# How to Run Successful Design Sprints

As presented in Design Sprints - a Speakers' Corner event from Innovate Island on 07/05/2021

**George Krasadakis**

## 1. The ‘Design Sprint’ explained

The purpose, the structure, the key elements; definition of success

## 2. The Success Factors

What makes a Design Sprint successful – things to do, risks to manage

## 3. The ‘connected’ Design Sprint

How to improve Design Sprints – in terms of preparation, execution, business value

# 1. The ‘Design Sprint’ explained

# What is a ‘Design Sprint’?

“A time-constrained, five-phase process that uses design thinking with the aim of reducing the risk when bringing a new product, service or a feature to the market.” - en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Design_sprint

# What is a ‘Design Sprint’?

A timeboxed, orchestrated *problem framing*, *solutioning*, *prototyping* and *validation* process.

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*A timeboxed, orchestrated problem framing, solutioning, prototyping and validation process*

**Context**

Problem space, an opportunity, a specific problem statement + resources; content; knowledge.

**A 'validated' solution**

A solution to the problem which has been validated by key stakeholders.

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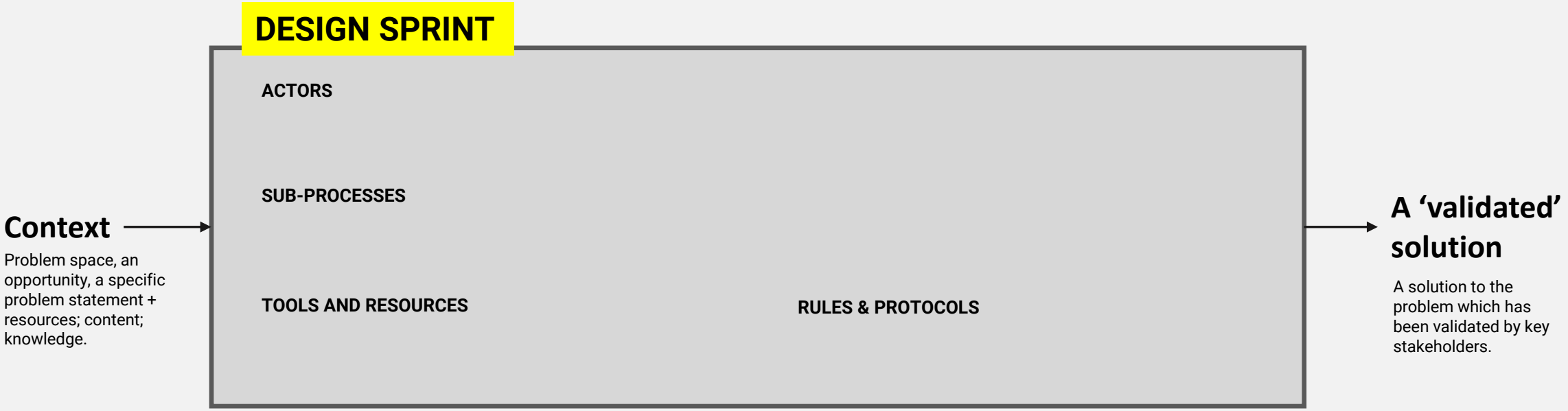


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## DESIGN SPRINT

**ACTORS**

A cross-disciplinary team + An experienced facilitator + A decision maker + Key stakeholders

**SUB-PROCESSES**

**TOOLS AND RESOURCES**

**RULES & PROTOCOLS**

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Design Thinking exercises, low-tech tools, re-usable digital resources (UI elements, content, software, data etc.)

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The entire team is committed; no digital devices, no interruptions

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# What is a Design Sprint?

## DESIGN SPRINT

### ACTORS

A cross-disciplinary team + An experienced facilitator + A decision maker + Key stakeholders

### SUB-PROCESSES

- MON: Problem framing
- TUE: Solutioning
- WED: Prioritization
- THU: Prototyping
- FRI: Validation

### TOOLS AND RESOURCES

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# **Design Sprints:** Outputs, Outcomes, Success

## Desired Outputs

1. A well-articulated and framed **problem**
2. A defined **solution** and a high-level roadmap
3. A package of **feedback** and validation of the solution, by the key stakeholders.
4. A collection of associated problems.
5. A collection of **ideas**
6. W*ireframes*, architectural *diagrams*, *user journeys*, *clickable prototypes*, *low-tech prototypes*

## Desired Outcomes

1. **Clarity** regarding the problem, and the overall direction
2. An ambitious **vision** – regarding the 'solution' or the product
3. **Alignment**, **inspiration** across stakeholders and groups
4. A boost of the **innovation culture** and the importance of the cross-disciplinary collaboration

**Successful design sprints** deliver outcome in at least some of the **above** directions.
It is the beginning of a long process of product definition, iterations and development.

**Less successful design sprints** deliver just outputs and, occasionally, *noise*.

# **Design Sprints:** Do you need one?

**Design Sprints are expensive events.** Consider running one when:

1. There is a **major, strategic, complex problem** to be solved
2. There is **high degree of uncertainty** associated with aspects of the problem
3. There are **no obvious solutions**
4. There are **multiple, cross-domain skills** required

**For simpler cases**, you should consider other innovation events, such as:

1. Brainstorming or Ideation sessions
2. Wireframing, rapid prototyping or hackathons
3. User research threads
4. Market Intelligence sessions – competition and trends exploration

# 2. The Success Factors

# **SF #1: The right team:** Diversity of thought; expertise; mindset

### *Bring the Right skills*

Ensure that the right **multidisciplinary** team with sufficient skills is in the room.

### *Form the right mindset*

Openness, willingness to share, to co-create, to challenge assumptions. Ability to think big but also be pragmatic and purpose-driven.

### *Leave seniority out of the room*

Team must 'forget' about seniority, hierarchy, and authority.

### *Keep the team small*

Limit the team to 6–7 people to ensure pace, and productive interaction. Invite others JIT, as needed

### *Get the team prepared*

Emphasize on the importance of preparation – set the context via pre-reads

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# SF #2: The Right Context

*Create a good pre-read package*

Share upfront an **executive view** of all the aspects of the problem, the goals of the sprint, the process itself

## What to share upfront:

1. The problem space, the impacted users, the pain points etc.
2. The strategy and goals of the organization
3. The Technology state of the art.
4. The competition, the startup scene; successful and failed attempts.
5. The Design Sprint process itself – help people to trust the process

**Context** → **Problem framing** → **Solutioning** → **Prioritization** → **Prototyping** → **Validation** → **Solution**

# SF #3: Readiness for Rapid Prototyping

**UI Frameworks**
Libraries of reusable UI components, application templates, charts, layouts etc.

**Data sets**
A catalogue of standardized datasets in the context of the problem – internal and/or external. This could accelerate prototyping of data-driven concepts

**Tech Devices**
Some concepts might require specialized equipment e.g. AR/VR devices, or the ability to 3D Scan/3D print etc. Ensure that these are provided when needed.

**APIs**
A catalogue of APIs in the context of the problem could accelerate prototyping

**Design Tools**
Tools to accelerate the prototyping process – like wireframing, website builders, advanced content/ experience tools etc.

# SF #4: A Great Facilitator

**A great facilitator can make the difference**

The facilitator has the difficult role to orchestrate the process and lead this ultra-creative group to the desired outcome .

## The facilitator must be able to:

1. Apply the rules
2. Maintain *a fast pace* and *increased levels of energy*
3. Must ensure that all voices are heard – minimize the impact of 'power' and 'authority' in the room.
4. Must deeply understand the context – not only the generic structure and rules of Design Sprints

# SF #5: Readiness to capture everything

**Add a note- taker to capture all key points**

Consider adding an illustrator as a 'visual storyteller' – to compile the highlights of the design sprint

## A digitized version of:

1. The ideas, solutions, problems mentioned throughout the sprint
2. The key points of the discussion
3. Sticky notes - typed into a single digital document
4. Diagrams, sketches, flows, wireframes
5. Feedback captured from stakeholders

A 'digital package' that become available to the participants after the event.

# 3. The ‘connected’ Design Sprint

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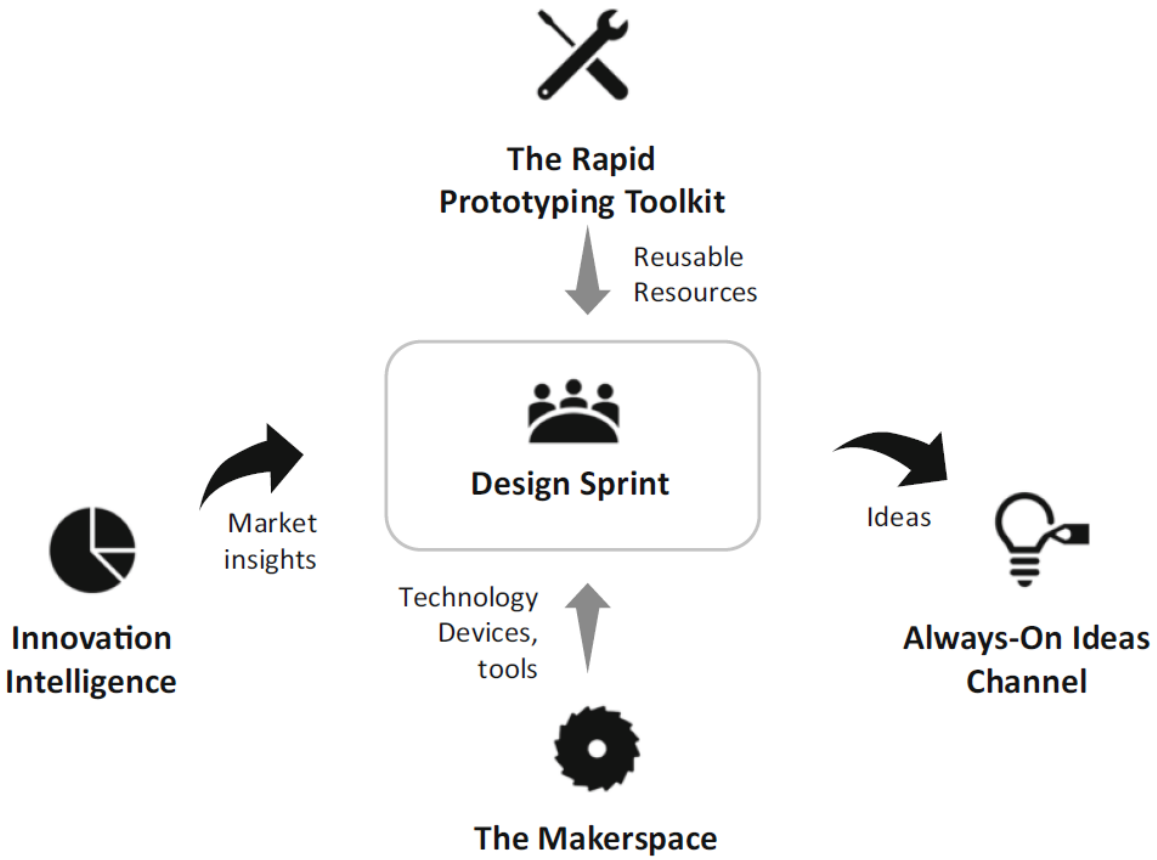


**Fig. 10.4** Connecting a design sprint with the innovation framework

Source: The Innovation Mode

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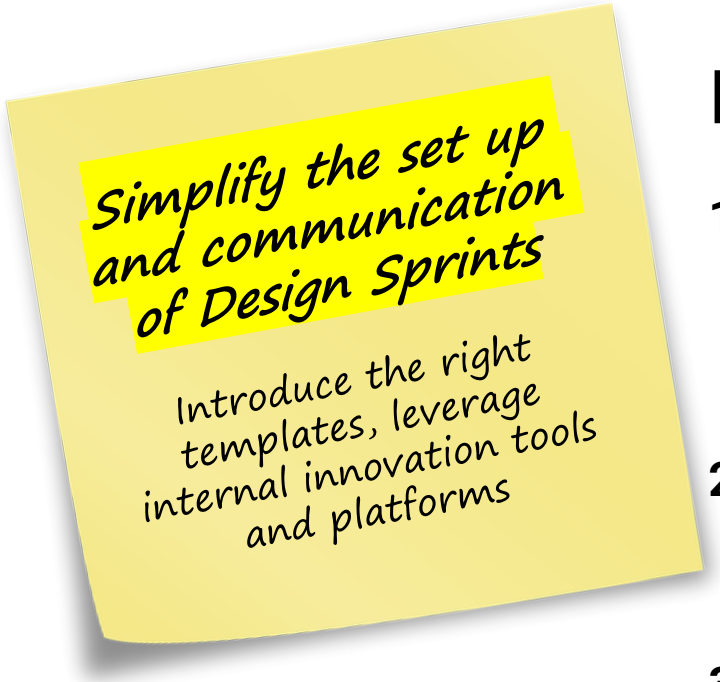


## How to streamline the set up of the DS

1. **Help the organizer to prepare and share ‘the context’:** use *content templates*, leverage the *innovation portal* and established channels; participants get a link to a web-page with all the information the need – instructions, pre-read etc.
2. **Help the organizer form the ‘dream team’** - a tool that receives the context of the Design Sprint and suggests the right participants
3. **Listen to feedback from participants**: Establish a standardized feedback process to encourage participants to evaluate the design sprint against multiple dimensions.

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# Thank you!


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The Innovation Mode


### Further reading

Rapid Prototyping practices for Software Engineering teams
Idea Management Platforms - Key Principles
How to Run a Successful Corporate Hackathon
How to run a successful Design Sprint
The Design Sprint (Knapp, Zeratsky, 2016)
The Innovation Mode (Krasadakis, 2020)


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