most workshops?

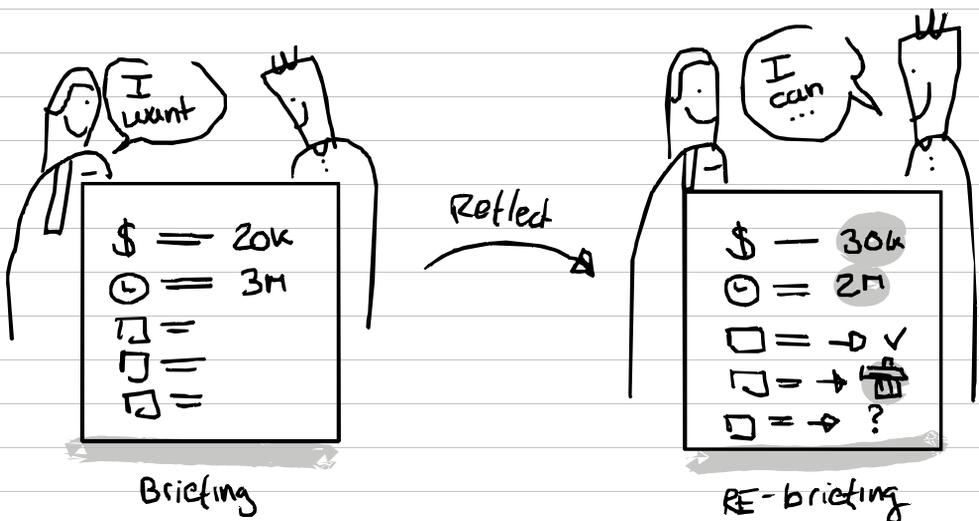
## What is a rebriefing and why is it important?

In short: a rebriefing is the moment when you come back to a person that gave you a task and you tell them how you understand what you should do in your own words and highlight what elements were missing and which one aren't possible in the time or budget frame that is given.

### What is a rebriefing?

Most projects, be it a Service Design Project, or any other type of project start with a briefing, kickoff or request. Basically someone, a client, your boss, a stakeholder, tells you the details, goals, budget, time frame for the project:

A rebriefing is the fact of coming back to the person who told you: "This is what I need". and tell her: "This is what I understood, this is what we can reasonably do, and this stuff you asked is impossible. Can I start?".



### Why is a rebriefing important?

A rebriefing is the moment where you disappoint the person who wants to give you a task before you start working on the task.

It's so much better to come with the disappointing stuff before time and money got lost.

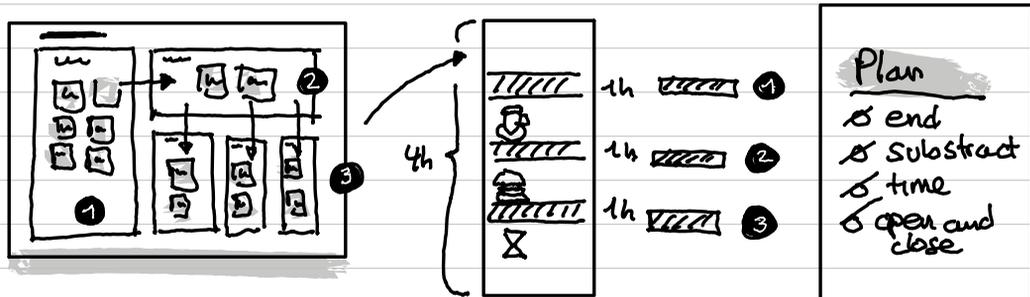
But you might say: "but Daniele, we are already perfectly aligned!" Then definitely you need the rebriefing. Because you think you understood the person that gave you the task but you haven't tested it. The fact that you re-tell the "client" what you think he wants will reveal also what you missed.

So a rebriefing helps the client see what is really possible. It helps you see what you miss understood, and it helps both of you to have a much clearer contract.

# What does it take to create a workshop?

In short: The minimum process to design a good workshop goes like this:

- define what is the result you want at the end
- remove all the standard things (break, intro, outro, buffer, late start) to see how much time you really have
- build a minute by minute plan of how you'll use the time that you really have.



## Define the end goal and make it visual

It's kind of strange to me how many people create workshops where they put in exercises without being crystal clear what they absolutely want to get at the end. It's as if you cooked by just putting ingredients that sound fun together. Sure people will have a full belly but it won't be something coherent.

So how do you start by making the end clear?

What has helped me in the last few years is to do one of the following two things:

- **build the end report**: create the slide deck with filler words and images of the report that will be sent after the workshop.
- **draw the end summary canvas**: create the one page visual canvas, just like the business model canvas that you'll use to summarize the end result.

## Subtract

The second step is to verify how much time you really have to arrive at this result. To make this you need to remove the basic blocs that are always present in a workshop but that aren't the activities themselves. This includes time for:

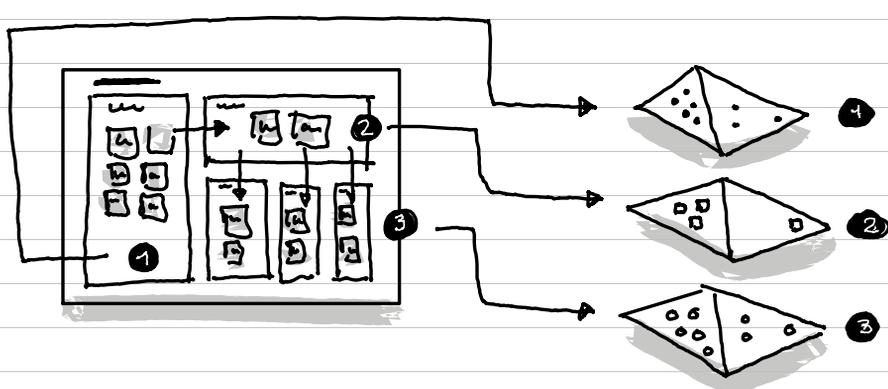
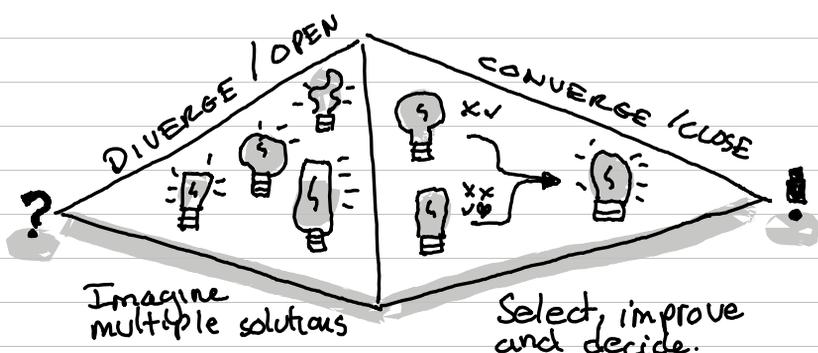
- **A late start**: 10 minutes, because there is always someone who is late.
- **Introduction and conclusion**: because people need to understand the plan, what they did and the next steps.
- **Breaks**: because when people are together for more than 1 hour they need time to breath, go to the toilets, stretch their legs, etc.
- **Buffer**: extra time for when things go longer but you can't make them shorter.

Now you can do some basic math: total time minus all the fixed blocs gives you the real time you have at your disposal.

## Time each step by minutes

The third step is to look how you can get to the end result you want with the real time you got.

The usual structure of most workshop activities is like a diamond:



There is a phase where we open things up by looking at several ways to answer the challenge. The second phase is the moment where we choose which are the most promising options, improve them and finally select one.

How do you do that?

- To open: you list ideas, sketch them, etc.
- To close: you give feedback, improve and vote.

## Going further

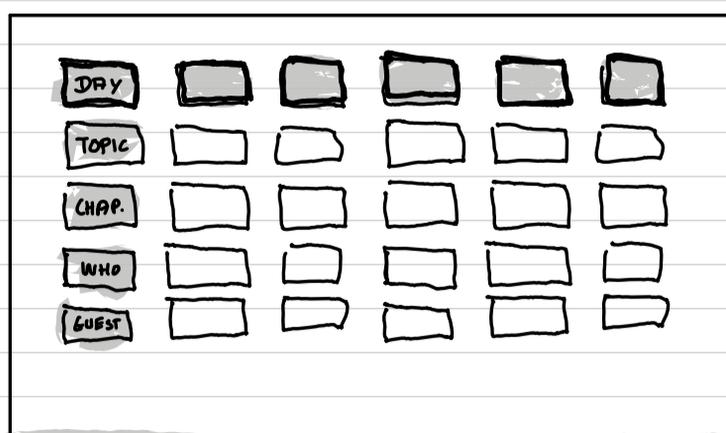
Here a few resources to go further

- Basics of workshop facilitation
- Spreadsheet template for workshop planning
- Decision making activities
- Library with hundreds of workshop activities

## How does a minimal blueprint for teaching look like?

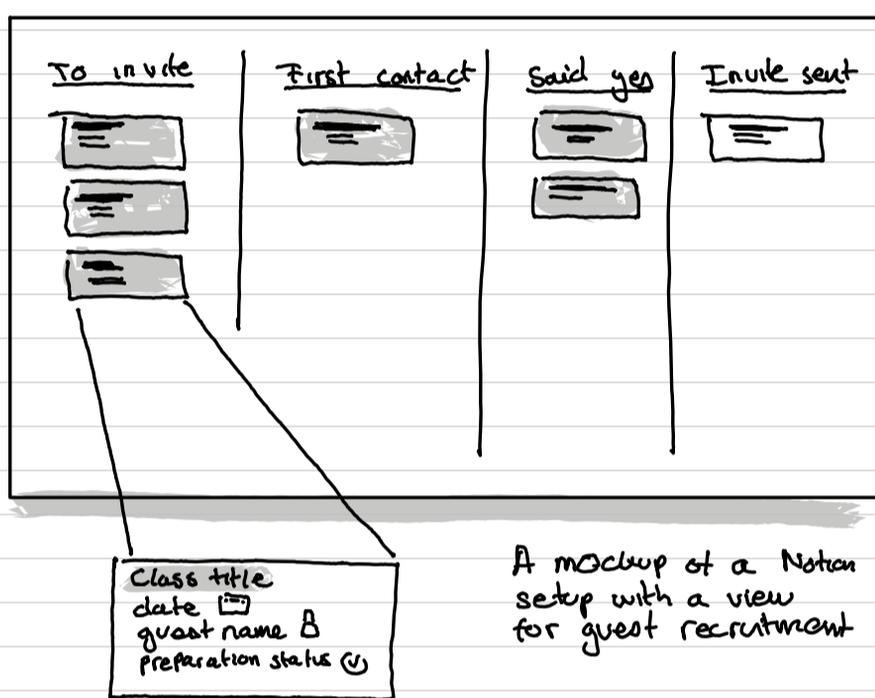
In short: a simple blueprint inspired by the Practical blueprinting method is a great way to keep an overview of a series of classes including: who teaches what, who are the special guests, what are the readings for the learners, etc.

## How does that look like?



A mockup of a teaching blueprint

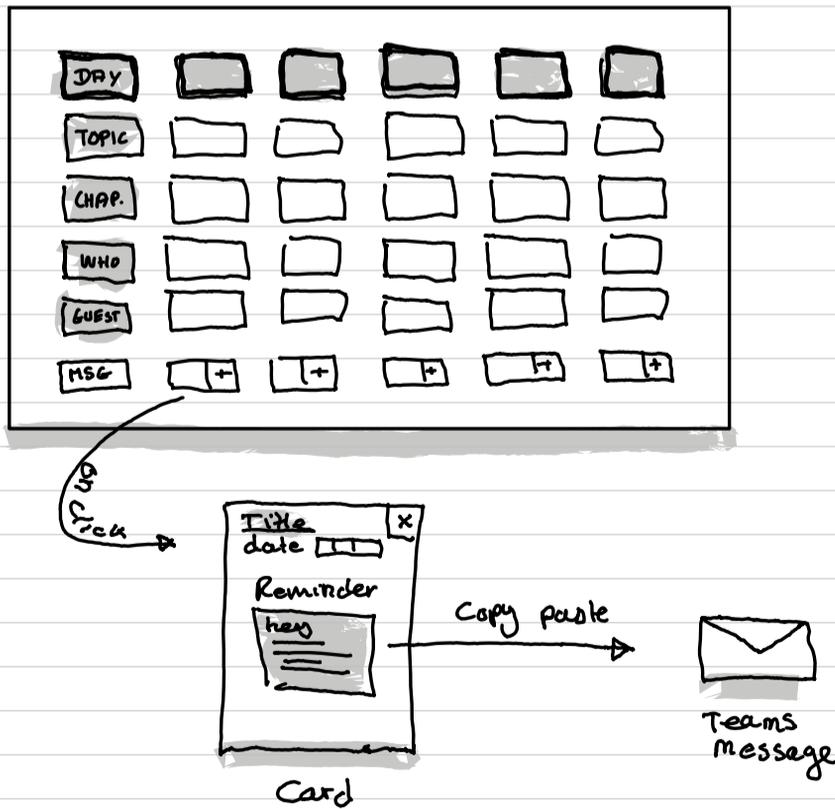
I like to have used such blueprints in two formats: a quick and dirty oiro board (great for quick planning) or a more fleshed out Notion database shown in a Kanban view that shows me the different stages of preparation. This is especially useful for me to track the stage of my recruitment of external guests.



A mockup of a Notion setup with a view for guest recruitment

## How to make this better?

I think in the future I'll use more miro for this kind of stuff with a twist inspired by notion: using the "cards" feature so that I can then also have a card "messages and reminders" which then open with a full text editor where I can write in advance the reminders and messages for the learners, because sadly Microsoft Teams doesn't allow me to schedule messages more than a few few days in advance. And as I plan my courses months in advance (including all the messages and reminders) I need a place to store these things so that I can quickly copy and paste reminder messages when it's the day.



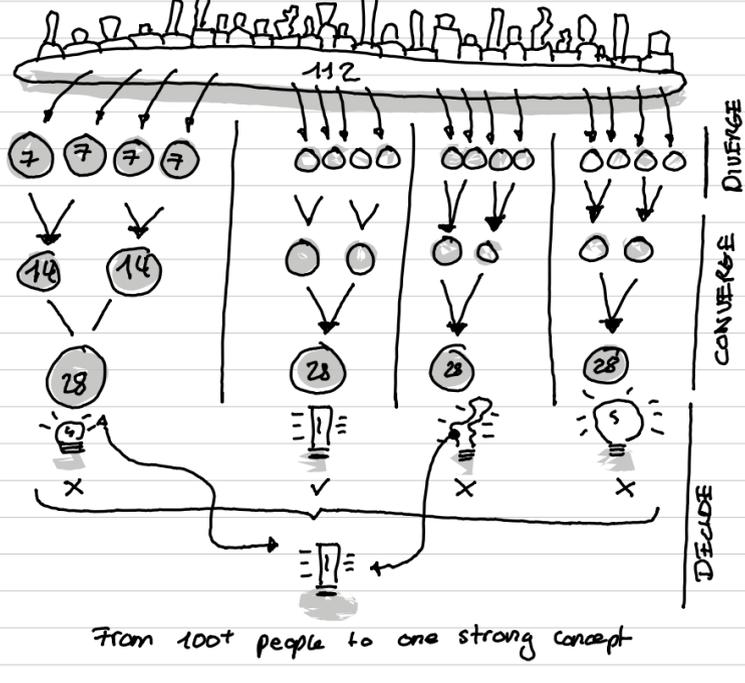
## What are things a course blueprint can contain?

Like a service blueprint, especially one inspired by the "practical blueprinting" approach, you can really customize the building blocks to your needs. Here a few ideas of blocks that can be useful and that I've found useful in the past:

- teacher
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# How can you align people in mass participation workshops?

In short: start by aligning small groups of 5-7 people. Once they are aligned within each group, merge two groups together, and again.



From 100+ people to one strong concept

## The base idea: divide, align, merge.

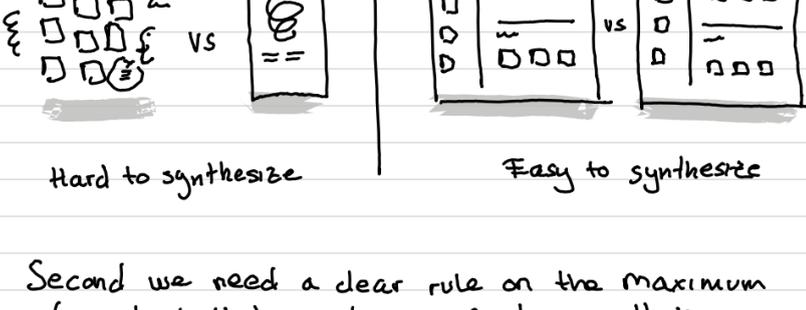
When you have a shitload of people it's nearly impossible to have a conversation with 100+ people at a time. So the process I use looks like this:

### Divide and align

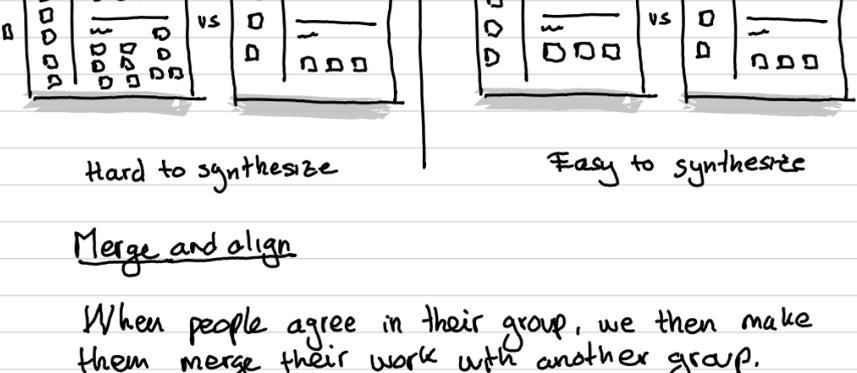
I make smaller groups of 5-7 people. These people get plenty of time to come with a good first draft.

One thing that is key at this stage is to do two things so that the rest of the process is possible.

First we need a sort of framework, container or canvas that structures the answer of the group. Think a tool like the Business Model Canvas or a custom made canvas. This makes it then easier to compare and debate later as people are comparing bananas to bananas and not bananas with poems.



Second we need a clear rule on the maximum of content that people can produce in their group. So that later when two groups meet it's easier to combine things together. Also, a maximum number of elements focuses the group and forces them to make decisions.

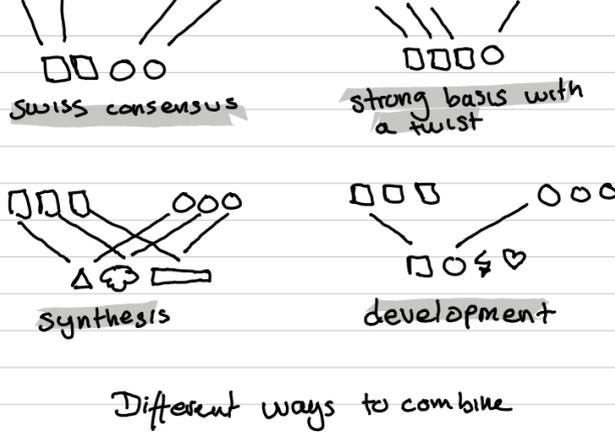


### Merge and align

When people agree in their group, we then make them merge their work with another group.

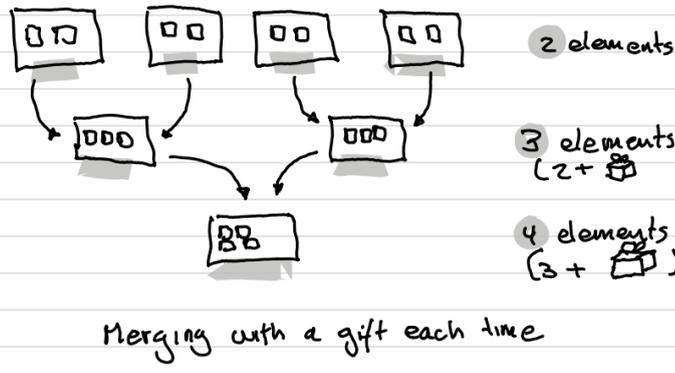
Here things that can help is to spot, while people are working, groups that have similar ideas so that they fight over the details not about the big ideas. Also that helps people to realize that they have common wishes even if they didn't speak together.

Another thing that helps a lot is to again give a maximum of elements. If in the little group the rule was "you need to get to 3 elements", the rule when combining could be: "you need to get to 4 elements". Because there is one additional element the synthesis feels less hard, and it's sure that even if the work of one group is taken as the basis, still the second group can save one element.



Different ways to combine

Once there is a clear alignment, here a bit of time pressure helps, we can repeat this step if needed to combine the work even further.

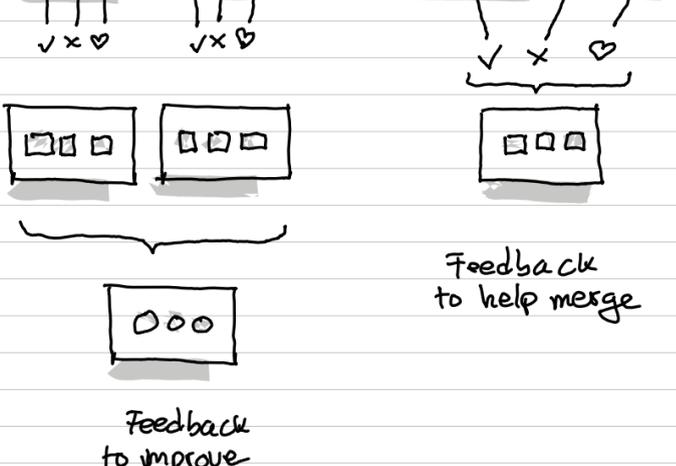


Merging with a gift each time

### Deciding and feedback

Decision makers can boost such a process with two tools: decisions and feedback.

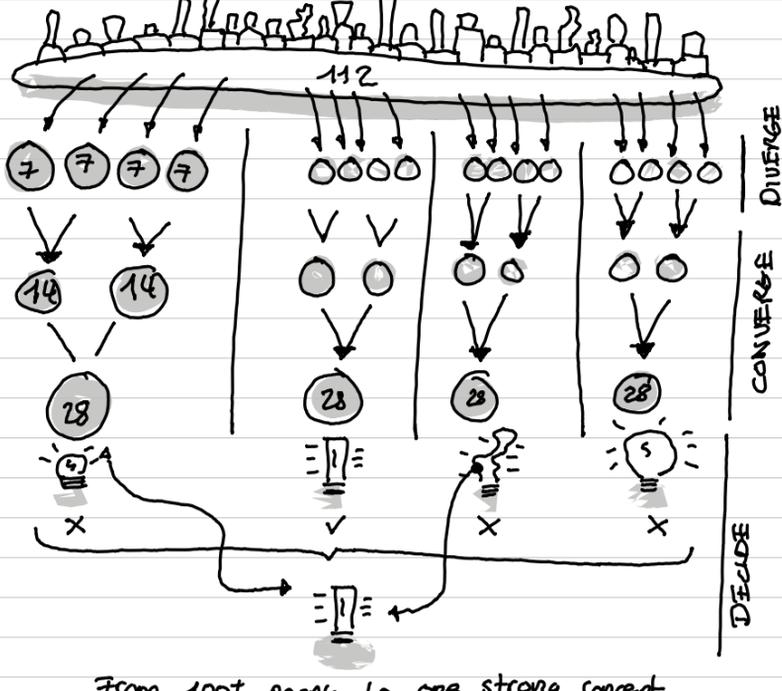
Between the steps decision makers can give feedback to help people see a blind spot, show where they see potential, etc. That either helps the group to improve the work before merging it with another, or it can help two groups have a direction in which to do the combination.



Another way decision makers can accelerate the process is by sharing decisions: which groups should combine their efforts and which of the final concepts gets selected and with which changes inspired by the other concepts.

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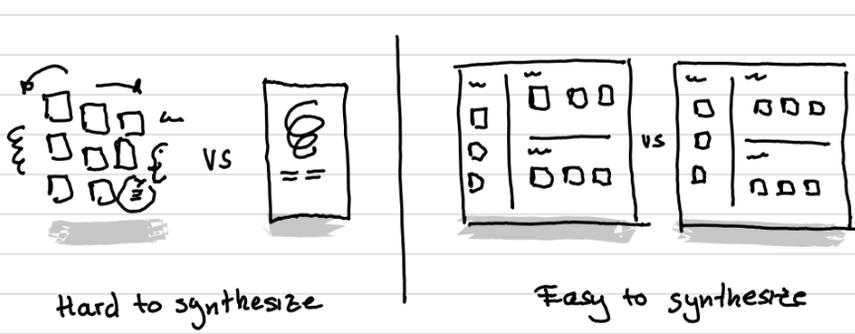
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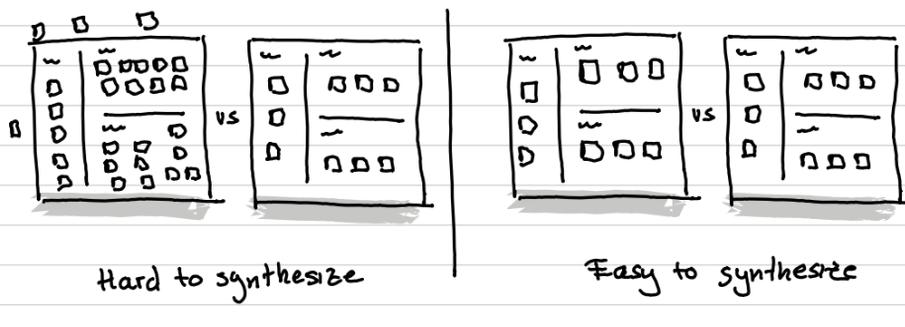
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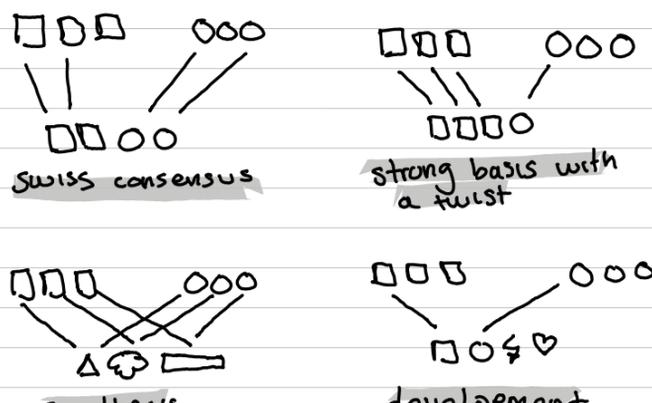


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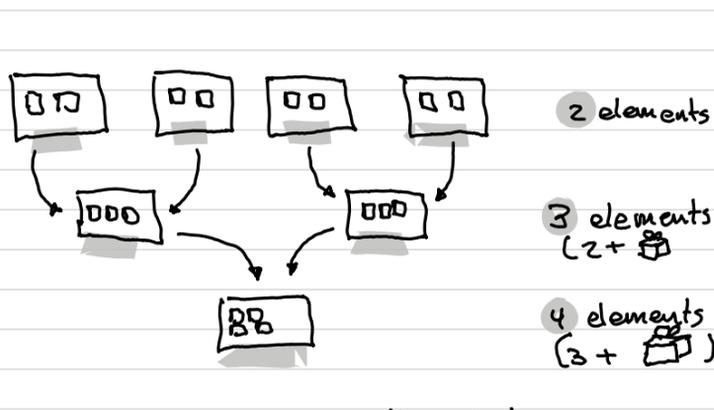
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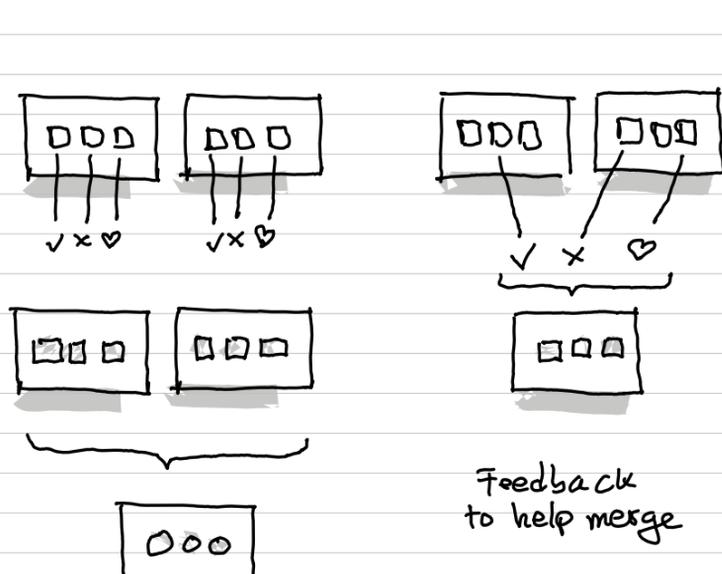


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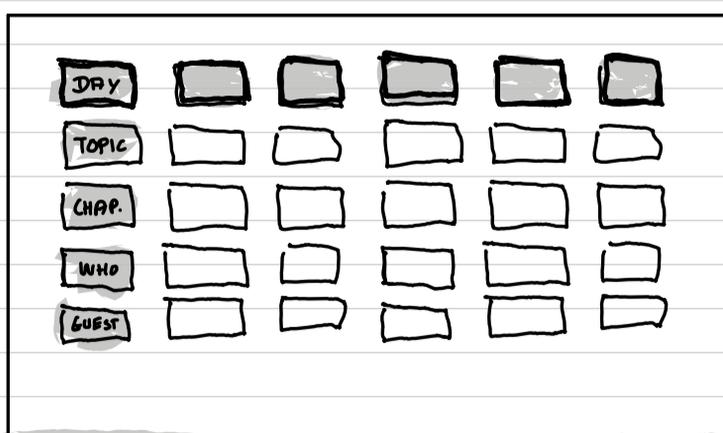


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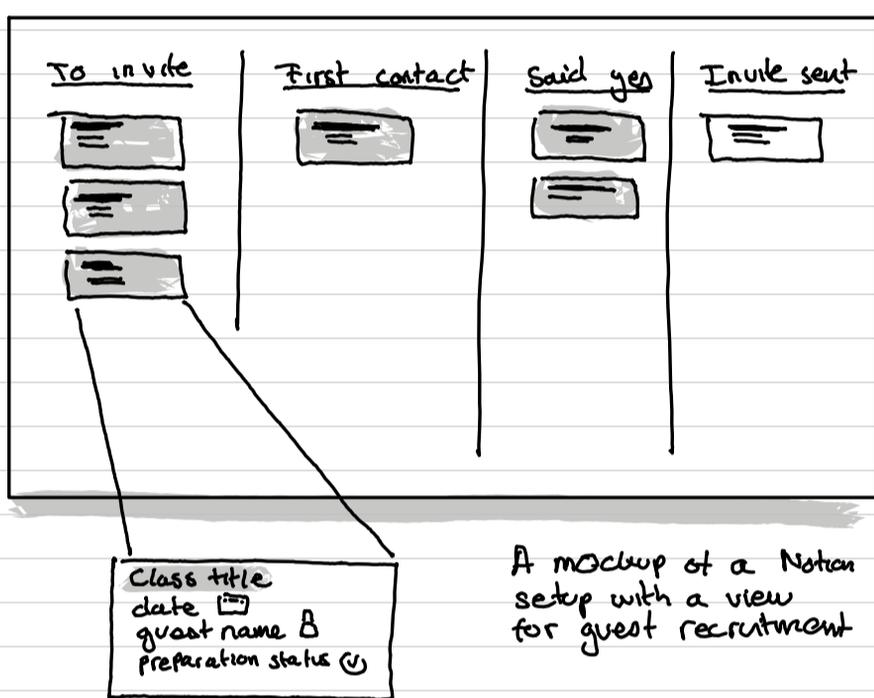
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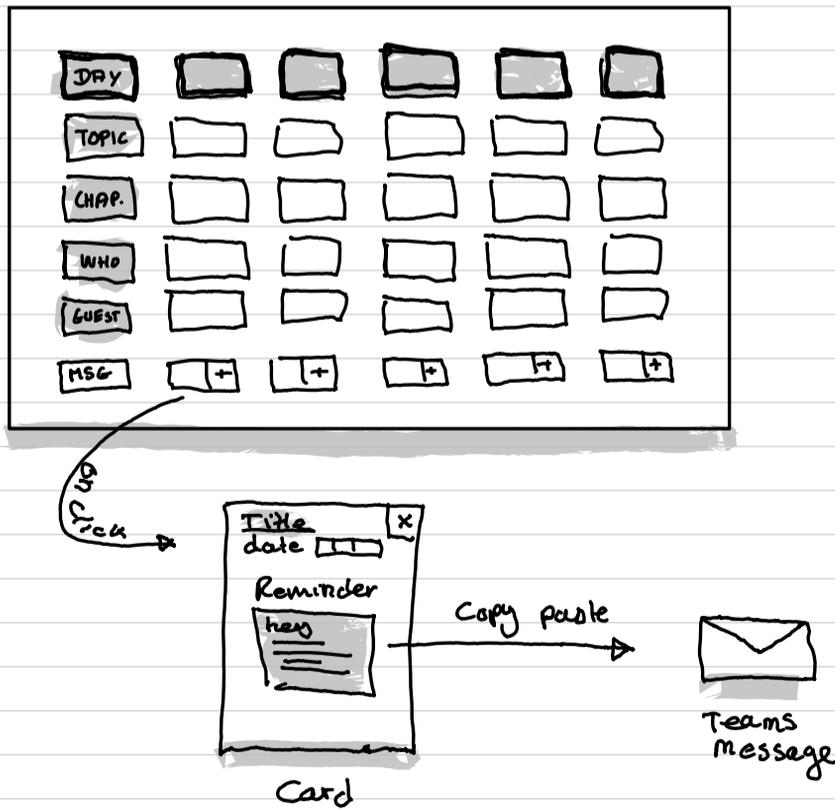
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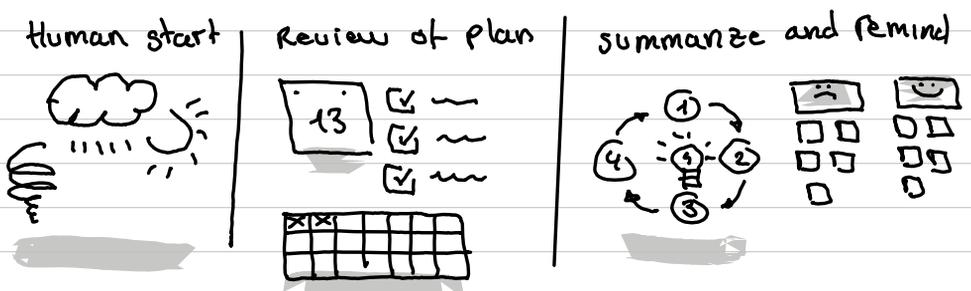
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## What are the pieces of information I repeat in each class?

In short: in a course that I teach over multiple weeks I repeat each time: the calendar overview, goal of the course, grading criteria.



### Context.

These are courses that I teach which happen roughly once every one or two weeks over a semester. As learners have been busy with other courses in between I like to have an introduction and conclusion to each class that repeats key information.

### The intro pieces.

At the start I roughly share the following this:

- Emotional weather report: each participant shares how he feels today. Super useful to adapt the tone when people are going through difficult stuff (death of a loved one, sickness, etc.). It also helps everyone contextualize the reactions of the colleagues.
- Goal of the course
- Grading criteria
- Calendar overview: how does today's course build on the previous sessions and how it prepares us for what's to come.
- Day overview: the big chunks of what we'll do today.
- Why it matters: zooming out to show why what we learn and practice is important for a Service Design practitioner.

This looks like a lot but you can do it in roughly 20-30 minutes. It's also time well invested as it allows people to fully arrive in the course and let all the rest outside during the day.

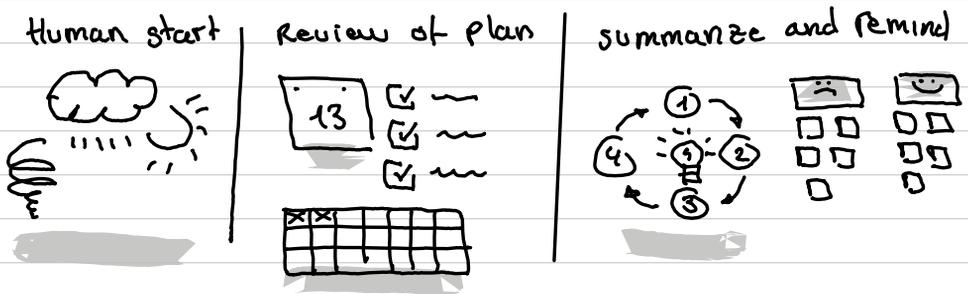
### The conclusion pieces.

At the end of the day I also have conclusion elements that I re-use almost each time:

- Live-sketches summary of the key learnings
- Overview of what has been done today
- Overview of the calendar
- Reminder of the assignment for the next session
- Stars and wishes: a short written feedback shared on sticky notes about what was good today and what is wished for the future.

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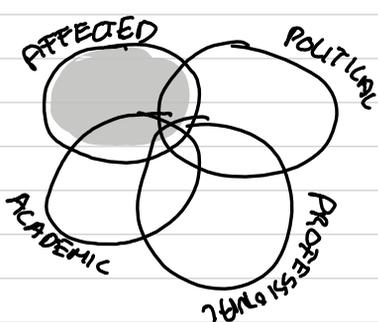
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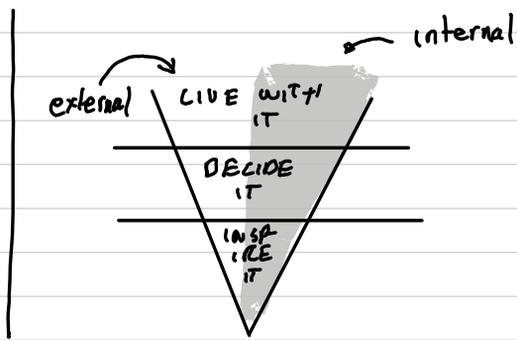
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- Reminder of the assignment for the next session
- Stars and wishes: a short written feedback shared on sticky notes about what was good today and what is wished for the future.

What's a good mix of expertises to have in a project?

In short: Benjamin Nauchen in his work mixes 4 lenses: people affected, professionals, academics and political.



Benjamin's approach



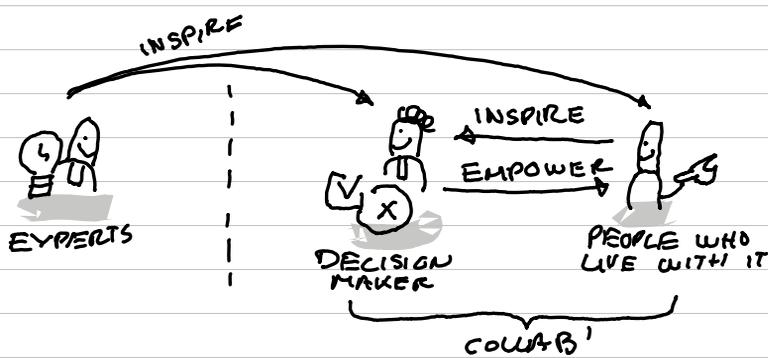
Danielle's approach

### My two cents

In the projects I run I like to have the following mix:

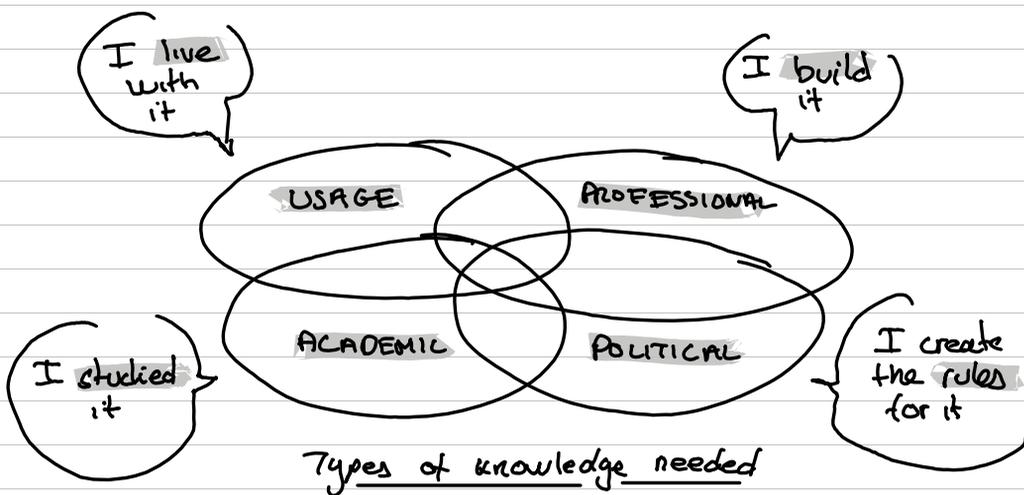
- People who will live with the decision
- Decision makers
- Experts that can inspire: external, internal, topic related, finance, etc.

The order here fits also the amount of time is spent with each group. And I often start from the bottom of the list to create the focusing for the work.



### What do experts say?

In a webinar about Accessibility and Service Design, Benjamin Nauchen shared his approach for the types of people that need to be mixed together. In his accessibility projects it looks like this:



Types of knowledge needed

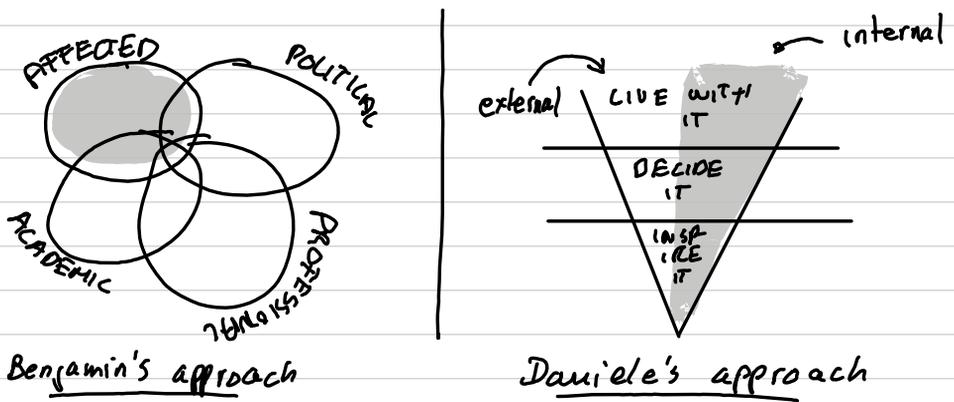
To go deeper on this topic watch the webinar with Benjamin, especially from: 10min to 15s.

### Backstage of this article

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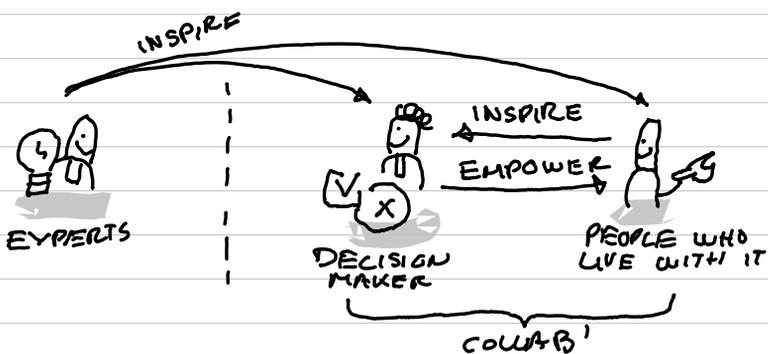


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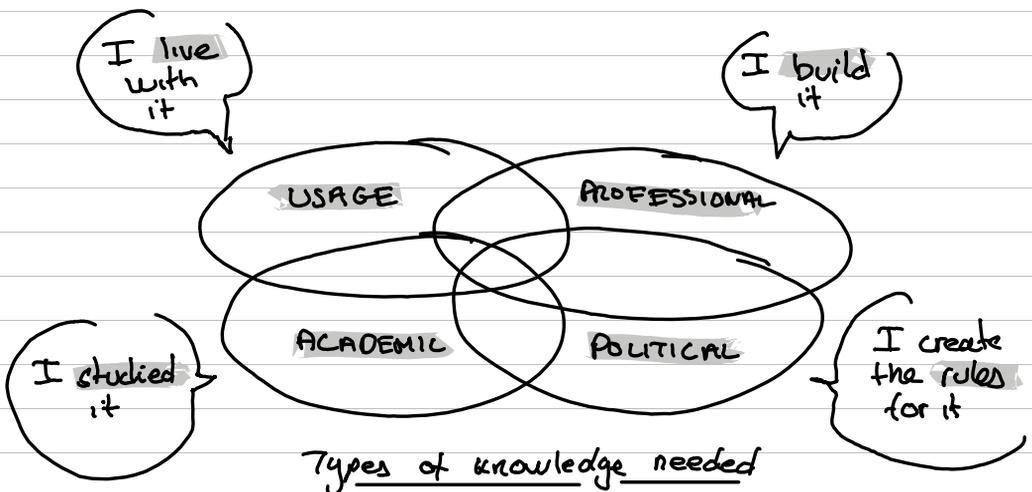
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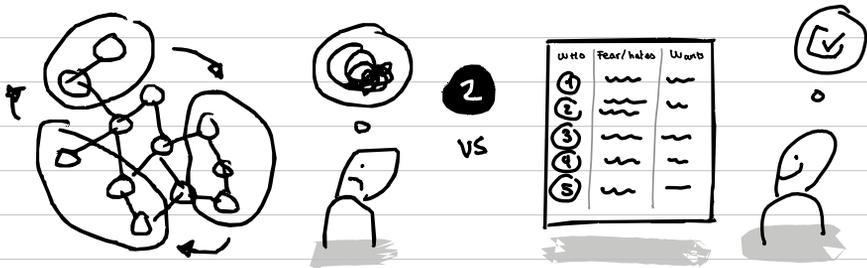
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## What's the problem with stakeholder mapping?

In short: I often see stakeholder maps that describe in details the mess of a situation but not many that lead to real and different stakeholder engagement. The 'what does this mean' answer is missing. Even worse a lot of time these maps are based on assumptions not research which leads to the same critics many have for personas.



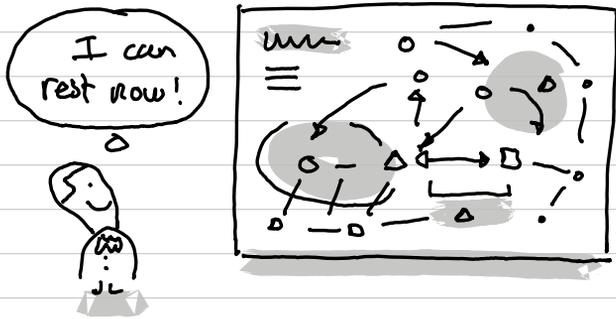
## From Stakeholder Map to Stakeholder plan

### Problem 1: analysis paralysis

Some stakeholder maps are so complex, so detailed that they lead to a sort of mapping procrastination or analysis paralysis. People spend more time doing the map than using the map to walk.

It's as if you had bought a great map for hiking that gives you many trails, but you just look it at home without actually go out for a hike.

The same happens with many other synthesis tools: persona, blueprints, etc. They give a sense of "I have done something" when in fact you just "prepared the tool that will help you do the right thing".

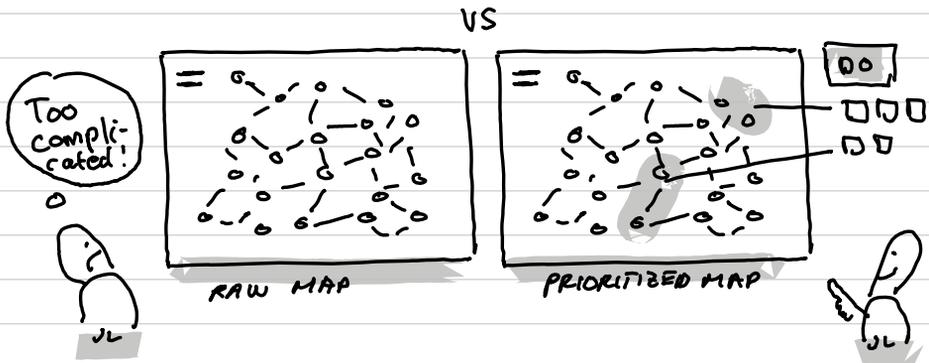


### The fake sense of accomplishment

This fake sense of accomplishment leads often to people:

- not prioritizing with who to engage and how
- not actually doing the uncomfortable work of calling, having a coffee with the people who were previously in a blind spot that the map revealed
- not answering the question: okay but what does this help me to do or not do?

The other side of the analysis paralysis is that it can push people in a sense of helplessness.



## Helplessness from mapping without focus

When all parts of a mapping feel at the same level it can feel that it's all too big. There are too many people to engage. So why even start?

Instead when you prioritize (including the parts that are uncomfortable but important) you gain a sense of: "This is where I'll make a dent in this big universe".

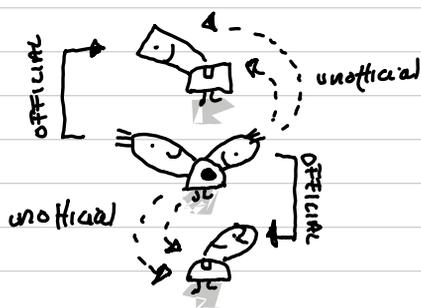
## Problem 2: assumption based

Personas are great tools when they are based on actual research. They are even useful when not done with research to speak with experts who will then reveal your blind spots.

The same is true with a Stakeholder Map or any other synthesis tool: a journey map, a service blueprint, a Business Model Canvas, etc.

## How to engage a hierarchy in a big organization?

In short: use a mix of official moments (committees, work meetings, emails) and unofficial moments (watercooler discussion, coffee chat, superior talks, etc.).



When engaging people in a hierarchy either below or up there are official ways to do it in a large organization. And you should use those and respect them.

But that doesn't mean you can't use unofficial channels.

## Play in parallel

Over the years I've learned the hard way that playing only with the official channels doesn't work, because:

- You get in contact only for decision making
- You don't get to test things before they get big.
- You don't give a chance to people to prepare themselves to what's coming.

So it's smart to play in parallel: official and unofficial.

## For what to use unofficial channels

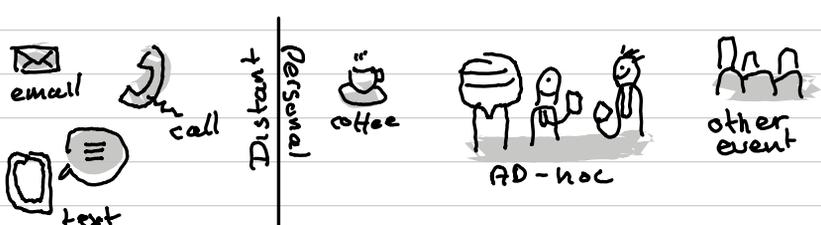


## Power of unofficial channels

Unofficial channels are great for:

- **Testing**: rebriefing, showing a prototype, asking questions so that you can improve stuff before it gets officially reviewed.
- **Prepare**: to let people know what will arrive later, so that they can prepare themselves and others of their team.
- **Get tips**: get tips on how to best frame, present, ask, when the official moment will come.

## Which channels to use in parallel?



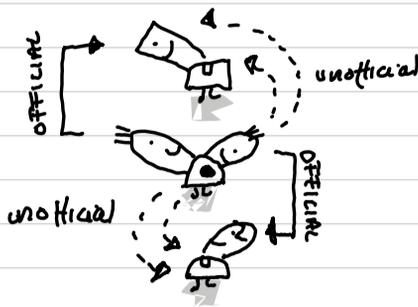
## Distant vs personal contacts

Obviously you can use the classical work tools to get in touch even for unofficial stuff (emails, calls, texts, etc.).

But to me the magic is often in the more personal stuff, getting a coffee together, a conversation in the corridor or using another event for a "by the way conversation".

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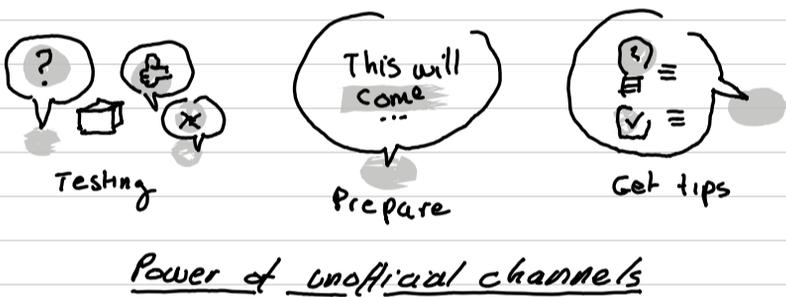
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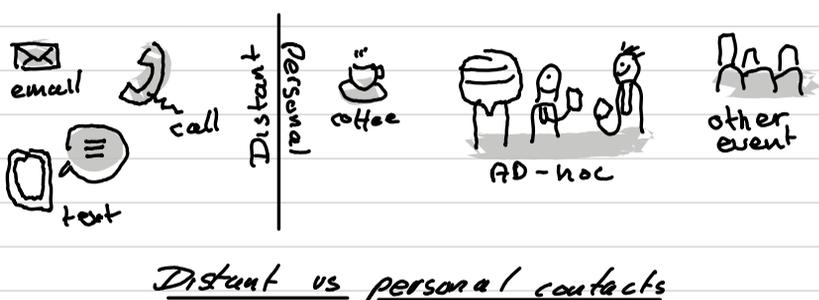
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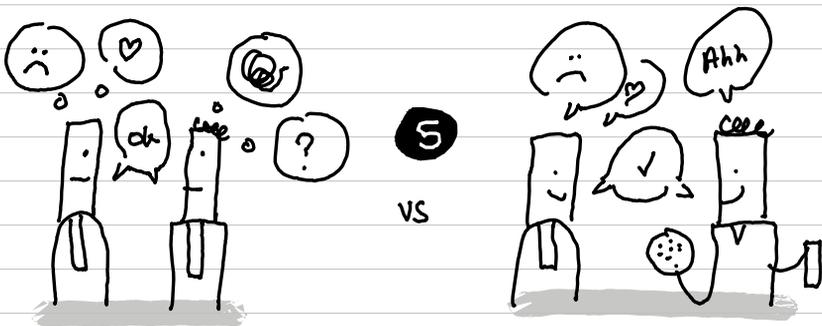
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# Why it's important to remember bosses and colleagues are also just kids?

**In short:** When you see the kid in your colleague you want separate what they do because of their role and what they do because of their personality. Both parts might have different needs, fears, wishes, etc.



From this is a [role] to it's a kid too

A weird piece of advice that is often given to help people with public speaking is to imagine that the audience is made of people who are naked.

Another version of this that helps me more in the workplace is the idea of imagining your colleagues and yourselves as children playing a game together. It helps me because it makes me realize that my boss is also another kid, who has things he loves, hates, understands and does not understand.

Once we start understanding that people are not only their role but also the kid in themselves, we get to ask:

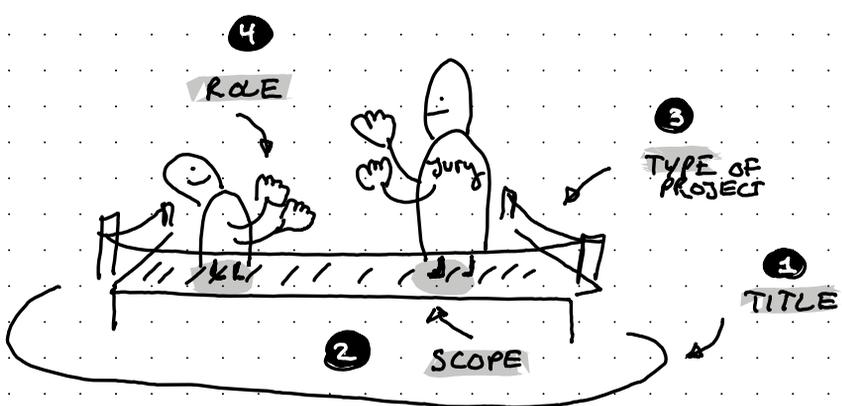
- What are you passionate about?
- How do you like to play and work?

You then understand that to work well with Bob, calling him first will do way more wonders than sending him an email. And that for Maria it is the opposite. You will be able to use metaphors that fit with what people understand and are passionate about.

And you will also understand that John is usually grumpy on Mondays because he had to manage his three kids during the weekend alone.

The trick is then to be able to separate what part of your interactions are driven by the role the person has, and what parts are driven by the kid they are. Sometimes it is even helpful when you do this for others. For example by saying: in my role as the project lead this is what I need. And as Daniele, it would make my life easier if we can work like this.

# How can you avoid stupid critics from the people who will grade your work?



**In short: Frame your project in a way where you define what is the zone of combat. Here four things you can do practically:**

- Use a project that creates a mental image
- Say what type of project it is with an additional adjective (for example: an impact led association, a redesigned customer experience, a service startup, etc.)
- Say what's in the scope and what isn't in the scope of your project
- Say what is the role you take in this project (activist, in house service designer, social designer, etc.)

## You set the combat zone.

The way you frame and introduce a project, can positively bias jury members and better help them understand what you are trying to achieve. There are a few things you can do to help frame your project:

A master project presentation can be seen like a fight, There is you and your opponent. But your opponent is one that's super jacked and has a black belt in many martial arts, when you are just a yellow belt. What you can do is to choose the rules of combat and where the fight will happen so that it favors you.

## A project name that creates a mental image

The title of your project is the first opportunity to frame your project. Choose a title that already teases what the project is about.

Kilian **XXX** for example gave to his Master Project in Digital Ideation the name "Flowmotion" this made clear that his project is about the notion of flow and that its about movement. Compare this to projects names like: Project Yellow or Dilloo. Both would be nice startup names but they don't help people know right away what your project is about,

## Say what type of project it is and add an adjective

To me two of the worst ways to describe a Service Design are to say you created a platform or a service. These two words just are blackbox terms. Instead you could use terms like:

- Impact led association
- Serious game
- Low Tech Methods library
- Backstage restructuring
- Two sided marketplace
- Productivity SaaS
- etc.

What you want here is that the combination of the title of your project and of the type of project already puts your project in a box.

For example, if you say that your project is an impact led association, then when you show people, it's clear without saying anything that these might be volunteers. Knowing it's an association then clarifies that here it's not a project that is made to make a shit ton of money.

## A clarification of what's in and what's out of the scope

A master project can't do everything. And depending on the background of the jury members they might be very surprised by the things you didn't do.

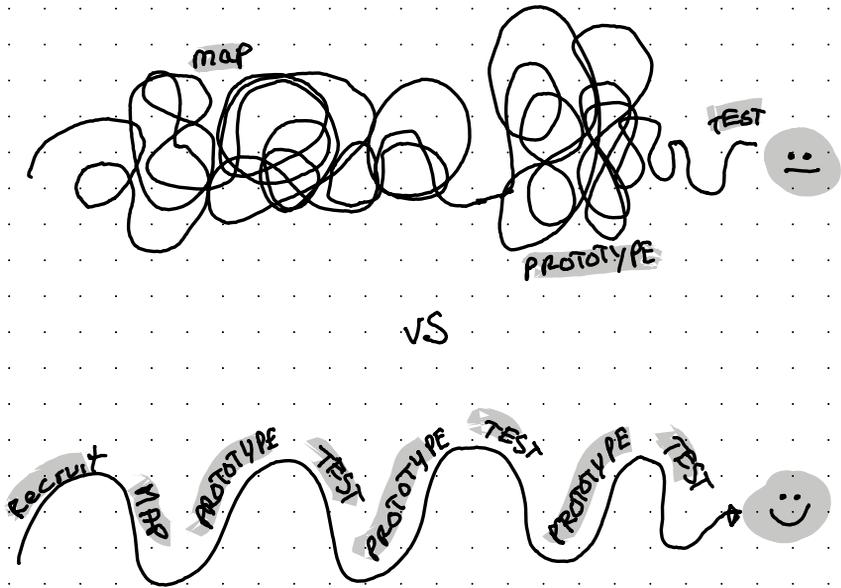
That's why it can be really helpful to frame your project by showing you understand the many layers of the situation that you are working on, and then show on which level, which focus you are working and what are the parts that you decided to not adress and why. With that jury members know that you didn't do their favorite thing, not because you are not aware it exists, but because you decided to use your time strategically.

## A statement of your role in the project

By saying what type of role you gave yourself or you took in the project you share, you help jury members to give critical feedback based on that role. If you say you took the role of a design activist, the expectations are very different than if you say my role is to be a business designer.

# How can you push yourself to test and iterate more?

In short: start by recruiting testers and scheduling multiple test moments. This gives you a positive pressure to have to show up with something to test as there are people waiting for you.



Recruit first prototype second  
recruit early for multiple sessions  
to beat concept procrastination

## The danger

When you are a Service Design team of one one of the big dangers is too loose yourself in the synthesis and prototyping part of the work. Because you can always tweak a little thing in a prototype. But that can then lead to doing less testing sessions of the things you've built.

## The hack

A little hack that I like to recommend for people doing Service Design as a team of one is to recruit first and prototype second.

In fact, you can start your project by scheduling test days throughout the project and recruiting people for these days. This creates a sort of positive pressure where you know there are people who are waiting for you on a specific day to test what you have created.

## The advantages

Back in the days when I worked on an innovation project in London with the lovely folks of Good Innovation for a big NGO we had a setup where we finished each week of work with a full day of testing.

Having that rhythm:

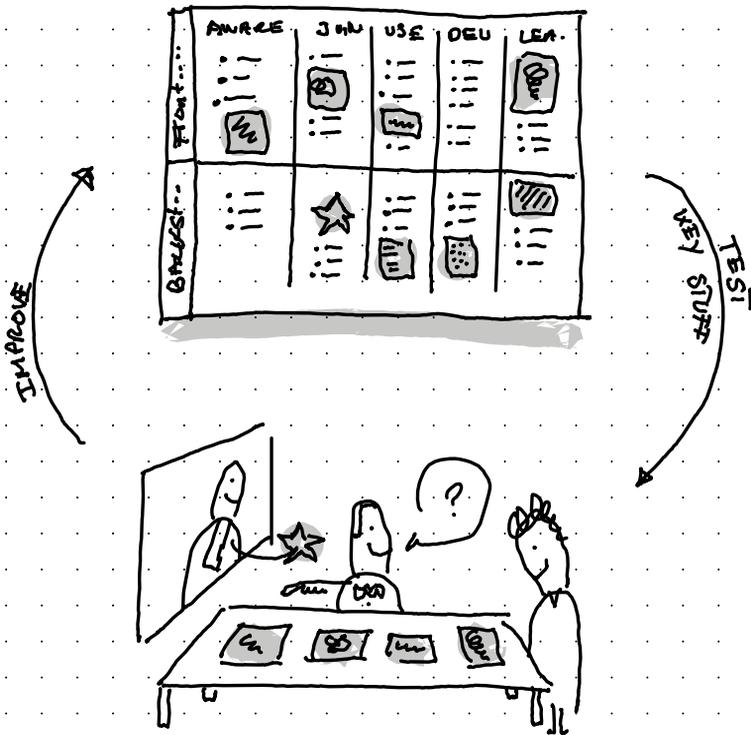
- pushed us to iterate
- pushed us to make decisions
- gave our project a sort of heartbeat
- ensured we were grounded in deep empathy

## Backstage of this article

This article was illustrated using a refurbished Remarkable II tablet. The text was written on the same tablet using a folio keyboard.

# How to use a Service Blueprint for better prototyping?

In short: Create a full blueprint, highlights the part that aren't obvious, and then do a ping/pong between the blueprint and prototyping.



From 2D to 3D or script to prototype

## The 2D to 3D dance move

We can use a Service Blueprint to create a sort of dance, where we move from 2D to 3D, as my mate **Emmanuel Fragnière** often puts it. We move from a flat plan, the Service Blueprint, to something tangible, the prototype.

Then the dance move continues. We go back to the blueprint to adapt things based on what we learned from the prototyping, and so on.

## The break in the dance move: selecting the risky stuff

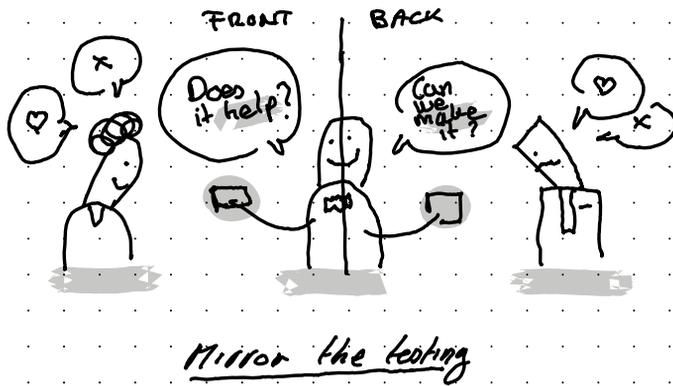
We don't always need to prototype the whole service idea. Often we don't have the time for that. In those cases, before going from the Service Blueprint to the prototyping we need to select what we want to prototype.

Here you can choose your flavor of selection method:

- **Obvious versus new:** you don't prototype the things that are already well known (like a registration form) but focus on the things that are new for the organization that you design for.
- **Risky:** you look for the parts in your prototype for which there is the most risk of things going to shit, or where you just don't really know how that works. Similar to what's done in an **assumption mapping** process.
- **High investment:** you prototype first the things that would cost way too much to fix later. There are things you can easily change and update later, and things that are a pain in the ass to modify. Focus on the the ones that are a pain in the ass.

# Why you should see a Service Blueprint as a mirror?

In short: Understanding that a service is a mirror between front stage and backstage pushes us to research both sides, test both sides, and to put as much care in both sides.



A Service Blueprint is basically a customer journey which has below it what the organization needs to do to make it happen.

I often say that it's a mirror: what goes in one side happens in the other side.

## Mirror the blocks

When in a Service Blueprint we capture an important information for the frontstage, we can capture the same information for the backstage.

For example, if we capture the emotional state of the person we serve in the frontstage, we could do the same for the people who run the service.

Having the mirror metaphor here pushes us to have the same level of empathy for both sides.

That works also the other way around. If for the backstage we have quantitative data to describe key moments, we could have a reciprocity and reflect on what pieces of hard data we could track for the frontstage too.

## Mirror the activities

This idea of mirror doesn't apply only to what goes in the Service Blueprint, but can apply to most of the activities of the Service Design professional.

When doing prototyping, testing, research, etc. we can mirror the activities. When we interview one side, we should interview the other side too. When we prototype how something feels for the people we serve, we can prototype how it feels to maintain that for the people who run the service.

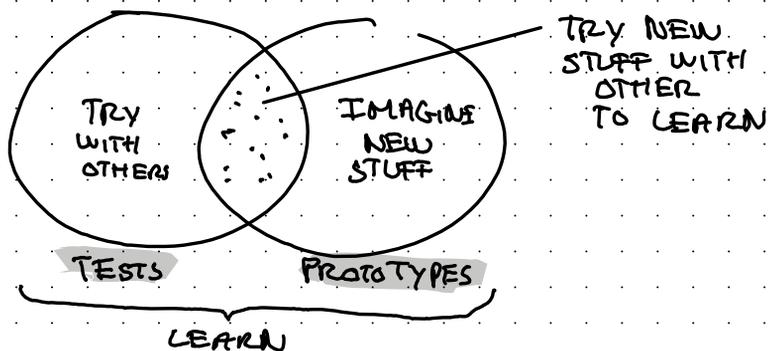
## A good rule of thumb

The mirror metaphor can help us then have a tiny rule of thumb that we can ask ourselves through out our work:

Am I forgetting one side of the mirror of the service?

# What's the difference between a test and a prototype?

In short: a test is a way of learning by showing or asking something to someone. A prototype is something new that you create that can, but is not always, tested.



## Not all tests need a prototype

A survey, an interview, can be tests, where you learn something by making people react to something. A great test for example is to show people the websites of existing services and make them try them out. You haven't created anything, but still you have tested a lot.

## Not all prototypes are tested

Sometimes you create a prototype of a service idea, or of a part of a service, not so much for testing it, but for making clear what you have understood or what you have in your head.

Here the prototype is another way of doing what the smart nerds call **Design Synthesis**, Using design to make sense of what you've learned.

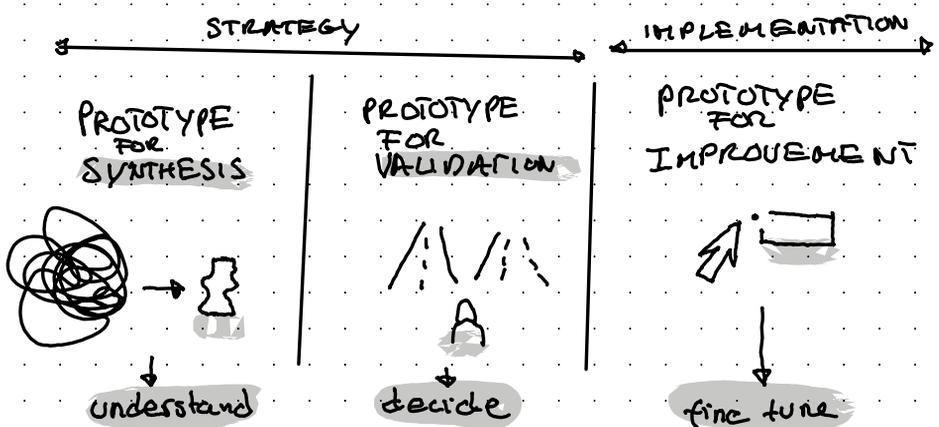
I have seen for example, great prototypes that show physically how an intangible service works in a very artistic way. And that very artistic prototype strength was that it helped the designer better understand what was actually the problem she was working on, and gave her the metaphors that guided the rest of her project.

ADD HERE PROTO SHARAYA.

# What are the different types of prototypes?

In short:

- **Prototype for synthesis:** something you build to understand a service, or an idea.
- **Prototype for strategic testing:** a prototype to test the direction or value of a big idea.
- **Prototype for touchpoint improvement:** a prototype to test what is the best way to create or improve a specific interaction.



## Prototypes for synthesis

Sometimes you need to get things out of your head to better understand them. You build something tangible to describe your idea. It can be even very artistic, like building out with clay a sculpture that describes how people usually feel when using your service.

Prototypes like these, are made to refine your thinking. And it's kind of okay if you don't test them with the final users. Because they are there for you.

Just like a back of the napkin sketch that is a note that will help you kickoff a project.

## Prototypes for strategic testing

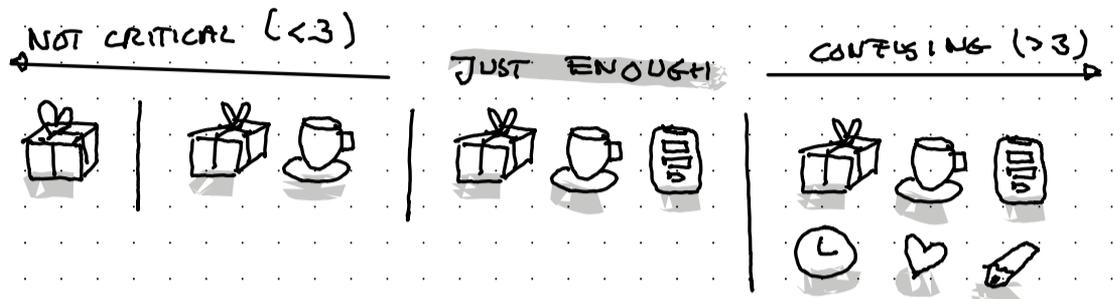
There are prototypes that are made to test out if the direction you are about to take really is worth it. Here, before you even start building the prototype a lot of strategic work goes into in: you synthesize all what you learned (for example in a tool like a Service Blueprint, a Value Proposition Canvas, a Business Model Canvas, etc.). And then you pick the most risky assumption your whole strategy is built on. And you test that thing. That's approach is pretty well described in the book **"Testing Business Ideas"**.

## Prototypes for improving implementation

These prototypes are made to refine the details of the touchpoints that will make your service. Here you test out the wording of a form, or the navigation of a website, or the best way to greet someone in a hotline call. The big strategic direction is already validated. Now you test out the details.

# How many different prototypes should I build or test?

In short: I'm a sucker for building and testing very different ways of solving the same idea in order to learn the most possible. And three is my favorite number. It's enough to push people to imagine that there could be other ways of doing, enough to make them critical, and not too much so that it doesn't confuse people.



## The rule of three

When it comes to prototype, I love to present three different things. When you show one, it's like showing a photo of your unique child. People can feel that this is a sacred thing. So it's hard to criticize.

Plus when you show one thing, people get in a feedback mode about the details. They don't think about what else could there be.

When you show two it's like a boxing match. It's either this, or that. Or it's like the last round of an American or French presidential election. You have to choose between the least worst candidates.

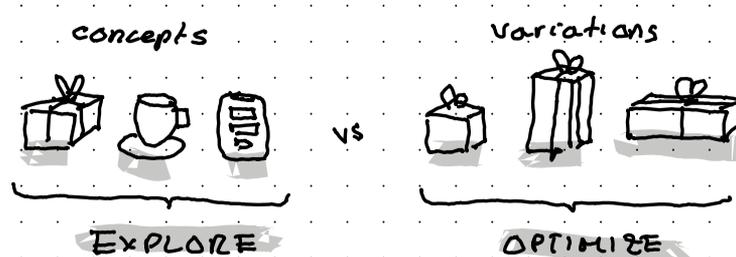
When you have three it makes clear that the decisions have not been made yet. That things are still open. And therefore people tend to play LEGO. They say: from the first one, I'd keep this, but remove that, and from the second one, I'd keep that but remove this, etc.

And they can more easily imagine and dream about something totally different that you didn't even have on your radar.

But why not more? I feel that once you are beyond three it gets messy for people's head. They have a hard time remembering what was the difference between number 7 and number 1. And it feels like too much choice, just like when you are in a new supermarket in a new country and you have to choose a yoghurt. There is just too many options to choose from, which might lead you to not even choose (what smart people call **the paradox of choice**).

## Different concepts, not variations

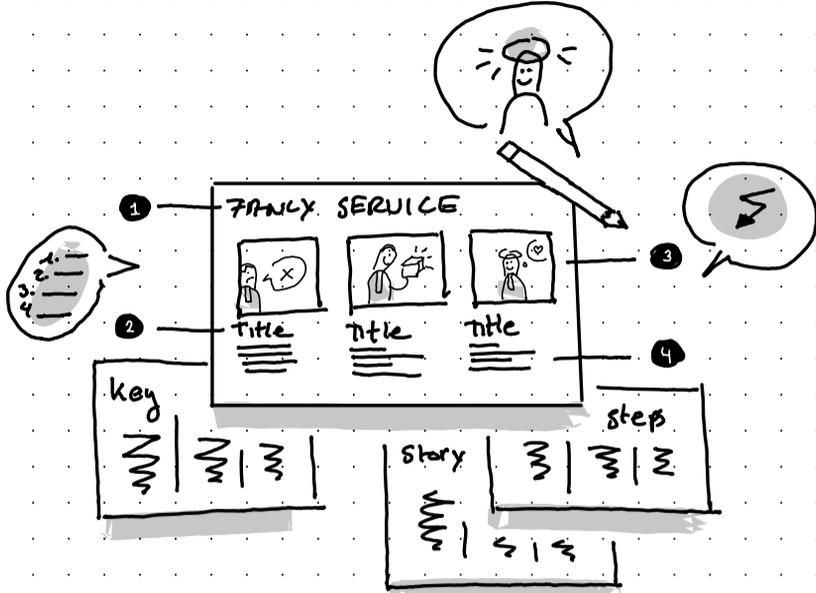
When I say three prototypes, I mean three very different directions. Not tiny variations like it's usually done in AB testing, where you swap a color, or a text. AB testing has its place in the world of optimization. But it's not the approach that leads to the deepest learning moment.



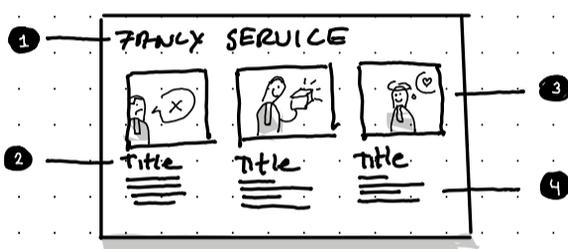
PROTOTYPING vs AB TESTING

# What's one of the quickest service prototypes you can create?

In short: A storyboard with three service moments that each include a title, short description and a doodle is super fast to create. It takes 15 minutes and you have already something you can test. As it's fast to create, it makes it easy to test several different ideas.



First, title, then sketch, then description



## The order I follow for storyboarding service ideas

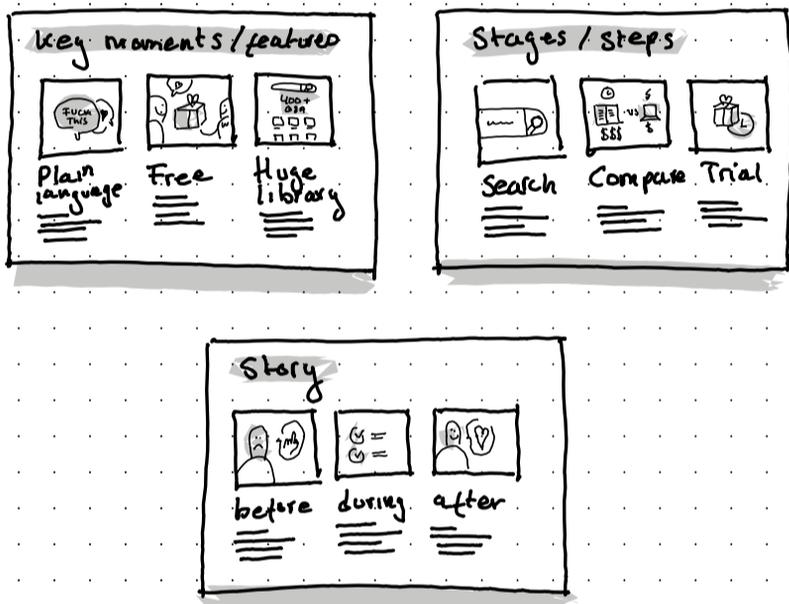
I like to start my service storyboards in this way. First I give the whole storyboard a title. That already sets a sense of direction. Then I draw three frames where I'll later draw tiny shitty doodles. Then I add a title below each of these frames.

Only then comes the actual drawing. And I really like to draw before I describe. Because usually it's through the drawing that I figure many things out.

Finally I add a little description below the title of each frame.

## Three frames for many different things

You can use three frames to describe many levels of a service concept. You can describe:



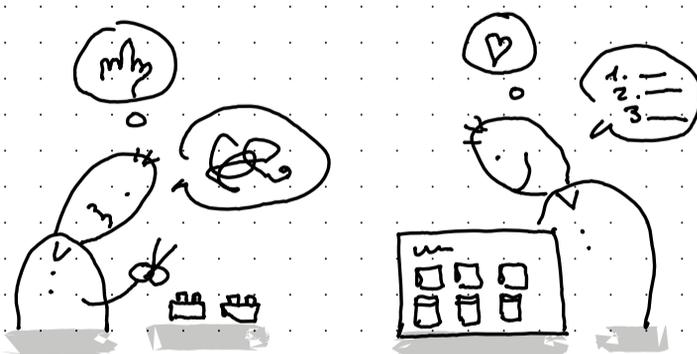
## Different types of service storyboards

- **The three key moments or features of the service:** not showing all the things that are expected (like forms) but focusing on what makes this service truly unique.
- **The three stages within a specific moment:** like describing the onboarding moment in more details.
- **The before, during and after:** which describes well how people discover the service, use it, and how it changes their lives. Just in three frames, not bad, right?!

## Quick means you can do many

Because this type of prototyping is so fast, in one hour you can easily have three to five different prototypes that are very different out. And then pick three to test out with people. Not bad for an hour of work!

## When you don't know or are blocked make a storyboard



## Storyboarding vs other prototyping tools

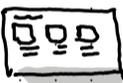
When the people I coach or mentor are blocked in their head, I like to push them to do a storyboard. For two main reasons:

- **The structure kills the white sheet syndrome:** a storyboard like this has a structure: main title, three frames with sketch, title and description. You just have to fill the boxes. It doesn't feel like starting from a white sheet of paper. It's a less anxious process.
- **Making it by hand gets people out of their head:** especially when people do these storyboards by hand, they get out of all their thoughts, and they get out of their computer (which is often a sucker of attention, and where too much time is spent collecting and fiddling on details). Focusing on one A4 sheet of paper for a few minutes does people well. And they have a result that they can directly take and show others.

# What should I do when I'm not sure how to prototype?

In short:

- **Make a storyboard:** when you are clear about the what but not the how.
- **Co-create with users and stakeholders:** when you are not sure what would be useful.
- **Use a mapping tool with an assumption map:** when you don't know which part to prototype first (the mapping tool can be a Value Proposition Canvas, a Business Model Canvas, a Service Blueprint, etc.)
- **Get inspired by a test library:** there are many tools library out there; check them for inspiration.

		HOW	
		I KNOW How to prototype	I DON'T KNOW How to prototype
WHAT	I KNOW WHAT to prototype	 JUST DO IT	 LIBRARY
	I DON'T KNOW WHAT to prototype	 CO-CREATE	 STORYBOARD

How to get unstuck before prototyping

**When you are fully blocked: make a storyboard.**

I wrote a **full Q&A about why storyboards are an awesome quick prototyping method**, but in short, a service storyboard is a great way to get unstuck because:

- **Fast:** it's quick to make
- **Structuring:** it has some structure that is guiding
- **Calming:** it's something you can do well on paper which gets you out of your laptop.

**When you don't know what to build: prototype with those you serve**

Now your job is not anymore to come up with the prototype but to create the conditions to help other people to prototype. So recruit the people, and then make a plan for how you'll prototype. What is the question you'll ask? What tool will you give them (LEGOs, Storyboard frames, Clay, etc.)?

**When you know what but not how: browse a tools library**

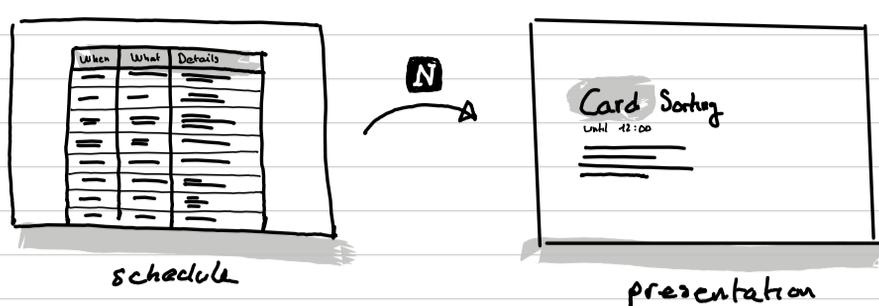
There are many, many, many, many (did I already say many?) **libraries of methods and tools** that show you all the fancy and simple ways you could create a prototype.

There are even books that are basically a **list of tools**, or that **guide you in the selection of tools**.

And when in doubt, go back to the first advice. Just make a storyboard to get started., Yeah life can be simple.

# How to transform a workshop schedule in slides in one minute within Notion?

In short: Create a minute by minute workshop schedule like usual. Ask Notion Agent to transform it in slides. To do it faster, add a shortcut with prompt in your Notion Agent setting page.



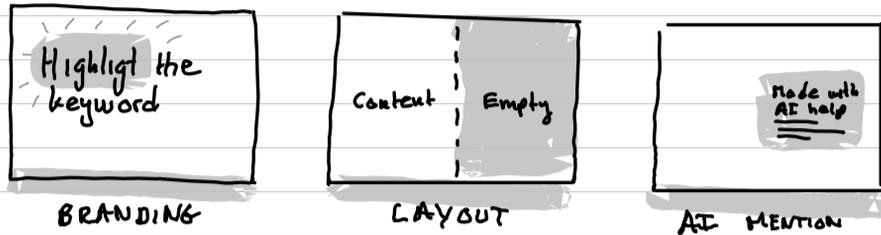
## The prompt

So if you are just looking for the prompt I've used here it is. Further below you can find out how I get to make it work by typing just "workshop-slides".

ADD THE PROMPT HERE

## A few features of this prompt

There are a few things that make this prompt work well for me:



## The key features of my table to slides prompt

- **Minimal branding:** When you launch the prompt it asks you what is the highlight color that you want to use. Then based on your answer it will always put one word in the title of each slide in that color.
- **Half screen layout:** The title and description of the activity are put in a 2 column layout, where the content is on the left column, while the right column is empty. I'm an ex-graphic designer, so I still live by the rule of no more than 8-10 words per line. If you let Notion do your slide, without that trick you get way too long lines of text.
- **Made with AI help mention:** In my Notion Agent I have set a rule which forces Notion to mention at the start of any document it creates by itself that this document was created with AI and then reveal the prompt that I wrote. **I really like the idea of AI nutrition labels.** But, having that at the start of a presentation doesn't make sense, especially because the AI work here was not to make the workshop, but to reformat a workshop schedule in slides. So I've instructed here my Notion Agent to bypass the usual rule, and add a similar mention at the end of the workshop slides.

## Context: how I prepare my workshops

Since I can remember planning workshops, I've always done the same thing. I've created a minute by minute plan of my workshops. In **Google Sheets**, in **Notion databases**, in Notion tables, etc.

A very simple setup where I have a sort of table with the following columns:

- When: with start and end time
- What: a title that describes the activity
- Details: which gives a few more details on how to run the activity

When	What	Details
12:00 - 12:10	Intro	
12:10 - 12:30	Warm-up	Storyboard of service idea in 3 frames
12:30 - 13:30	Lunch	
13:30 - 14:00	Review	Review of the storyboards

## How my workshops are usually planned

In the last few years, I've been going more the route of a simple Notion Table. Just because, not everything needs to be a notion database.

## Context: How I've setup my Notion AI with shortcuts

Okay, so I usually have a Notion page for each of my workshops, and in it there is a table (usually several versions) with the workshop schedule, and other details in it.

Just a few days ago, the team at Notion add a new feature to the tool. **A way to transform any Notion document into slides.** It's just a button, or shortcut, that puts your document in full screen and that makes a new slide for every divider you have added in your document, Brilliantly simple.

The prompt that I shared at the start of this article can turn the tables I usually use to plan my workshops into a new document that has dividers to separate slides.

But remembering, or having to keep somewhere a prompt, is just a shitty process. So in the **settings page of my own Notion Agent**, I have a section (which of course is a table) where I have setup shortcuts. Whenever I type that shortcut, Notion AI will use the prompt associated with the shortcut.

SCREENSHOT NOTION AGENT SETTINGS

## The use case

As this came out just a few days, I haven't had the opportunity to use this in a new workshop or course. Usually I plan my work months in advance, so I'm still benefiting from the work I did a few months ago.

Where I see this tiny setup as useful is for a specific type of workshops: the pro-bono or unbranded workshops.

When I run a workshop in a pro-bono mode, it makes sense for me to save time on the presentation front. The preparation is the same. But the slides will look more plain and will not be 100% custom made to fit the branding and storytelling of the organization. I save this extra effort for the organizations that pay.

So for a pro-bono workshop, an ad-hoc, last minute workshop made for friends this is definitely a nice way to quickly plan a workshop and still have a good enough presentation.