

311institute.com

Samsara Framework Series

311 Innovation Sprint Framework



ABOUT THE 311 INSTITUTE

The 311 Institute is a global Innovation and Business Management consulting firm and our mission is to help our clients discover and maximise the potential of new mass markets.

We are a world renowned Innovation and Management Strategy consulting group with Academic and Enterprise Affiliates in the US, Europe and APJ. Our Associates and Alliance Partners help Fortune 500, Government, Entrepreneurs and Non Profit enterprises create new uncontested markets and realise higher value by building Accelerator Communities and Innovation Centers of Excellence, predicting and leading industry trends and innovating new and alternative routes to market.

SUMMARY

The 311 Innovation Sprint is a standardised, repeatable low cost, low risk five day framework that uses your organisations in house skills to rapidly design, prototype, improve and test innovative and disruptive new products, services, processes and business models.

This framework is intended for:

Audience:	Everyone
Roles:	All lines of business
Skill Level:	All

The Framework

There are six steps in the framework, outlined below:

- 1. Pre Sprint Preparation**
Get the people and things you need
- 2. Day 1: Understanding**
Select a problem or topic and use research, competitive insights and strategy exercises to understand it
- 3. Day 2: Ideation**
Rapidly develop as many solutions as possible
- 4. Day 3: Decide**
Choose the best ideas and craft a user story
- 5. Day 4: Prototype**
Rapidly build a prototype that can be demonstrated to end users
- 6. Day 5: Validate**
Run a User study

1. PRE SPRINT PREPARATION

Now that you have a good understanding about the purpose of the 311 Innovation Sprint you'll need to prepare to ensure yours is successful. Select an important problem or topic, pitch it to your team and schedule a User Study for the last day of the Sprint. Get the right people and the right supplies in a room and you're on your way to running a successful Innovation Sprint.

1.1 Choose your Problem or Topic

First identify one or more problems or topics that are important to your organisation, ideally they should be something that you're struggling to solve.

1.2 Get the Right People

The ideal Sprint team consists of between four and eight people and ideally should have a representative from each line of business including the Executive team. If you skimp on getting the right representatives then it could have a detrimental effect on the outcome.

1.3 The User Study

Once you have a date for the Sprint recruit real world users and schedule the User Study for the last day of the Sprint. This hard deadline helps focus the teams and motivates them to work at speed.

1.4 Choose a Facilitator

The Facilitator is responsible for managing the Sprint and making sure it progresses in the right way and at the right speed. Facilitators need to be confident leaders and should be sourced from outside your organisation.

1.5 Book it all

Now that you've prepared the ground clear everybody's schedule for five consecutive days and book a conference room with lots of wall space and whiteboards. Much of the magic in Sprints comes from the sense of urgency so the concentrated amount of time of the Sprint adds another constraint.

1.6 Supplies

You need very few resources to run a Sprint but here's a list of what we like to use:

- Post It Notes
- Drawing Pens
- Whiteboards and whiteboard Markers
- Coloured dot stickers
- A4 Pads
- Timer
- Refreshments
- Blue Tac

You're ready. It's time to start.

2. DAY 1: UNDERSTAND

The first day of the Sprint has arrived and it's time for you and your team to explore and understand the true nature of the problems and topics that you're faced with. Hopefully the composition of your team will mean that each person will bring a different perspective.

The goal of the first day is to encourage everyone to share what they already know and develop a common understanding with the rest of the group. By starting at the beginning it nudges the group into a beginner's mindset and leads to fresh perspectives and fresh solutions.

2.1 Gain Understanding

Use all or just some of the following exercises to get a lot of information on the table as quickly as possible but once complete ensure that each presenter articulates their findings in only ten minutes to keep the day on track. Once the exercises have started make sure that each and every participant is writing down questions on the Post Its. While there are many different questioning styles you can use we have found that the "How might we . . ." question, such as "How might we streamline xyz?" is often the most powerful and ends up being the most useful question later in the Sprint.

Given the nature of some of these exercises you may need to gather some data or conduct some interviews before the Sprint starts, just make sure that any activities you undertake don't create a bias before the Sprint begins.

Exercises can include:

- **What is the Business Opportunity?**

What is it? It's why your solution and organisation exists
 Presenters: C Suite

- **Competitive Demonstrations**

What is it? It's a demonstration of your competitor's solutions

- **The User Experience**

What is it? It's a walkthrough of how your customers use your solution

- **Measuring Success**

What is it? It's how your organisation will measure success

- **Analyst Research**

What is it? It's third party insight into the pros and cons of your solution

- **Team Interviews**

What is it? These are organisational interviews to get internal feedback on your solution

- **Data Analysis**

What is it? Its real world analysis and data on your solution

2.2 Storyboard the User Story

Whether you are redesigning an existing solution or situation or are designing a new solution from scratch have your team use their collective knowledge and common understanding to collaboratively sketch each and every step of the user's journey as they use your real, or conceptual solution - if it's a new solution you might not have much to storyboard at this stage but try to get as much down as possible.

You may also be wondering how you know which stage, or stages of the user story to focus on and it depends on the problem you are solving in the Sprint.

Here are some examples:

- **Creating a new product concept**

What is it? It's understanding future trends and use cases for your solution

- **First Impressions**

What is it? It's the user's first impression of your solution

- **Improving your landing page's conversion rate**

What is it? It's understanding why people are visiting your site and what their goals are

This step can be difficult and time consuming but it's critical. Getting a visual map on the wall is invaluable for grounding the discussion and keeping everyone on the same page.

2.3 Focus

The User Study is rapidly approaching and there's a high chance that you won't be able to prototype everything you uncovered so you need to choose the ideas you're going to take forwards carefully. Keep referring to the Storyboard you just drew and select the ideas that will have the greatest impacts. What you decide here will set your course for the rest of the Sprint. At this stage the Facilitator is responsible for keeping discussions moving quickly and it's important that the team are always questioning and helping further each other's understanding.

Once you've worked out a common understanding of the problem and started to define which part of it you're going to tackle it's time to move on and rapidly develop as many solutions as possible.

3. DAY 2: IDEATION

It's time to start turning out solutions and again it's everybody's responsibility to participate, work as individuals and sketch out possible solutions.

3.1 Divide the Storyboard into Stages

In Day 1 you drew a storyboard, now you need to revisit it and look at it together as a team. If the storyboard is more than two steps long then you'll need to divide it up before you start developing ideas. Dividing the storyboard into stages can sometimes be as simple as finding natural themes and drawing a box around them and once you've done this you need to decide which part to focus on first and then make sure that everyone in the Sprint focuses on the same part of the problem.

If your storyboard has more than three stages you might have to divide them all equally among the teams. Either way the Facilitator must ensure that everybody knows which piece of the storyboard they're focusing on before you all continue.

3.2 Revisit old ideas

It's likely that some team members had thought of solutions to some of the problems or topics you've chosen before the Sprint even started so we recommend that you include the most appropriate ones in your Sprint.

3.3 Paper first

Paper is a great leveler so start designing on paper first, you'll have a chance to use different tools and polish your designs during the prototyping stage.

3.4 Your time starts now

There are many ways to start the creative ideas flowing and we've found that the following methods normally produce the best results:

- **TAKE FIVE**

Length: 5 minutes

At this point in the Sprint the whiteboards and walls will no doubt be covered in diagrams and notes so take five minutes to read them and jot down whatever they think might be useful.

- **MIND MAP**

Length: 15 minutes

Add all the ideas that are in your head, mix them with the notes you just took and loosely organise them on paper in a Mind Map, this is going to act as your cheat sheet that you can refer back to when you're sketching ideas.

- **CRAZY EIGHTS**

Length: 5 minutes

Get everybody to fold a blank sheet of paper in half four times then unfold it so they get eight panels. Everyone then has 5 minutes to write or sketch down eight rough ideas which aren't shared with the group. With only forty seconds to write down each idea people will be running on instinct and if they get stuck simply get them to repeat an earlier sketch with a small variation, this type of exploration is useful and keeps the ideas flowing.

For the best results do two rounds of Crazy Eights and on the second round everyone will have the hang of it and you'll undoubtedly find though that squeezing another eight ideas out of each of them will become more painful but this is often where the most interesting solutions come from.

- **STORYBOARD**

Length: 20 minutes

During this stage we begin to use the ideas that people have generated to enhance the original storyboard. Start with a fresh piece of A4 paper and put three sticky notes onto it then, taking your top three ideas, write one onto each Post It. If you need to refer to your Mind Map or Crazy Eights then do so and if your ideas represent different stages of the storyboard then put them in the right order.

There are three important storyboard rules:

- Each one should be able to stand alone
- Don't put your name on them, keep them anonymous
- Give each idea a name

When you finish your miniature A4 storyboards stick them on the wall side by side so people won't have to crowd in too tight to see them.

- **SILENT CRITIQUE**

Length: 10 minutes

Now give everybody the same colour Dot Stickers and without speaking to each other get them to put a dot on every idea they like. There are no limits to how many stickers you can use and by the end of this process you'll have generated a heat map and some ideas will already start standing out.

- **THREE MINUTE CRITIQUES**

Length: 3 minutes per idea

Get everyone to gather around the storyboards, one at a time and get people to talk about what they liked making sure to ask the person who came up with the idea if the group has missed anything important. Usually the best, most popular ideas are those that people can understand without explanation and this process works far better than letting people explain their ideas first which inevitably begins to bias people towards particular ideas.

- **SUPER VOTES**

Length: 5 minutes

Once everyone has had a chance to look at the ideas everyone gets two 'special' Dot Stickers. These act as 'Super Votes' for the very best ideas and between the original heat map and these Super Votes it's very easy to see which are the strongest concepts. Sometimes a democratic decision making process can lead to mediocrity so if your organisation has a number of key decision makers then reflect that in the Sprint and give them each one or two more dots than the rest of the team.

3.5 Repeat

Now it's back to the first step to start the whole cycle over again. Split up the original storyboard one last time and move on to another stage. Sometimes you'll realise that your initial scope was too large and that you should just double down and keep working on the same section. Either way, the end of the first cycle is a good time to take a few minutes to reflect and carefully decide where to focus next.

You should expect your team to be able to do this cycle two or three times in a day before getting burned out so throw in plenty of breaks to keep motivation high.

4. DAY 3: DECIDE

By now you've explored the problem or topic and generated solutions. While it feels good to have a lot of brilliant ideas you can't prototype everything so you've got tough decisions to make. Which solutions will you pursue and which will you shelve?

In this section we walk you through the best ways to decide which solutions to flesh out and how you'll fit them together into something you can rapidly test with users to learn what's working and what isn't.

4.1 Combat the group effect

The decision making process is hard and this is one place where working as a group can become a liability. Companies and teams have a natural way that they make decisions but in a Sprint the group effect can cause people to behave more democratically than they do in real life. Once the Sprint is over and that rosy democratic feeling wears off the danger here is that you could be left with something that doesn't have true support from the organisations formal decision makers.

To combat this the Facilitator needs to get more assertive participation from the decision makers to give their honest opinions. Super Votes are one way to de-democratise the decision making process and being blunt is another.

4.2 Search for conflicts

Now comes the time when you have to comb through storyboards from the previous day looking for conflicts where there are two or more different approaches to solving the same problem. Every time the team identifies one make a note of it on a Post It note and stick them on the wall under the title 'Conflicts'. It's important that you try to avoid instinctually dismissing the worst ideas and opting for the safe choices because sometimes these conflicts can create interesting discussion points which lead to cleaner, simpler solutions.

4.3 Best Shot or Battle Royale?

You can run your User Study in one of two ways on the last day of the Sprint. You can prototype several different approaches and test them against each other, the 'Battle Royale' or you can go with a single prototype, the 'Best Shot'.

The 'Best Shot' lets you to put a lot more work into creating one prototype and if you're testing one solution then the User Study is less complex and allows you to granularly compare it with your competitor's solutions.

The 'Battle Royale' on the other hand works well for newer spaces where there really aren't many conventions and you need to figure which one is going to work best for the user, however it takes more time and your testers may run out of patience before you get all of the information from them. You can circumvent this though by bringing in fresh participants and running more studies.

You can also run a hybrid of the two, sometimes you may find that something in your Best Shot isn't working and that you need to have a Battle Royale over a specific feature.

So how do you know which to pick? Let the team decide . . .

4.4 Test your assumptions

The User Study is around the corner and not only is it a way for you to test the credibility or viability of your solutions but it's also a way to test a whole mix of assumptions your team might harbor such as user behaviour, options, technology choices and more so make sure you maximize your opportunity wisely.

4.5 Storyboard the User Story

You are now ready to create a storyboard that shows precisely how the user will use your new solution and this will be the foundation you use to build the real prototype.

To create your storyboard draw a large grid onto two or three whiteboards - each cell should be about as large as two sheets of A4. The idea is to draw a film strip that tells a story, starting when the user opens, or starts working with the prototype and ending when they complete all the necessary tasks.

In each film strip frame draw a single action, whether it's a pointer click, text being entered or a user physically interacting with your product. These don't have to be presented in great detail but you do have to think through every action that takes place in the story. You can also storyboard how you'd imagine they'd get to your product, for example through a Google search as well as what they'll be trying to do when they get there. This will help you figure out whether the first frame of your comic book is an E-Mail or a Google search or an ad and then hopefully your story will flow easily from there.

4.6 Stay Blunt

As you storyboard there will be lots of small decisions to make that didn't come up earlier in the day because you're now working at a more granular level and inevitably there are going to be some decisions to be made so stay blunt and focused and validate them in or out quickly. When you're happy with your new storyboard it's time to turn it into a higher resolution mock up and we'll discuss that next.

You've identified your conflicts and decided which assumptions to test so now you're ready to create your prototype.

5. DAY 4: PROTOTYPE

You've identified your problems, created your solution storyboard so now it's time to design the prototype.

5.1 Realism

Simply put a prototype is anything a user can look at and respond to but they don't usually have to be very complex to teach you what you need to know. Prototypes don't have to be pixel perfect but you should aim to make them as accurate as possible reflection of the final solution. In the following sections we'll show you how you can make a Minimal Viable Product quickly and easily.

5.2 The Tools

Our favorite weapons of choice are either Keynote if you're an Apple user or PowerPoint if you're a Windows user and if you are prototyping a software interface then using templates from Keynotopia can make the process even faster and produce even better looking results. Both of these tools will let you create gorgeous click through mockups of your solution quickly and can be complemented with a variety of tools like Adobe Illustrator and Wacom tablets that will help you create good enough conceptual drawings of your products.

5.3 Running Order

Spend the first hour of your day reviewing and making your plan and then divide the teams into sub groups and assign each group a specific segment of the design to work on paying special attention to people's abilities and skill sets. Each sub team should have someone who's familiar with working with either Keynote or PowerPoint, a designer and finally someone responsible for stitching the final slides together.

Now you've divided the teams up have a look again at yesterday's storyboard, or, if you've decided to run a Battle Royale then the storyboards plural. You probably want to divvy up the best of the storyboard sketches on paper, too. Those are often the blueprint for many of the mockups you'll have to make, and they can save you a lot of time.

There are, of course ways you can speed things up which include creating a series of templates and standard graphics and using the Timer to maintain focus and we would also recommend that you schedule regular 5 minute lightning critique sessions throughout the day aimed at catching any designs that are going off piste or aren't up to scratch paying special attention to inconsistencies and typos. If you're lucky enough to have an outsider present then schedule 30 minutes at midday with them to go through the work you've done so far and listen to their feedback.

5.4 When the tools aren't enough

Nine times out of ten, you can learn everything you need to know in a User Study with a click through of mockups but sometimes you can't avoid coding in which case get someone with the right skills to help. It's important to remember though that this code is throw away and you have to remember to move fast and work hard to emulate the other prototype designs you've created.

5.5 Finish what you started

With your User Study looming tomorrow you need to complete your prototype today. Having something that is good enough is much better than having a half-finished masterpiece.

6. DAY 5: VALIDATE

The last day has arrived and it's time to validate your new solution. Today you're going to be running the User Study and show your prototype to four or more real world consumers.

6.1 Running the study

Your aim for the day is to extract as much honest and insightful information as possible from your user group, both good and bad.

6.2 Key questions

Before the day has even begun it's important to have a list of questions and you share your assumptions with the group. Talking about your game plan before the study starts will help you get better results.

Break your teams into two roles – Interviewers and Observers. Things to consider at this stage include:

- Can you include your conflict items into the User Study?
- If you are running a Battle Royale make sure the interviewer understands the differences
- Consider showing participants some real products for comparison
- What do you want to see through your users' eyes?

6.3 Set up the Observation Room

Reserve two rooms for the day and test the equipment to make sure it's in working order. One will be used to conduct the interviews and the second will be occupied by the Observers who will be watching a live video feed of the proceedings in the next room, taking notes and trying to second guess which parts of the demonstration will fail and why.

Here are some guidelines that you should follow during the study sessions:

- You owe the participants your respect
- Everyone is responsible for taking notes
- Designate a Stenographer

6.3.1 Make a scoreboard

Using a whiteboard make a column for each of the participants and then add rows for each part of the interviews, for example Background, First Prototype, Second prototype and so on. At the end of the session write down the highlights and lowlights from each participant in bullet form writing the bad in Red and the Good in green. Using this approach will make it easier to spot themes and common observations and if you wanted to you could also include ratings out of ten.

6.3.2 Pattern Matching

Once you've concluded your final interviews, which by the way you might have felt produced mixed results it's normally easy to identify patterns. Go to the whiteboard, update it as necessary and look for observations that occurred more than twice and mark them with a Green dot for Good and a Red dot for Bad now make a new list



of what worked and what didn't. These are your top line findings and represent your post Sprint action list which the CEO or decision makers need to bless before you leave the room.

Congratulations, the Sprint is complete.



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