

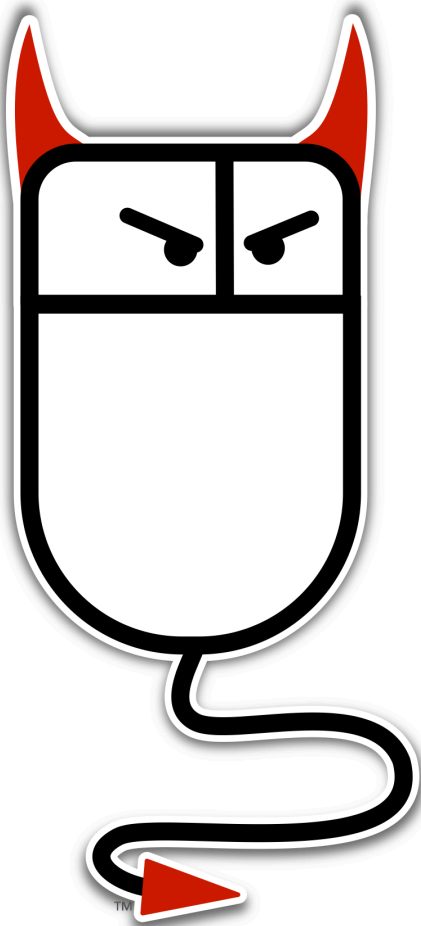
FAST, EASY USABILITY TRICKS FOR BIG PRODUCT IMPROVEMENTS

Chris Nodder
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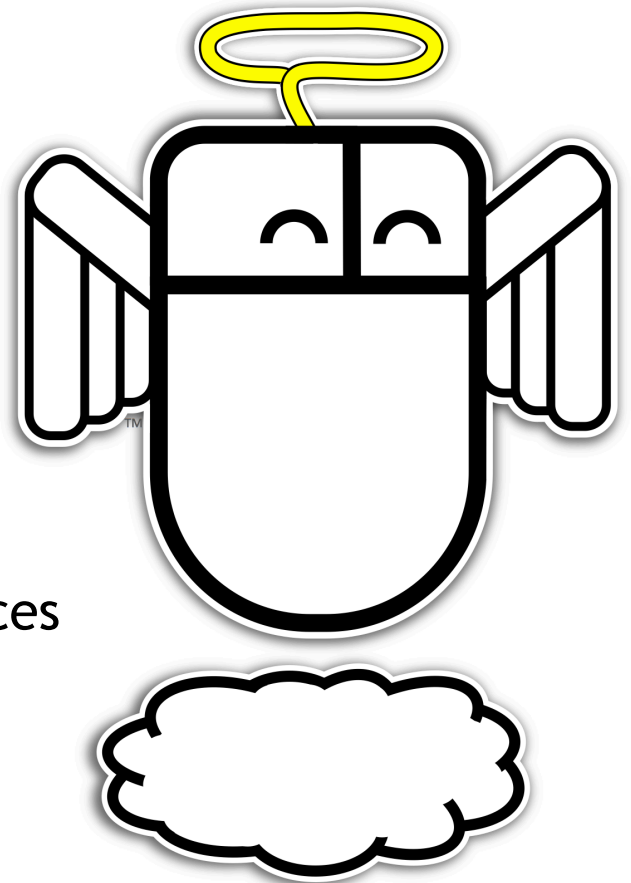
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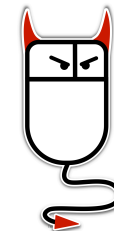
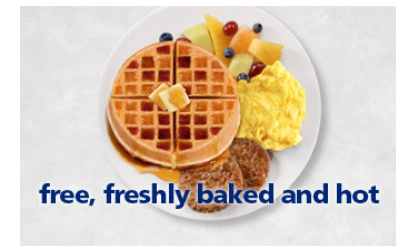


Taming evil interfaces
Creating heavenly experiences



One week to set a product vision and high level design that the whole team understands and uses to plan and build the product





Easy process- just 5 steps

1. Find some users to watch
2. Interpret what they tell you without bias
3. Create actionable product ideas
4. Turn your ideas into designs
5. User test your designs

...all before you even start coding!



1. Find some users to watch

- Work out who you care about
 - If you say “everyone,” you need better product definition
- Seek them out in their environment
- We chose General Managers and Assistant Managers/Front Desk Managers

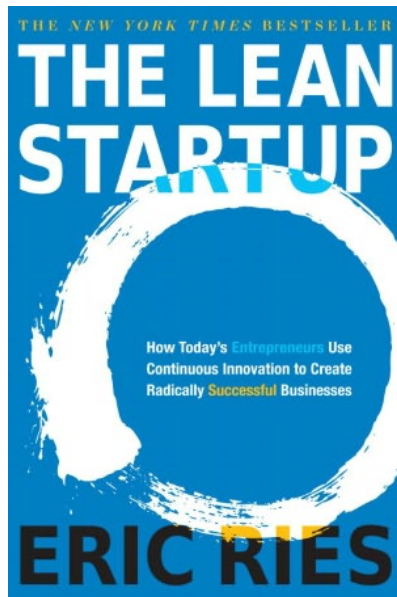


But we already listen to our users...

Surveys: good at reinforcing your biases

Metrics: tell you *what*, but not *why*

Focus groups: tell you ???



“Get out of the building”







Field observation

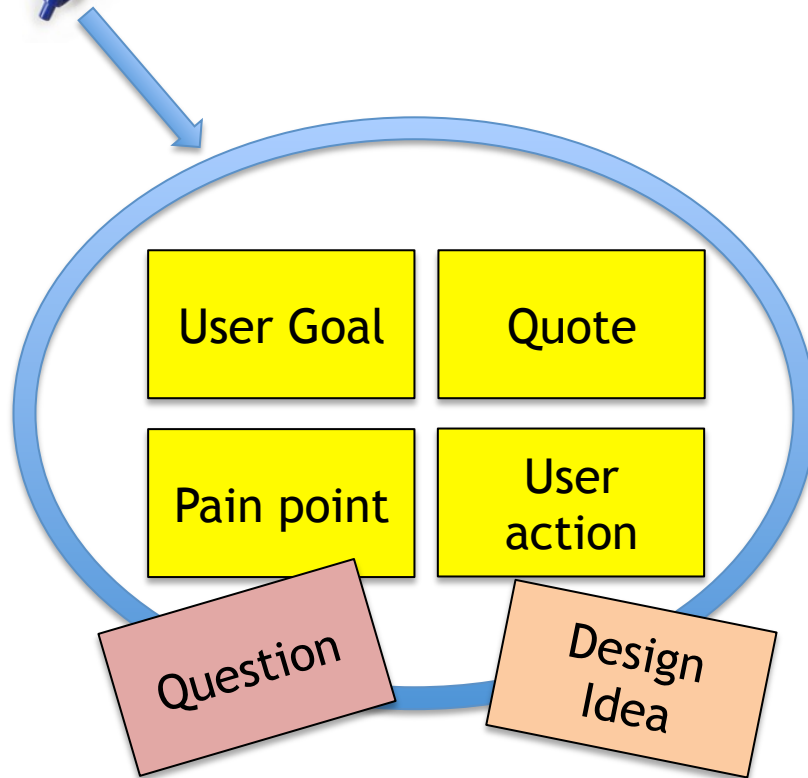
- DO:
 - At least 3 visits per user type, preferably more
 - Take lots of hand-written notes
 - Engage (smile)
 - Ask open-ended behavioral questions
 - Ask for examples (times when “it” happened)
- DON'T:
 - Engage in conversation
 - Sell them on your cool product idea
 - Ask them to predict the future

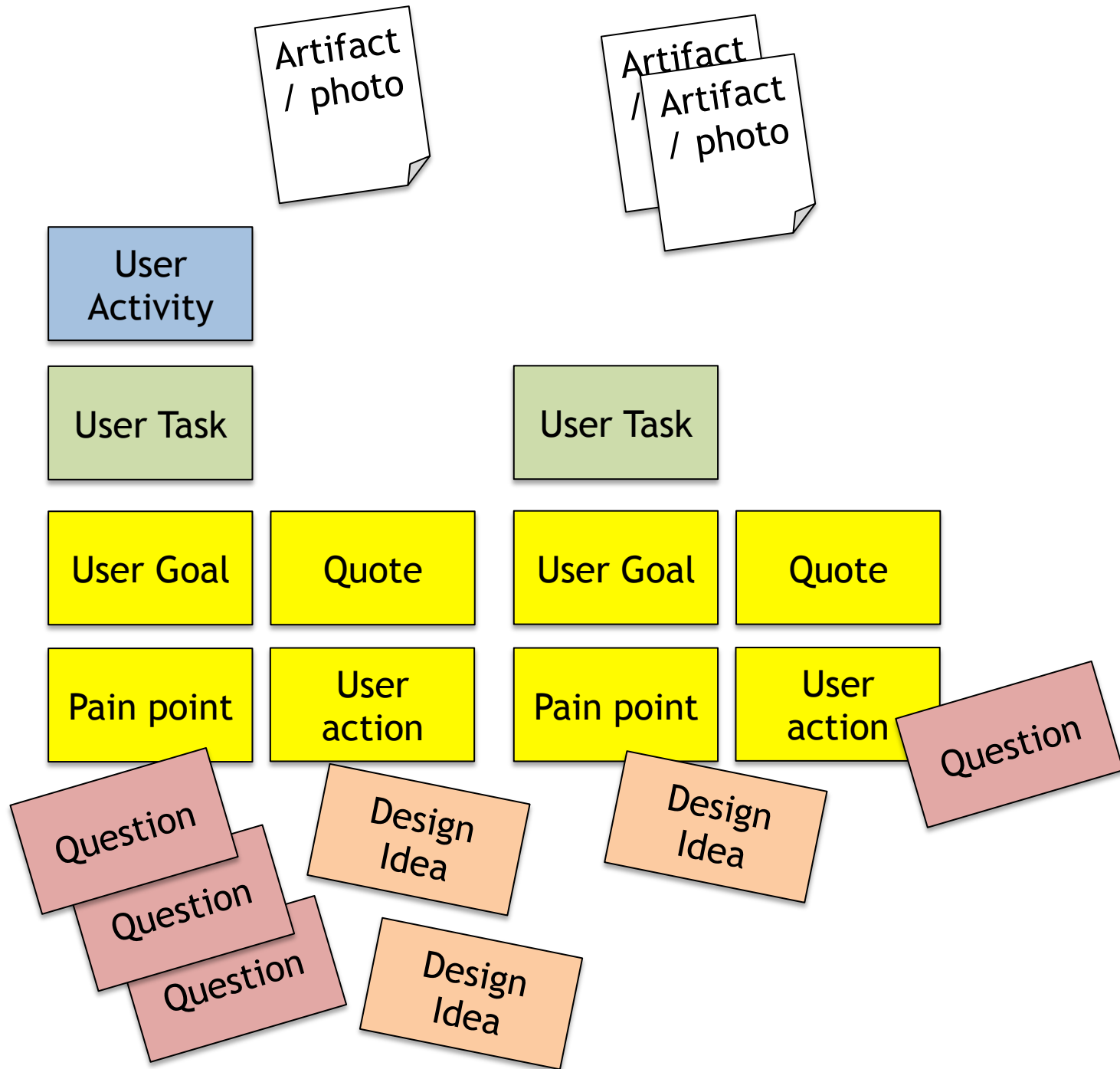


2. Create an experience map

- Every observation goes on a sticky note
- Every sticky note goes on the wall
- Sticky notes are grouped into tasks
- Tasks are arranged chronologically
- If you think of design ideas, add them on a different colored sticky note
- If you think of more questions, add them on a different colored sticky note







Experience Mapping



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Successful experience maps

- Making the map is a data party
- Bring everyone who was on visits into the room at the same time
- Everyone writes and places their stickies at the same time
- Welcome disagreements - they highlight where the interesting stuff is
- Focus on user pain points (resolving those in your product is a big win)
- Information radiator: Put the finished map in a busy place
- Bias is reduced by multiple observations, and by focusing on the problem not the solution



3. Create actionable product ideas

- Extract product ideas from the experience map
 - Look at the User Activities from your map
 - Choose areas that are broken (pain points)
 - Work out what user roles (personas) are involved
 - Write stories that say how the personas could use your (new) product to solve their problems*
- Don't describe specific UI yet... that's the next step. Instead, describe behaviors and outcomes

*These are similar to use cases, but I prefer to use real people or personas as “the user”



DIANA - SHARER

GOALS:

- WANTS TO MAKE OTHERS SUCCESSFUL
- POST HER IDEAS OF BEST PRACTICES
- SHARE IN A SAFE WAY WITHOUT HAVING TO DEFEND HERSELF

CONFLICTS:

- NEEDS TO FEEL THAT WHO SHE GIVES IS ATTRIBUTED TO HER (TAKE CREDIT)
- SOME OF HER GREAT IDEAS GO AGAINST STANDARDS
- SOME PEOPLE ARE TURNED OFF BY HER IDEAS (THIS IS OK)

QUOTES: "PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS ASKING FOR DETAILS ON HOW I DO THINGS"

"I HER PRODUCE A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER + A QUARTERLY SUMMARY, AND I BLOG AS WELL"

ATTRIBUTES:

- GREGARIOUS
- PROUD
- CONFIDENT
- CREATOR / STIMULATOR / TEACHER

GLENDA = SEARCHER

GOALS: FULFILL CURIOSITY / SCAN THE SITE

FOCUSED SEARCHING

- DOESN'T WANT TO STANDOUT
- BUILDS ON WORK OF OTHERS
- WANTS PERMISSION / INVITATIONS
- WANTS TO STAY IN COMFORT ZONE

CONFLICTS: - WANTS TO BE PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER, BUT NERVOUS, FOMO

- LACKS CONFIDENCE (DOESN'T POST) → because she won't stick her neck out.

- Feels like she wants to contribute - but afraid of being wrong

- LACKS KNOWLEDGE, WANTS AN ANSWER, BUT DOESN'T WANT TO APPEAR UNKNOWLEDGEABLE

QUOTES: "What I do works for me, but I don't want to put it out there in case it's wrong."

"I really want to learn more about xxx, but I don't want other people to see that I don't know the answer."

ATTRIBUTE

SMART
EXPERIENCED → LESS EXPERIENCED
LACKS CONFIDENCE → INSECURITY
CURIOUS
WANTS TO GAIN KNOWLEDGE

MARY = SOCIALIZER

GOALS: CONVERSING, CHATTING, TWINSUMMERIZING
SURVEYING PEERS

VALIDATION

CELEBRATION

COMMISERATION

VALUES TRIBAL KNOWLEDGE

SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR TABOO TOPICS

CONVERSE W/ PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCE

WANTS CLARIFICATION

CONFLICTS:

TRYING TO RECONCILE STANDARDS W/ PRACTICAL APPLICATION.

QUOTES: "I'M ALL ALONE OUT HERE IN SIOUX FALLS, I WANT TO INTERACT WITH SOME OF MY PEERS."

"BUT THE STANDARDS SAY ONE THING, BUT I'VE GOT SOMETHING ELSE AT MY HOTEL... WHAT WOULD YOU DO?"

ATTRIBUTES: ISOLATED, DISCONNECTED HUNGRY FOR COMMUNITY
MARY

Glenda has installed her waffle-maker. It is pretty messy so she puts down foil, but doesn't know if that's ok. She called support, they give her the standard but nothing more than the standard. She feels stuck. Support walks Glenda to Sharecast.

She's never been to Sharecast before so she sees the first-time user screen. She goes the search box and types in waffles. She clicks on the top-ranked answer, reads the post, finds it helpful.

Glenda sees other posts that may be relevant to her. She recognizes that Diana is the author of a lot of these posts. She clicks on Diana, opening her profile. There she sees a full list of all of Diana's posts.

She sees a post that she wants to contribute to. She leaves her contribution as a comment on that post. Glenda wants to build a relationship with Diana, since she finds her content so useful. Glenda reaches out to Diana via Diana's preferred contact method.

Scenarios





4. Turn your ideas into designs

- Hold a design charrette!
 - Choose one scenario and get every team member to sketch a design solution before the meeting
 - The sketch can be UI, a comic book/storyboard, or anything else that gets an interaction idea across. Artistic ability isn't important
 - Each individual presents their sketch to the group
 - All sketches are pinned on the wall
 - Everyone “dot votes” the concepts they like
- Do another round, or a smaller group takes all the good ideas and creates a new summary sketch
- If you have a UI expert on the team, you can use this as a critique session to teach good basic UI principles as well (for instance Nielsen's 10 heuristics*)

* www.useit.com/papers/heuristic/heuristic_list.html





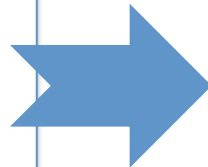
Build a paper prototype

- Take the best UI ideas from the charrette
- Draw just the interface elements needed to enable the scenario
 - This way you avoid feature creep and create the minimum viable product
- Have one person read the scenario out loud while another works through the UI
 - Because the scenario describes behaviors and outcomes, it should be easy to see if the UI meets the criteria
- Tip: Create each UI element on a separate piece of paper so that you can rearrange them or remove them without re-drawing everything



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[] Sharecast

First time User?

"Waffles" Search Results

Post (result 1)

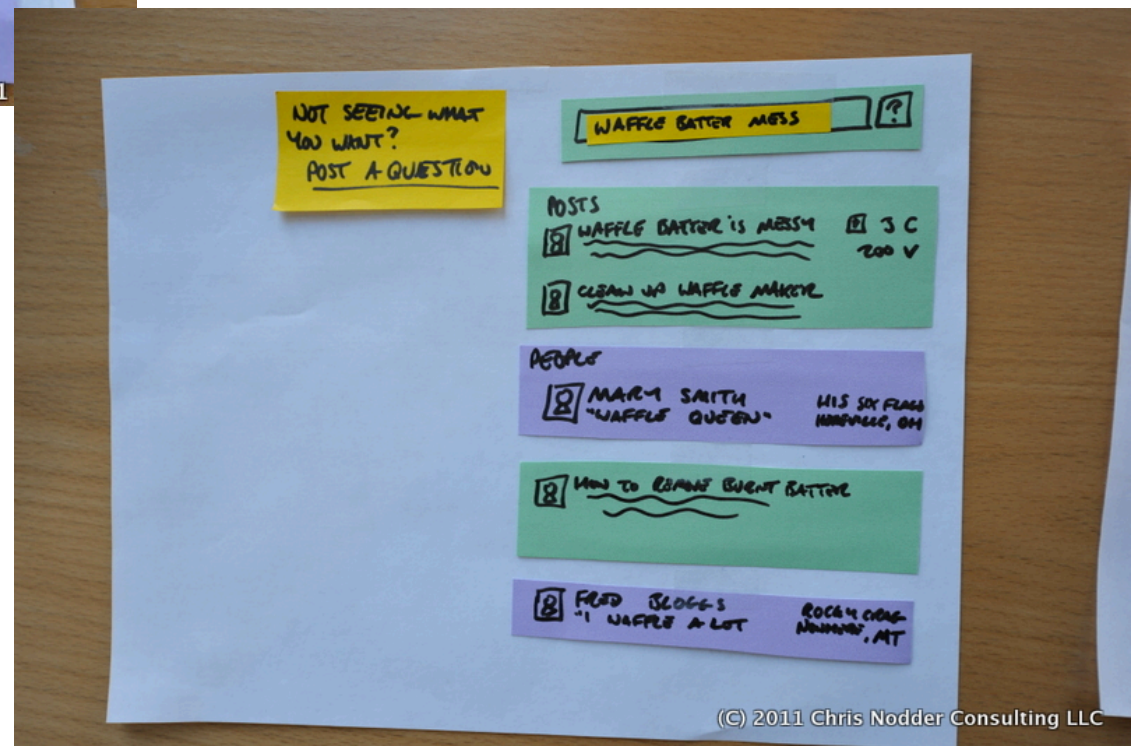
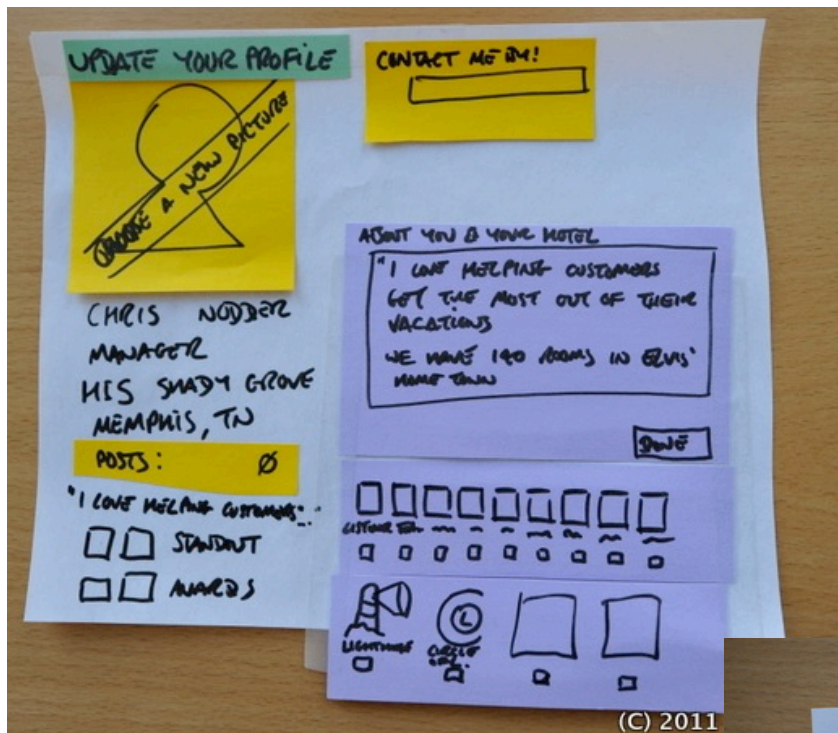
Waffles waffles waffles
waffles waffles waffles



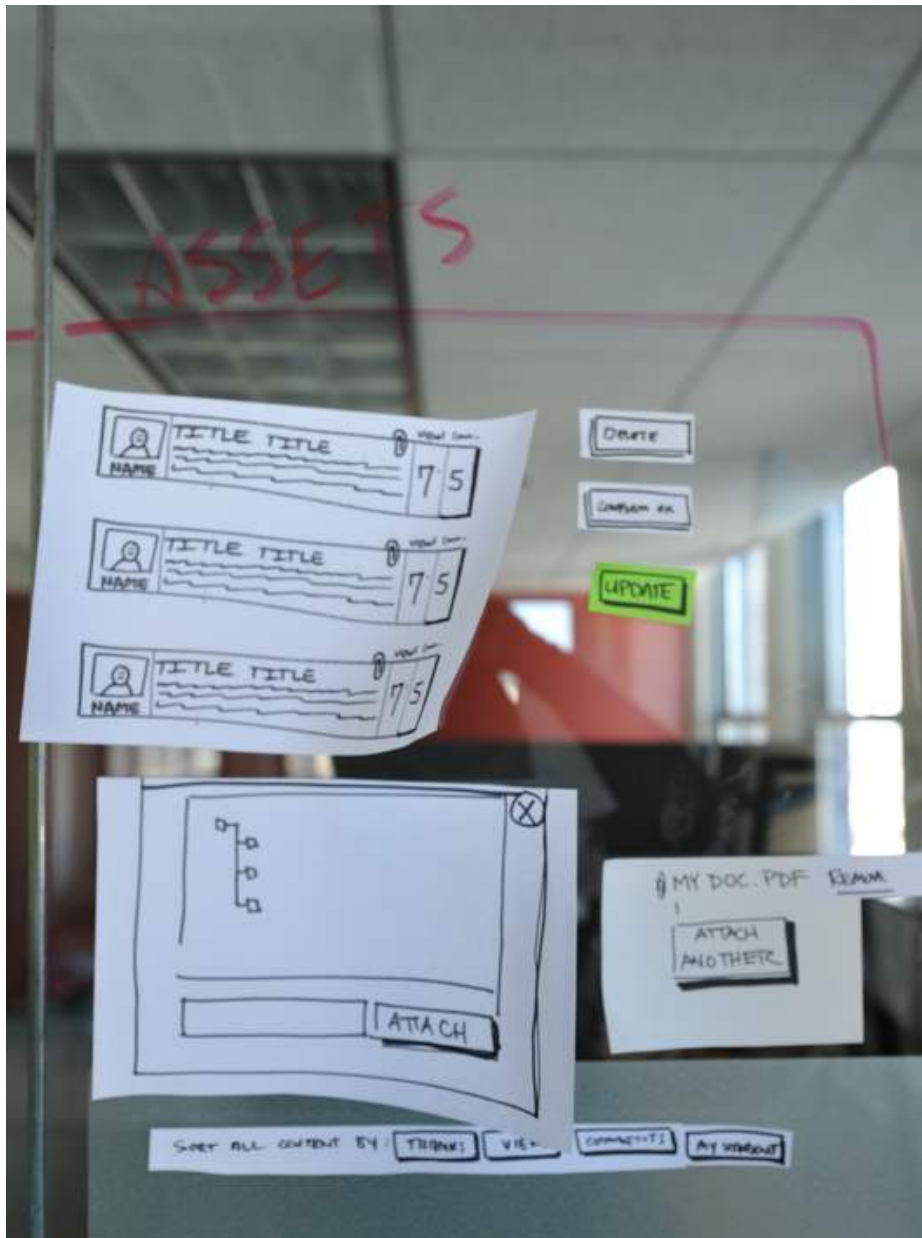
“The length of a healthy story is determined by the least number of steps absolutely essential to secure the hero’s objective.”

David Mamet “On Directing Film”



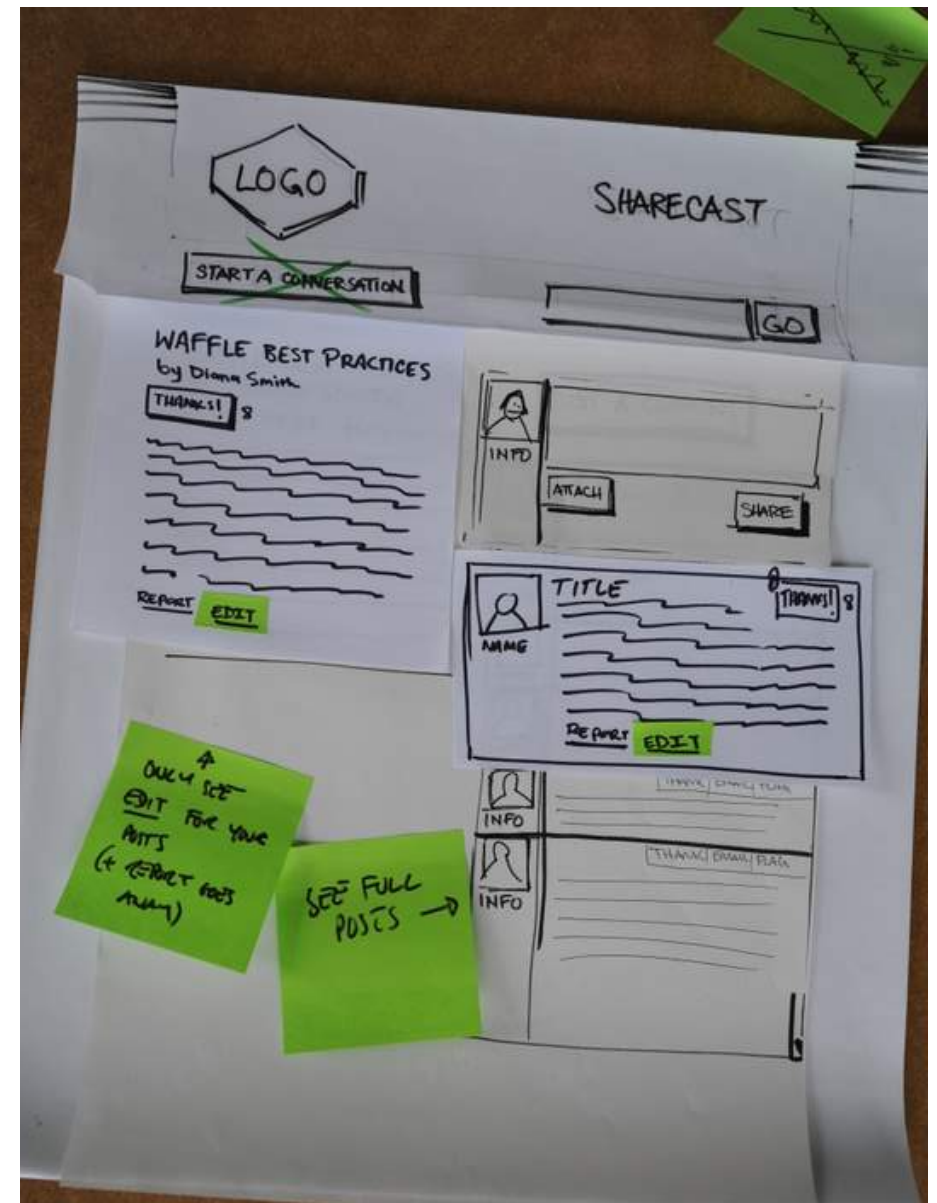


Paper prototypes



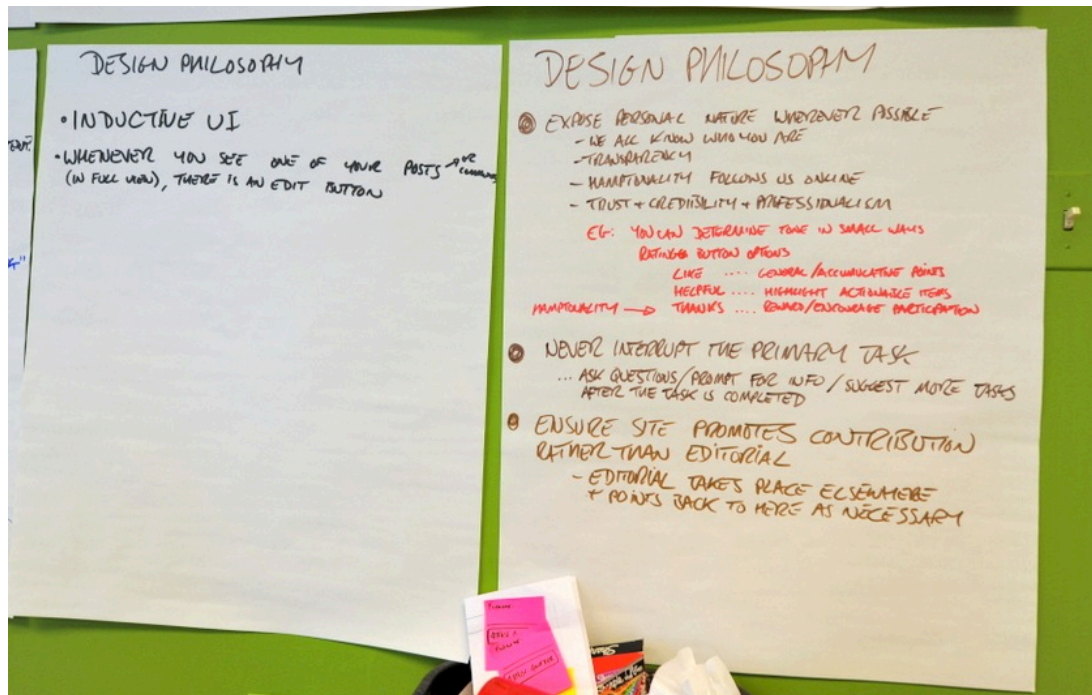
Paper prototypes



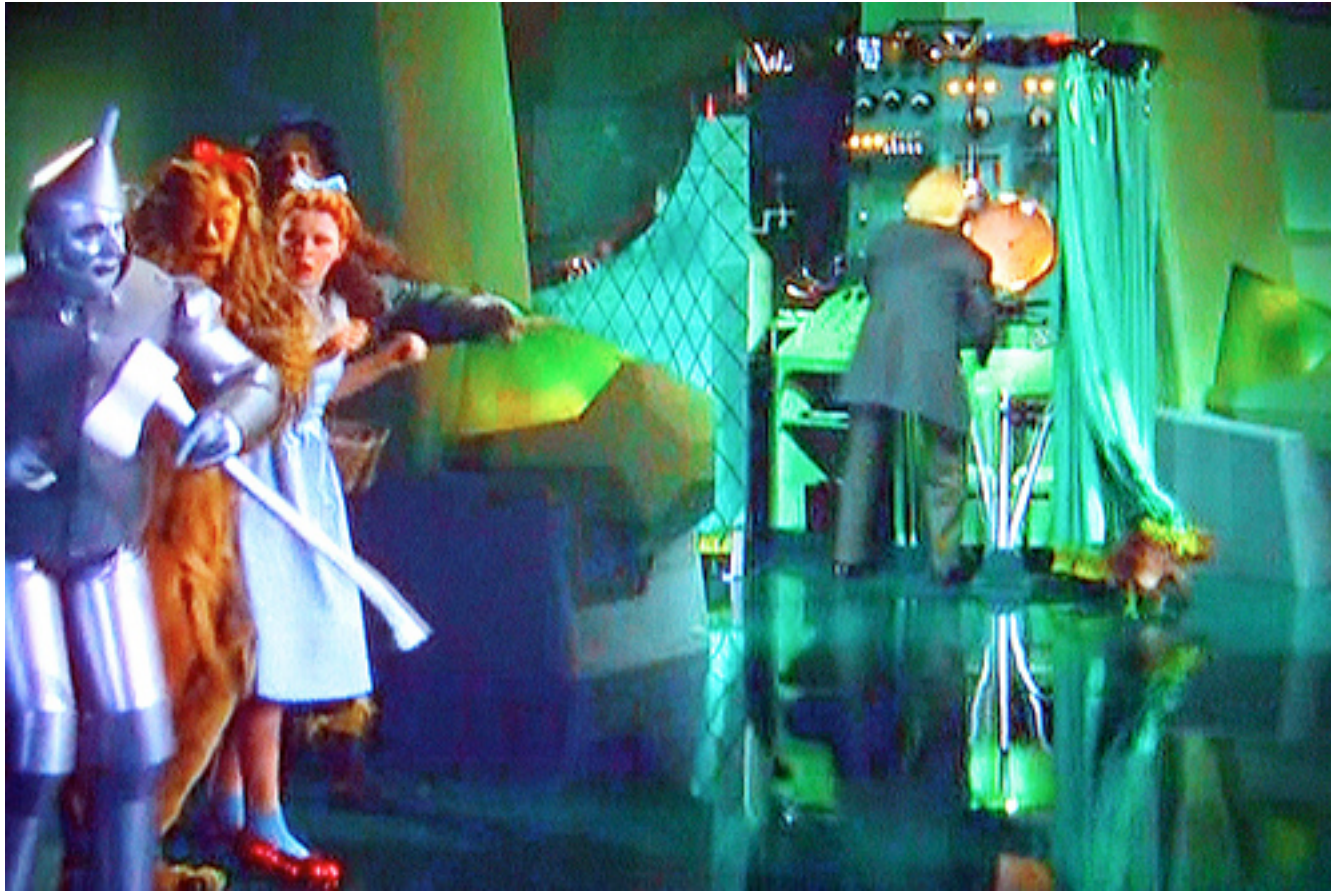


Paper prototypes





fx		Show all formulas
	A	B
1		
2	Expose personal nature wherever possible: - we all know who you are - transparency - hamptonality follows us online - trust + credibility + professionalism e.g. you can determine tone in small ways like with a rating button. Saying "Like" would general/cumulative points; saying "Helpful" would highlight actionable items; saying "Thanks" rewards and encourages participation, which is most Hampton-like	
3	Never interrupt the primary task. Ask questions/prompt for info/suggest more tasks after the primary task is completed	
4	Ensure the site promotes contribution rather than editorial. Editorial takes place elsewhere and points back to here as necessary	
5	Inductive UI - pull people through the interface by giving them clear, descriptive page titles that sum up what they should do on the page, one task per page, verbs on the action button	
6	Whenever you see one of your posts or comments (in full view) there is an edit button. Edit buttons replaces "report" link in post and comments	
7	There will only ever be one profile photo at a time - if you add a new one it replaces the old one	
8	in the summary of the post, there is a visual indicator if something is attached(pdf,video,pic). When viewing full post, you see video player, photo, or thumbnail of PDF/Word doc (?).	
9	The profile column will always be down the lefthand side of the screen - in the post reading screen, it will flip to the profile of the person's post you are reading. "View full profile" button will be added.	
10	Search by person returns all posts by that individual (chronologically) and shows a link to their profile at the bottom of the page. If no posts/comments, just link to profile appears	
11		



5. Run a user test*

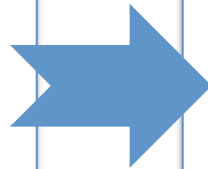
- Use your paper prototype
 - You don't need code to run a user test. It's amazing how much you can mock up with paper.
- Warm bodies
 - Your users don't have to be very representative for early tests - the interaction ideas should be understandable by most experienced computer users
 - About 5 users is enough to be sure that the problems you see are real
- Tasks
 - Use your scenarios to write tasks for users to perform
 - Make sure that the wording of tasks doesn't give away the answer
- Observers
 - Team members watch (remember the duct tape)
 - They write down quotes, observations. Save "solutions" until after the sessions
- Reward
 - Find something to say thank you to participants. Movie tickets, marketing giveaways, etc.
- Output
 - A list of issues with the prototype. Fix them (and re-test if necessary) before coding

**Users test the prototype, you don't test users*



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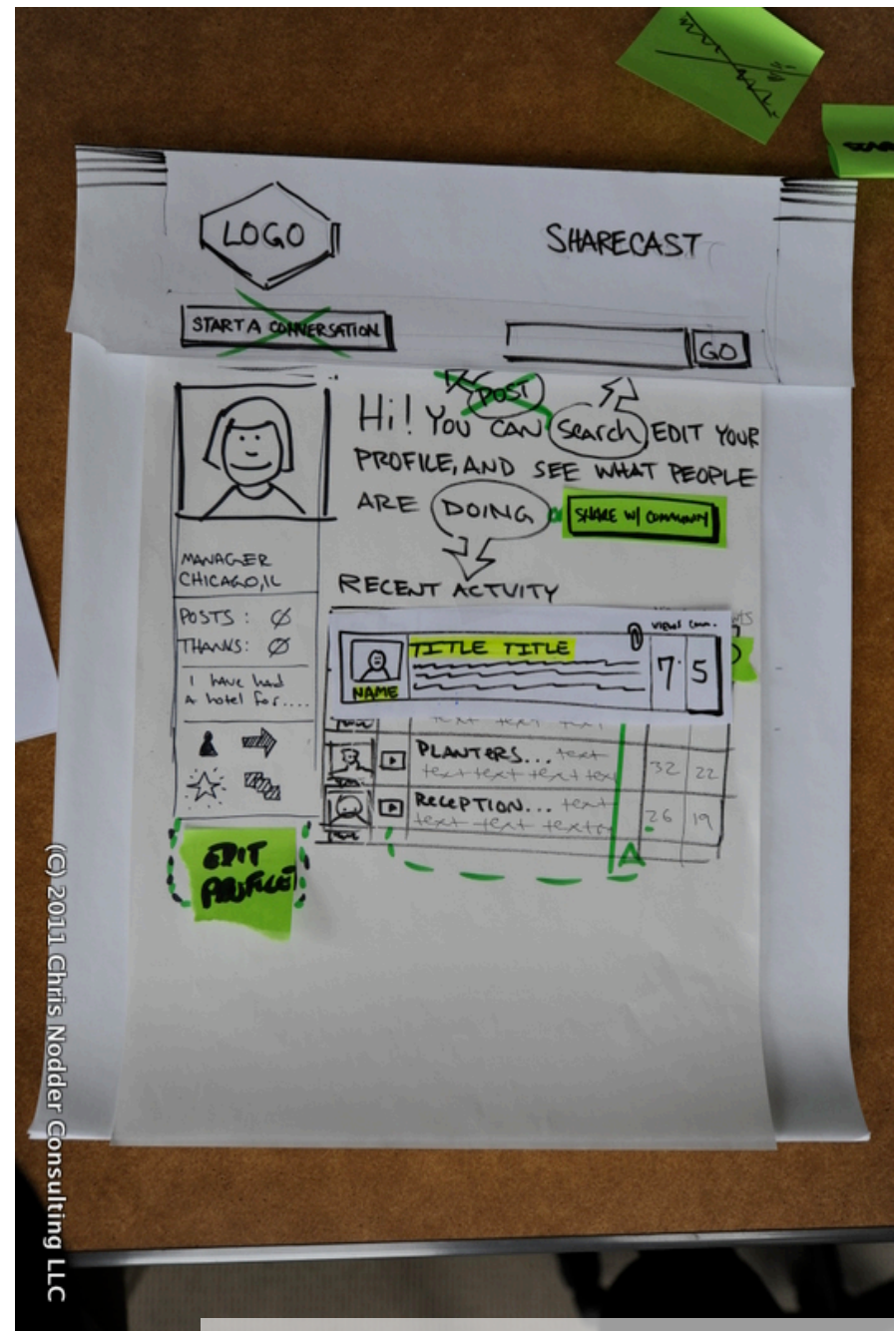
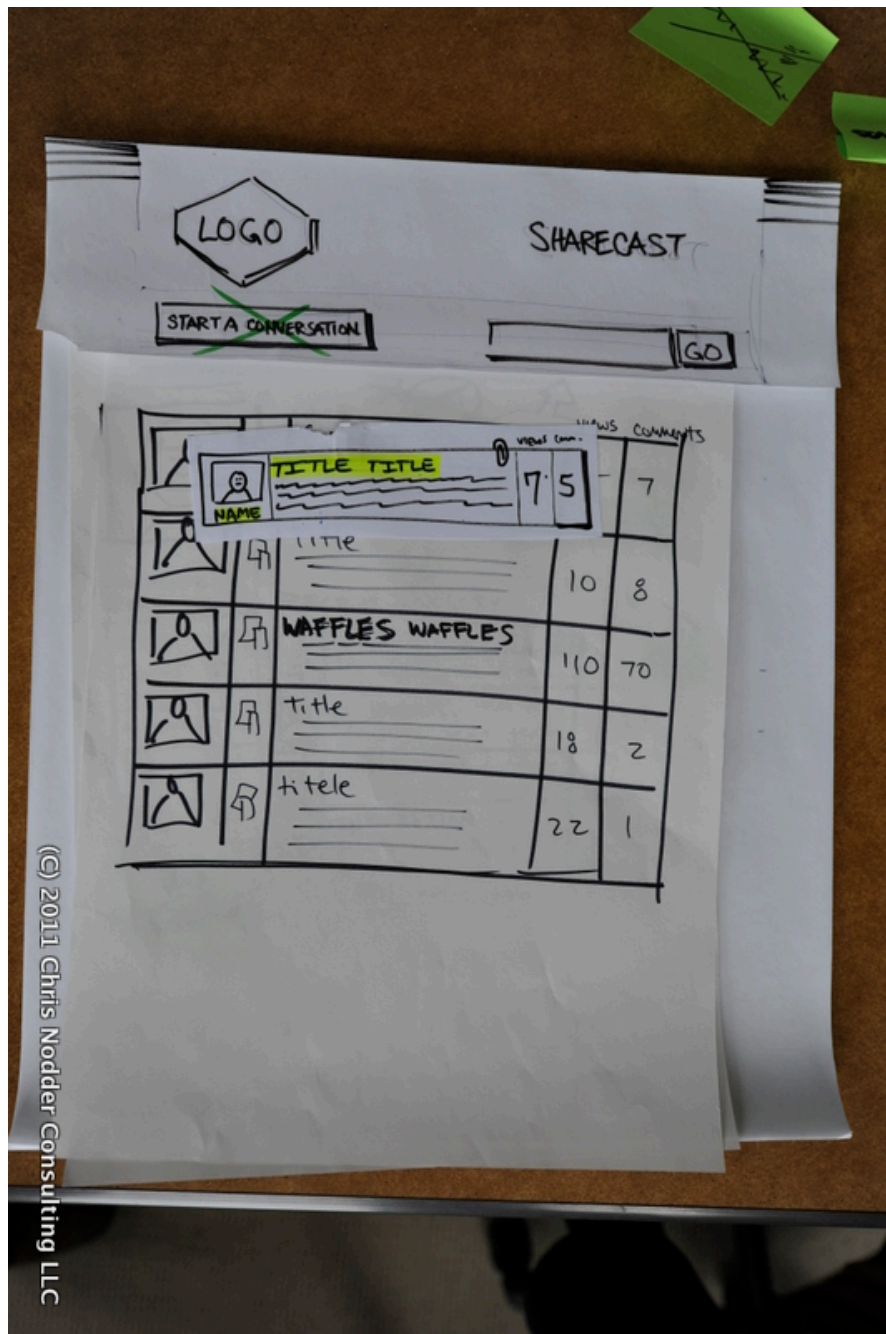
She's never been to Sharecast before so she sees the first-time user screen. She goes the search box and types in waffles. She clicks on the top-ranked answer, reads the post, finds it helpful.



You are the manager of a hotel in Chicago. You offer a buffet breakfast. The waffle makers in the breakfast room get really messy and you want to know if there is a good way of dealing with this.

See whether you can find out how to deal with the messy waffle makers.





User testing with paper



Now you can start writing code

- It's crazy that people consider starting to write code before knowing what to build
- Instead, *everyone* goes on visits, creates the experience map, participates in charrettes, watches studies
- Everyone should be too busy to write code!



Whatever happened to Sharecast?

- One week of planning meant a very fast, smooth implementation
 - 6 months of one developer, one designer, one project manager (all with other responsibilities)
- User tested wireframes, alpha, beta releases
 - Easy to make course corrections, no “gotcha” issues.
 - Alpha and beta testers built out community
- Around 70% of views are from returning visitors, people spend an average of 15 minutes per visit and in that time they view around 14 pages.





sharecast

search, share, and connect
with your peers

waffles

search



Chris Nodder

Interface Tamer
Seattle, WA



posts and comments: 0

[home](#)

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search results

☐ Maintenance ☐ Leadership ☐ Recognition ☐ Housekeeping ☐ Front Desk ☐ Breakfast ☐ Sales/Marketing

[filter](#)

posted by:

Page 1

October 26, 2011



pamela egbert
gm
syracuse, NY

Breakfast fruit selection

For a while now we have been considering the idea of adding a 2nd fruit display a couple mornings out of the week. Has anybody offered fresh strawberries or blueberries...

[more >](#)

views comments
96 **10**

April 4, 2012



James Moore
Associate General
Manager
Abilene, TX

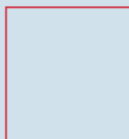
Waffles are sticking to the maker - Any suggestions?

We are having problems here recently with our waffles sticking really bad to the waffle maker plates. We will occasionally get sticky waffles after the plate has been in...

[more >](#)

views comments
95 **7**

March 25, 2012



Amanda Little
Asst. General
Manager
Salina, KS

International Waffle Day 2012!

This day is one of my favorite days of the year! I LOVE waffles! =o)
This year, we got all types of toppings such as mini-marshmallows, chocolate, butterscotch, and...

[more >](#)

views comments
77 **4**

The launch was a big success. When it was announced at conference in a room full of 1800 General Managers the Alpha and Beta participants spontaneously cheered and applauded, which was SUPER cool. There is a lot of activity and energy on the site.

Brian Donovan, Director, Root Learning

I just wanted to say thank you for your posts on Sharecast. I am a front desk agent and my career dream goal is to be a GM of a Hampton Inn and I love your enthusiasm and ideas that you have shared with us. I have a journal that I write things down in to remember for later and I've written several of your ideas down to one day implement on my own and hopefully at my own property.

e-mail from a "Searcher" to a "Sharer"



Recap: 5 easy steps

1. Find some users to watch
2. Interpret what they tell you without bias
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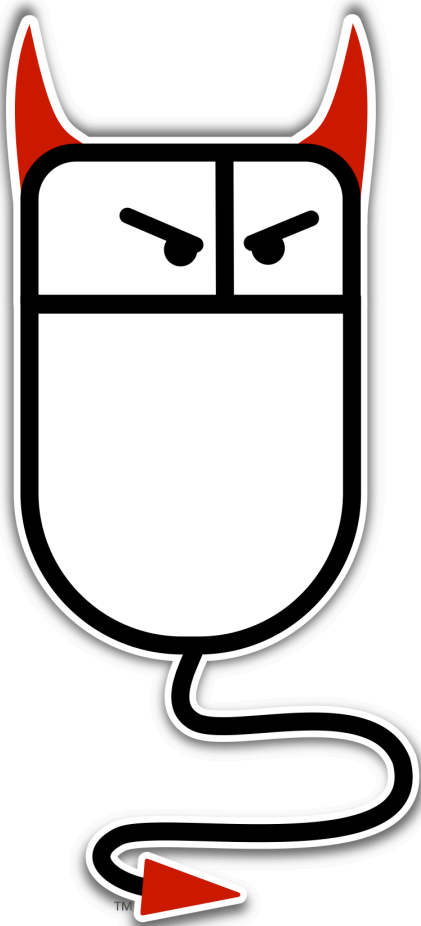


Benefits

- Great team bonding experience
- Cheap
- Easy to interpret results
- Fast way to improve the product
- Long-lasting value
- Stops arguments - you have real data



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@uxgrump
questionablemethods.com



Taming evil interfaces
Creating heavenly experiences

