The Importance of Creating an App Prototype

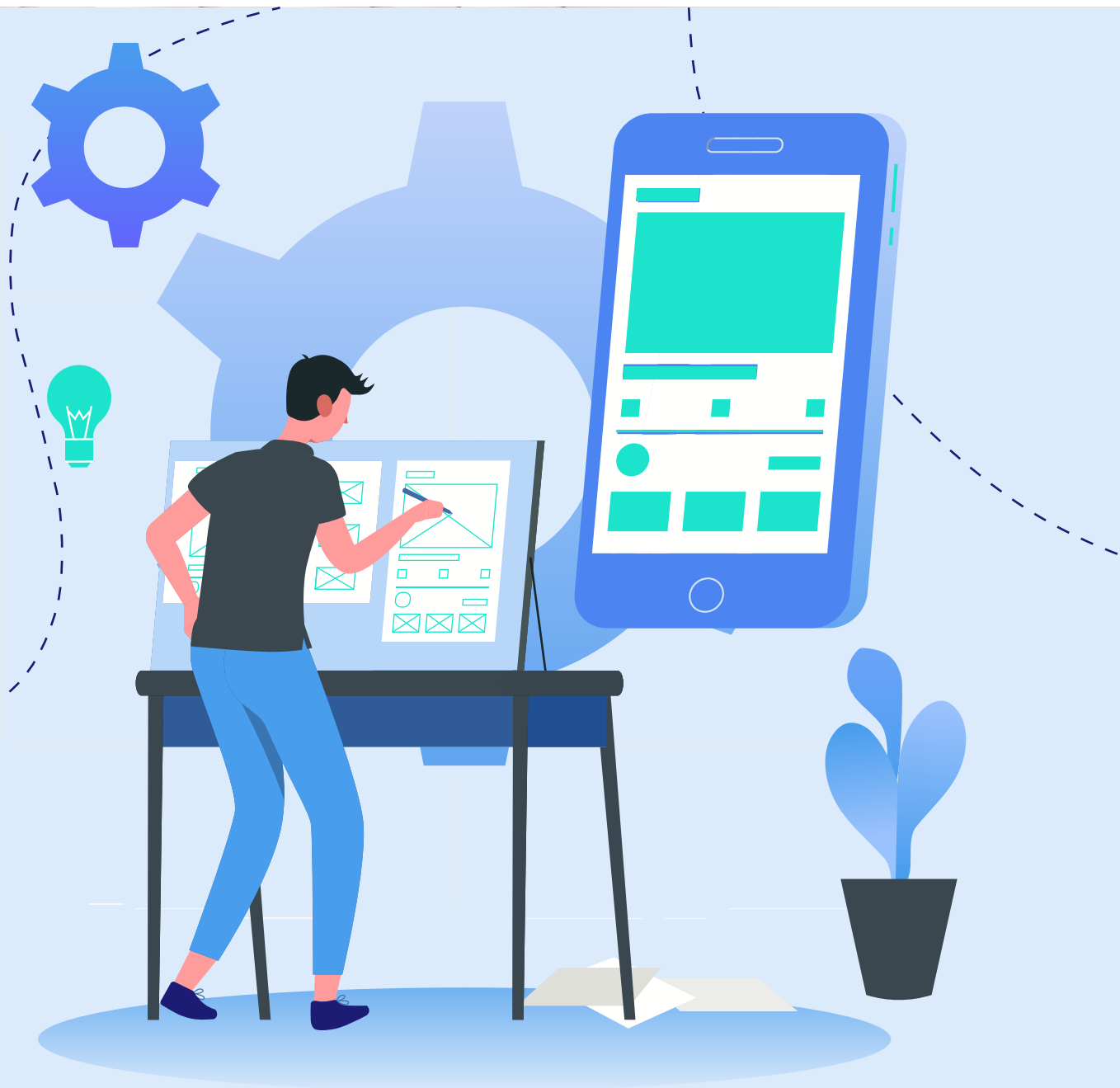**yeeply**

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The importance of creating an app prototype

Welcome to this eBook where we explain **why and how** you should create an app prototype. The fact that you are reading this, means that you are probably **thinking of creating an app** and are wondering where to start... That is great, you have come to the right place!

Apps have become one of the most popular entertainment and communication tools of our time and you have made a wise decision to act on this trend.

Your second bright choice was to think about how to **design a prototype first**, before seeking decisive development options.

Getting excited about creating an app is reasonable but it is also essential to **take the first steps gently**. Defining the design, interface, functionalities and structure is not something you should rush.

At Yeeply, we have helped carry out hundreds of app projects from all types. We can say from our experience that prototyping has a great influence on whether your app will become successful or not.

Do you want to **discover how to start prototyping** your mobile app? Keep reading!

1. The idea behind prototyping

Nowadays, there are millions of apps available to download. According to Statista, Google Play Store offers around **2.7 million** applications, followed by the Apple App Store with a selection of **1.82 million**. If we exclude China, these are the two biggest app stores of our time, followed by Amazon App Store.

Creating an app is one thing, but offering one that people **download and regularly use** remains challenging. Mobile applications are existing in abundance and in order to be successful, you need to stand out from the crowd. Especially if there is already a similar app available.

While one user has about 60-90 apps installed, 96% of their time is spent on the top ten of their selection.

Besides consumer apps, nowadays there are also a high number of **internal apps for businesses** available. These are often meant to increase productivity, leverage big data and help optimise the efficiency of business processes.

Read the following article if you want to find out more about the benefits of creating an enterprise app. Despite the fact that the purpose of such apps is completely different, it is essential to first create a prototype and test it among the employees.

Main purpose

Imagine you want to build a house from zero. You have this stunning image in your head but before you can turn it into reality, you will have to sit down with an architect to create a **blueprint** of the house.

After the structure is created, the construction work begins. **Starting with the foundation**, the floor and walls, and later the doors and windows. After that, the electricity and water connections and so on.

Once you start constructing, you can not suddenly change your opinion, deciding that the bathroom should be moved to the other side of the building or be double as big. Such radical **changes will cost a lot of extra time, money and effort**.

And it is the same with creating an app—the prototype is the foundation. It is essential to present, reflect and work together on a draft, so every aspect and detail is clear before the start of the development process. All to avoid you will have to apply drastic changes in a later stage.

Let the experts guide you

Designing and testing a prototype is not always that easy. Rely on an experienced team to help you out!

HIRE AN APP DESIGNER

Key benefits

However, prototyping involves more benefits. Let us take a look at them.

◆ It serves as a clear briefing for developers

It is essential that you and your development team have the same understanding of the app. It is still your idea or concept but **they will have to turn it into reality**.

When it is not clear for them what you want, confusion and misinterpretations will occur during the development process—resulting in an app that does not meet your expectations.

Proper documentation and in-depth meetings will help you to explain how you imagine your app. Visualising it in the form of a prototype makes it easier for the team to follow the example.

◆ Changes are made at the right time

This is one of the greatest benefits of prototyping. Like mentioned before, it takes more time, effort and money to apply changes once the development has already started.

In the prototyping phase, you can **easily make changes and test them**. Some of them might be effective, others not. But you will never know unless you try it out. And since it is only a draft version, you have got nothing to lose.

Many developers prefer to create a prototype first, before giving the final price for the full development process. They need to understand the full scope of the project in order to provide you with an **accurate quote**—without additional costs in the end.

You might be interested in this article:
How to define the lifecycle of mobile software development

◆ It serves as a semi-final draft

When you create a prototype you can experience the real app feeling without having carved anything in stone. Being able to "use" your app, makes you **think about new aspects**. It also helps you to notice what functionalities work, which do not, and if the navigation is intuitive.

Additionally, developing an app can be a major investment. It is likely that you have to search for **investors** and convince them that this app is the next big thing. Showing them a prototype might be the last push they need to make them believe in your project.
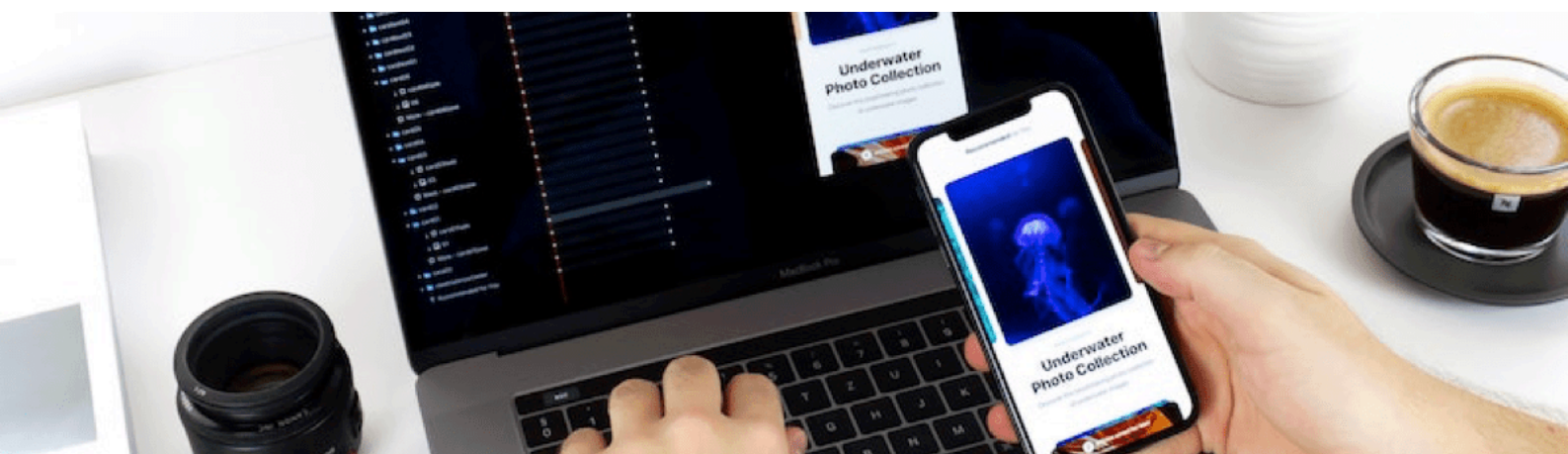
◆ Risks are reduced by testing it

Being able to use the app as it has already been developed, means that other people can as well. User tests are a great way to **discover things you need to change or add** before starting the actual development process.

Besides, test rounds are crucial to make sure that the users are actually enjoying and appreciating the app. If they do, it is likely that they will download it once it is launched.

However, downloading an app and using it are two very different things. Feedback from test users can help you to **find out whether they would use your app frequently or not**. If the prototype seems more like an application that will end up being downloaded but never used, the uninstall rate will be very high.

Therefore, we recommend you to discuss the technical feasibility of your app with your developer, avoiding unpleasant surprises at the end.

2. A step by step guide

So far, we have highlighted the importance of creating a prototype. Now it is time to understand the process of doing so.

In general, it consists of three main steps. In each phase, you add details to your prototype, so it ultimately **brings you as close as possible to the final app**.

Before we get started...

In one of our previous eBooks, we already explained [how to create an app from A to Z](). The first thing to start with, is to **identify the main objective of your app**. E.g. to solve a problem with it, offer entertainment or use it as a promotion channel. Also, determine if (and how) you want to monetise it.

Then, think of your target audience and what they would expect from the app. What **functionalities** could be essential and how would you keep them engaged?

Once you have figured out the above, you can start with the first steps of visualising what the app would look like and how it should work.

Step 1 - Wireframes

In this step, we create a first **rough sketch** of your mobile application. The draft version of each screen is referred to as a **wireframe**.

It indicates what the app should look like in terms of **layout, main components and navigation**. It should not contain tiny details but just serve as a starting point for your design.

By **defining your screens**, you should give a basic view of intended placements of buttons, tags, icons and other main elements.

For intuitive and smooth navigation, start with determining your main menu and draw out every screen option based on a single click.

Focus really on the main objective you figured out in the preliminary considerations and **put simplicity first**. Avoid a complicated structure with too many screens and options—you do not want to over-trigger or frustrate the user.

Here are some questions you should ask yourself at this stage:

▶ Which **elements** are the most important for the user?

▶ How are these going to **be arranged**?

▶ **What content** will appear?

Step 2 - Mockups

Once you have defined the wireframes, the next step is to level them up to mockups. The focus will be more on the visual aspect of each screen, showing a **static representation** of it.

Whereas you skipped tiny details in the prior step, now you should start thinking about the **shapes of the elements, colours, button texts, font size etc.**
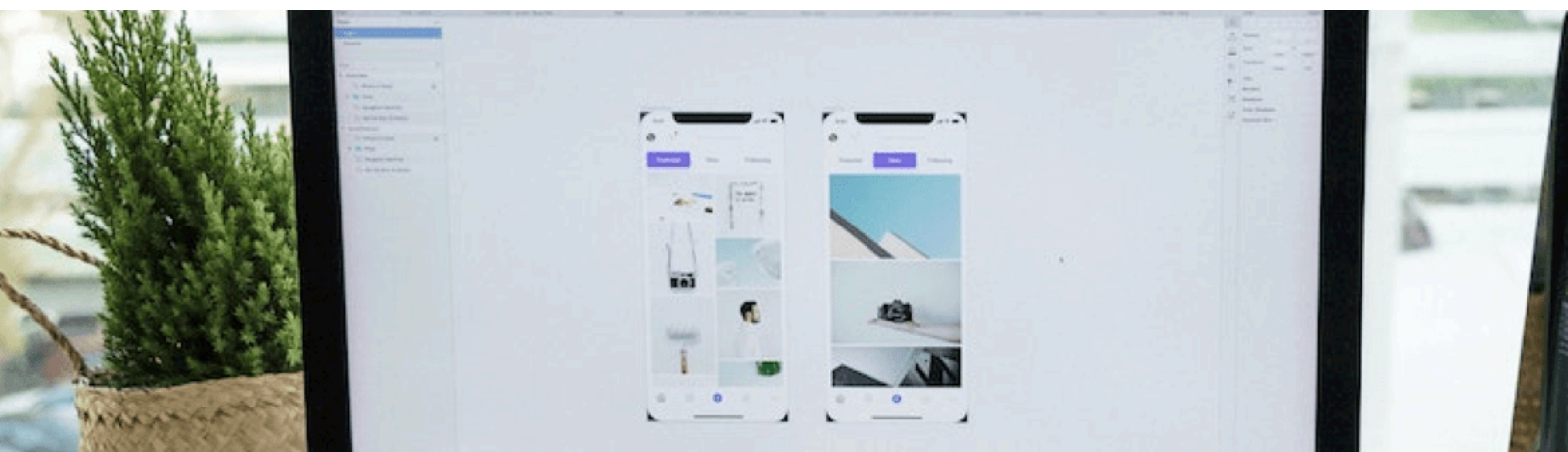
In this phase, you also decide the **copies and terminology of your content**, plus the images you would like to use. It is recommended to define a specific style or guideline for your app, which you can follow along the way.

It is also important to set the **negative spaces** (gaps) between each element. Do not be afraid of whitespaces, they are important for appealing and convenient navigation.

While setting up your mockups, it is essential to keep your target audience in mind—identify their needs and preferences—and design accordingly.

Questions that can help you to keep on track:

- ▶ What **colour palette** will be used?
- ▶ How will the **navigation** flow?
- ▶ What **style** will be applied for fields, symbols, buttons, icons etc.?
- ▶ Are there enough **whitespaces** between the elements?

Step 3 - Prototype

When talking about a **prototype**, we refer to a **fully interactive and functional model** of your (nearly) final product.

By now, a large part of the work is done since the static design of the app is defined. Now it is time to **simulate the possible interactions**, to see how the navigation will work in real-time. Thereby, focus on **intuitive and smooth navigation** throughout the experience.
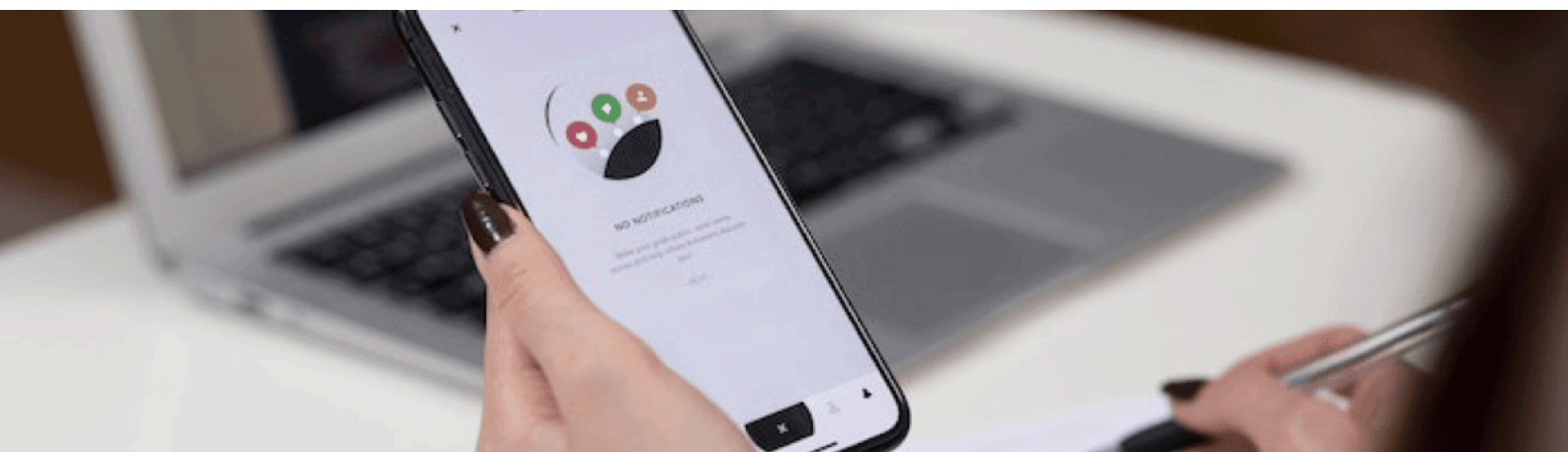
A prototype helps you to detect possible misinterpretations of elements and functions that sounded good in theory but did not work in practice.

You might not create just one, but **several prototype versions**. And each one brings you a step closer to the final app.

Here are some questions you should be able to answer at this stage:

- ▶ How will the user **interact** with the final product?

- ▶ What is the **sequence of changing screens**?

- ▶ What can be done to **optimise** the ease of use?

- ▶ Are there any **better alternatives** for the setup/ functions/ navigation?

To sum up, when talking about a prototype, wireframes and mockups are both parts of it. In order to create a final version of your app, it is important to go through those initial stages to to **decide on crucial details**.

Now that we have explained the fundamental steps to undertake, we can take a look at the different approaches to create a prototype.

3. Popular tools and approaches

There are many ways to create a prototype. Therefore, we have listed different approaches and tools for you. From there you can decide which one suits you best.

We will dive into three common prototyping methods: presentation software (mostly for beginners), prototyping tools (intermediate level) and coded prototypes (high level of expertise).

Beginner: Presentation software

Powerpoint and **Keynote** are software you are probably familiar with and are therefore convenient options to get started on your prototyping process.

Furthermore, there are simple wireframing libraries available like Keynotopia. Here you can use templates, reuse slides (or parts of it) and **link your wireframes together for a clickable prototype**. This linear user flow will force you to also think about the user experience.

However, using presentation software also has its disadvantages. Most of them miss (comprehensive) element libraries to use in your designs. Plus, they have **limited collaboration opportunities**, which makes it difficult for a team to work on the same prototype at once.

Besides, linking your prototype together is quite complex and features for adding interactivity are limited. This might result in a prototype that is **less realistic and deviates from the app you had in mind**.

Hire a prototyping expert!

Save yourself the time and effort to learn how to prototype and test your app. Rely on the experience and skills of an app designer.

TELL US WHAT YOU NEED

Intermediate: Prototyping tools

To create a persuasive prototype with any expertise level, the following tools can be useful to do so in a relatively quick and easy way.

Built-in elements, collaboration functions and **test options** make such tools very user-friendly. Besides, they allow a fast creation process and help to visualise the user flow, while keeping a clear overview.

It might take some time to get familiar with the tools but once you get the hang of it, it is totally worth it. Let us take a look at five popular prototyping tools.

◆ Invision

▶ **Access via**: Web browser

▶ **Collaborative:** Yes

▶ **Templates:** No

▶ **Usability testing:** No

▶ **Other features:** App Design, wireframing, whiteboard

Invision is a popular app for **creating interactive prototypes**. The free version allows you to design one prototype at the time. Paid plans, on the other hand, enable you to work on as many designs as you wish.

It has rich interactions and animations, which can be easily added to the static design. The features enable your **transitions and animations to run smoothly**. Moreover, Invision has a plugin called Craft for Sketch and Photoshop, so you can sync, update and share your designs instantly.
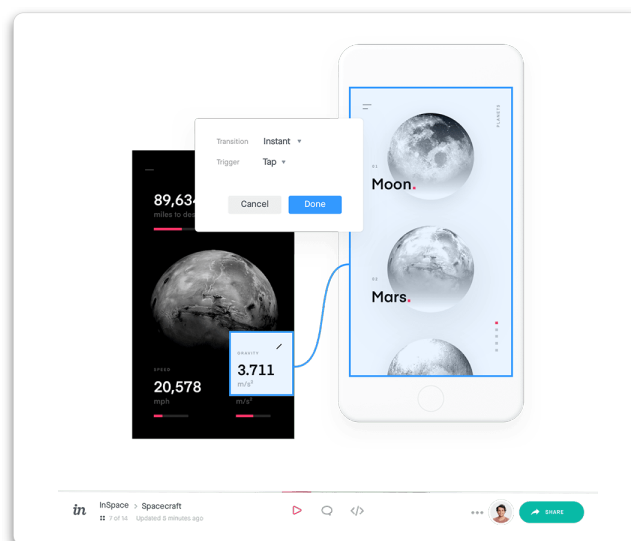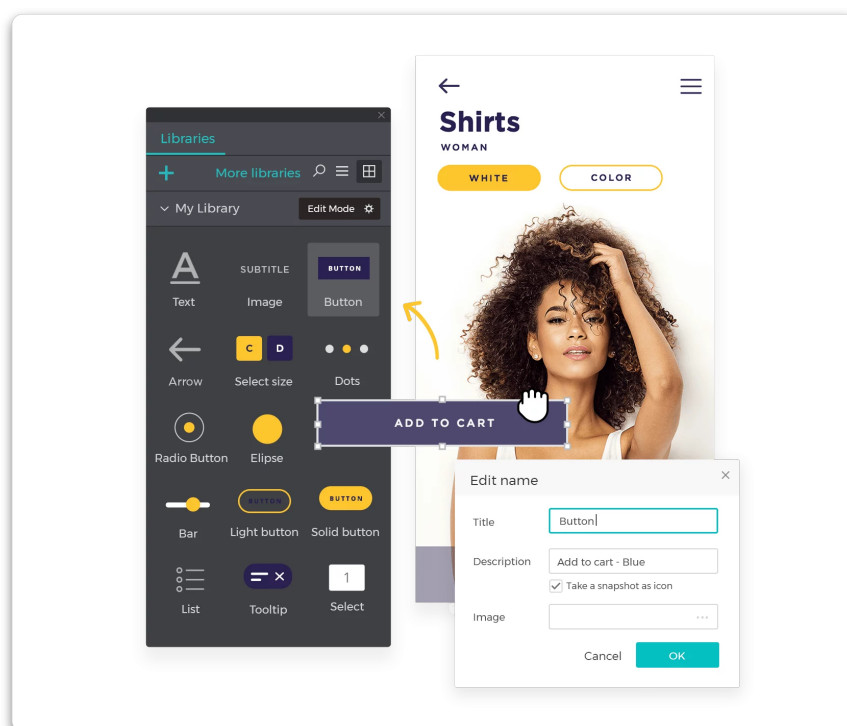
◆ Justinmind

▶ **Access via**: Windows and macOS

▶ **Collaborative:** Yes

▶ **Templates:** Yes

▶ **Usability testing:** Yes

▶ **Other features:** App Design, wireframing, mockups

Another common tool for prototyping is [JustinMind](). There is a free version for wireframing and a paid version which allows you to create advanced mockups and interactive prototypes.

The biggest advantage of this tool is its **numerous features** including animations, screen transitions, pop up banners and other effects. The main disadvantage is the steep learning curve. It is not the easiest tool to master.

Furthermore, the app has a **gallery of native iOS and native Android elements** which you can use to create a more realistic prototype. Besides, you have the possibility to do test rounds with Simulator.

◆ UXPin

- ▶ **Access via**: Windows, macOS, (+ web app)

- ▶ **Collaborative:** Yes

- ▶ **Templates:** Yes

- ▶ **Usability testing:** Yes

- ▶ **Other features:** App Design, UX, wireframing

UXPin is an interactive prototyping tool, downloadable for **macOS** and **Windows**. Despite this, you can also choose to use the **web application** so you do not have to download any software. This way you can log in from any device and collaborate more easily on your designs.

Thanks to their wide selection of templates, you can easily create new designs in no-time. On top of that, you can download the app for **iOS** or **Android** to test prototypes on your phone.

◆ Marvel

- ▶ **Access via**: Web browser

- ▶ **Collaborative:** Yes

- ▶ **Templates:** No

- ▶ **Usability testing:** Yes

- ▶ **Other features:** App Design

Marvel is known for its convenient use and user-friendly experience. It is integrated into tools such as **Sketch**, **Confluence** or **Figma**, just to name a few. Plus, Marvel is fast in synchronising updates, which makes it ideal to work collaboratively with your team.

But the tool also has some disadvantages. There is no comment function available and there is no possibility to work offline. Last but not least, some people are not satisfied with the transition and animation features that the app offers.

◆ Adobe XD

- ▶ **Access via**: Windows and macOS

- ▶ **Collaborative:** Yes

- ▶ **Templates:** No

- ▶ **Usability testing:** Yes

- ▶ **Other features:** UX

With Adobe XD you can easily switch between design and prototype mode and it offers **integration with other Adobe products** like Photoshop and After Effects.

The software is known for its smooth file importation and includes real-time viewing, commenting and sharing features. It really is an **all-in-one platform** for all your design needs. The only disadvantage is that it sometimes needs time to sync updates.
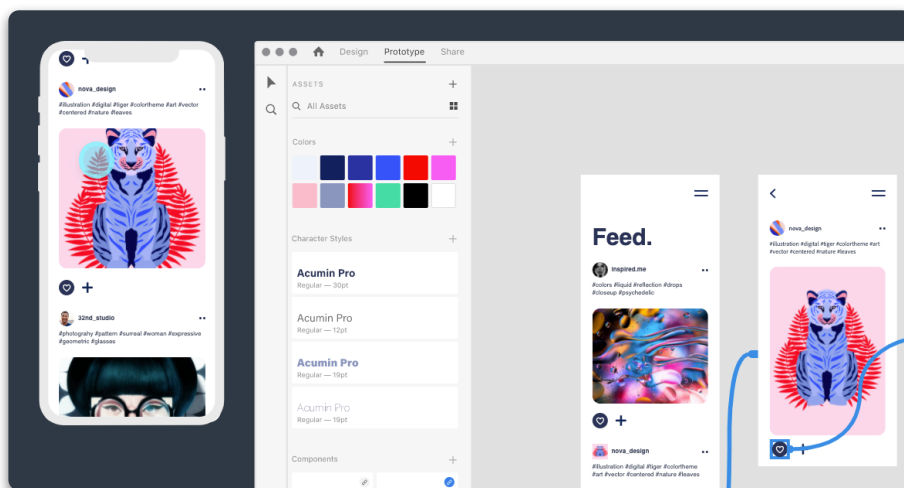
Advanced: Coding from zero

The best thing about coded prototypes is that the **first technical foundation for the app** is built.

While writing the code you need to think critically about the important elements— like the navigation, setup, teaser, header etc.—and their context to each other.

IIt does not require additional software to create it. When you test your app in an early stage, you can identify quickly what needs to be corrected. Hence, the **technical feasibility** can not just be assured but actually get tested.

Nevertheless, it is a complex approach if you do not have the required skills and knowledge to do it well. So, in case you decide to create a coded prototype, **the help of a developer or skilled designer** is unavoidable.

You might be interested in this article:
Usability and user experience in mobile app design

4. Let an expert help you out

Prototyping is not a process that you should rush. It requires time and effort if you want to do it right. In case you are not comfortable with designing a prototype yourself, you can always choose to hire an expert.

If you want your app to be outstanding or if you need to show a prototype to investors, relying on an app designer will most likely be the best choice.

Experts in app design can help you to keep on track and **focus on the fundamental aspects of your application**. Besides, with a convincing prototype, user tests will be more effective and the results will be more reliable.

There are several ways to search for the right expert(s), ranging from freelance platforms to agencies and development companies. However, working with the same team from the prototyping stage until the final app version has its benefits—such as **consistency and familiarity**.

Freelancer

There are several platforms where you can find a wide selection of freelancers, including references. Yet, there are two things to take into account. The reviews are not always trustworthy and due to high competition on these sites, **prices often come before quality**.

Recommended expert

Maybe you already know someone who has developed an app and can give you a **personal reference** of designers and/or developers. However, make sure they also have experience in creating prototypes or similar apps to yours. They are more likely to create relevant sketches and valuable suggestions for improvement.

Development Company

By using search engines and checking references on the internet, you can find reliable companies with **experience in specific areas**. You might find more than one required profile within a company, which facilitates the coordination of your project.

However, there are app development companies in abundance and information can get overwhelming. Therefore, it might be easier to get advice on finding the right team.

Tech marketplace

That is when we come in. At **Yeeply**, we dedicate ourselves to finding the perfect team for your digital project—like the creation of a prototype.

How does it work? All you need to do is [complete this form on our website](). It is essential that you tell us about your project and what type of support you need, in order for us to help you out.

All the **developers, UX/UI designers, design thinking experts and digital marketers** that you need, are gathered on one platform. In other words, we can find you a team for the entire app development process.

Besides, all our **150+ teams** have passed our demanding certification process where we validated their prior work, references and skills. Based on your requirements, we can provide you with one or more proposals. All you will have to do is pick the one that suits you best.
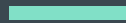
Start creating your prototype!

Find the best experts to help you define, design and test your app idea.

PUBLISH YOUR PROJECT

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