



LEARNING **DESIGN** SPRINT

Design thinking meets instructional design in
a team process to kick start your creative
learning solution in 5 days or less

ABOUT THE LEARNING DESIGN SPRINT

WHAT IS A LEARNING DESIGN SPRINT?

The Learning Design Sprint is a facilitated team-based process for the rapid design, prototyping, and testing of a learning solution. It uses the best of design thinking, instructional design, and lean innovation to design a solution with a validated prototype in 5 days or less.

Inspired by the [Google Sprint process](#) for product/service innovation, the *Learning Design Sprint* uses a timeboxed approach to create rapid, customer validated learning solution innovation.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

In 3 to 5 days a small, committed team is facilitated through a process that begins with a deep understanding of learner experience along with an assessment of on the job performance needs, progresses through the design of authentic practice activities and supporting learning resources.

The resulting framework allows the team to brainstorm and select a creative, performance-based solution. A prototype of the solution is prepared and then tested with real learners.

Taken together output of the Learning Design Sprint becomes the high-level design that will inspire and guide the program development effort. The process favours prototype development over extensive design documentation that fails to communicate with the same power as a prototype.

APPLICATION

The process is best suited for custom developed programs unique to your organization.

- Onboarding
- Product knowledge
- Operational and process skills
- Compliance and regulatory
- End user application skills
- Behavioural skills

THE LEARNING DESIGN SPRINT **PROCESS**

SET THE STAGE

Before your sprint begins, you'll need to have the right design challenge and the right team along with the time and space to conduct the sprint. We work with you to:

- Choose the right learning design challenge. The higher the stakes the better
- Conduct preliminary interviews to prepare straw-man models to jumpstart day 1
- Identify the decision-maker. Without a decision maker with authority, sprint decisions won't stick.
- Recruit the team. 5-7 people is best. SME's, Instructional Designer, decision-maker or delegate, e-learning or digital developer or interface designer, technology specialist.
- Recruit real learners for the prototype review sessions

DAY 1 UNDERSTAND

On Day 1, you'll kick off your sprint by sharing knowledge, understanding the problem, and choosing a target for the week's efforts.

AM. In the morning, you'll start at the end and agree to a business-oriented solution outcome. Next, you'll make a map of the current learner experience for typical learner personas.

PM. In the afternoon, you'll ask the experts at your company to share their perception of performance needs. The team uses that information to document required performance on a unique "performance canvas" highlighting key processes, responsibilities, cognitive and behavioural tasks and measures. Finally, you'll prioritize gaps and pick a solution target; an ambitious but manageable piece of the problem that you can solve and prototype in one week.

DAY 2 DEFINE

On day 2 you'll narrow the focus to define the learning needs to meet the captured performance and business goals.

AM. We begin by brainstorming a roadmap of practice activities needed to produce the performance documented in the performance canvas. The practice activities are clustered by role or performance types as needed. Starting with practice instead of content can be uncomfortable for traditional learning designers but has proven

effective in improving quality and reducing the content overload that mars conventional learning programs.

PM. Practice activities require information and guidance to learn effectively. In an activity we call “Just Enough” the team produces an inventory of existing and needed support information mapped to each identified practice exercise. This produces a content matrix that will guide the solution brainstorming on Day 3.

The afternoon ends with “lightning demos”; short demonstrations of existing solutions from within or outside your organization that serve to inspire creative thinking for the solution framework that the team will produce on Day 3.

DAY 3 **IDEATE**

Day 3 is solution creation day. Not the full solution of course, but a solution framework with a segment selected for prototyping. The day follows the classic design thinking pattern of divergent thinking for solution variety followed by convergent thinking to select the winning approach.

AM. The day starts with a facilitated review of the variety of learning modes available creative options available. This is quickly followed by an activity we call “Solution Sketch” where individuals work alone to create solution ideas. The only constraint is that the solution must incorporate the practice and content identified on day 2.

PM. In the afternoon the team works through a poster board exercise where individual solution sketches are presented, debated, and voted upon. The decision maker chooses the winning solution framework. The day ends with the team storyboarding a segment of the winning solution in preparation for the following days prototyping effort.

DAY 4 **PROTOTYPE**

On day 4, the team transforms the day 3 storyboard into a prototype. A simple façade is all you need to test with learners. Anything can be prototyped include classroom training, coaching, performance support, digital learning and touchpoints in the user experience. Prototypes are disposable. Build just enough to learn, but not more. All that is needed is enough for real learners/users to provide you with feedback for the next iteration of the solution.

AM. In the morning roles are assigned to the prototype effort. For example—designer, writer, asset collector, author, assembler. The team then divides and conquers by splitting the work into smaller scenes. Prototyping begins.

PM. Prototyping continues. As the prototype nears completion, all elements are assembled, and a trial run is completed to check for errors and flow issues. A final tweak and the prototype is ready for testing.

DAY 5 **VALIDATE**

Day 5 is the reveal. One final step to interview employees and learn by watching them react to your prototype. This test makes the entire sprint worthwhile: At the end of the day, you'll know how far you have to go, and you'll know just what to do next.

Two rooms are ideal. One for learner interviews, the second for the sprint team to observe interviews via video stream. An interview protocol is followed as 5 representative learners interact with the prototype. Towards the end of the day patterns are identified (positive, negative, neutral) and conclusions are drawn.

In a final wrap up, the team reviews their long-term goal, reviews the patterns observed in the interviews and decides how to follow-up after the sprint.

POST SPRINT **DOCUMENTS**

The sprint is all about rapid analysis, collaborative design and learning from prototypes. The outcomes of each day serve as minimalist design documentation moving forward. However, the rough and ready documents that emerge from each day are refined and prepared in a final Sprint summary for use by the team as they move forward into iterative development of the learning solution.

The sprint summary package will include:

- Project goal and success measures
- Learner experience map
- Performance canvas
- Practice activity roadmap
- Content needs matrix
- Solution framework and draft storyboard
- Functional Prototype
- Observations, patterns and recommendations from learner testing

LEARNING DESIGN SPRINT VARIATIONS

Not every organization can dedicate a learning team to work full time for 5 days on a learning design sprint. In fact, for certain objectives it wouldn't be wise to do so. The learning design sprint is flexible and can be adapted to meet unique needs. Here are some ways you might consider adjusting the sprint to your situation.

- The work of Day 1 and/or Day 2 can be done by a smaller team or individual in preparation for a 3-day solution design and prototyping effort.
- The prototype and test days (days 3 and 4) can be separated from the first three days for completion at a later date.
- Sprint days can be spread across a longer period of time. For example, 1 day per week for 5 weeks.
- For smaller projects focused on a single performance or learning issue a sprint can be configured into three days

To **learn more** or to schedule a meeting to discuss how the Learning Design Sprint might benefit your organization:



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UNDERSTAND

Day 1

Understand the learner and performance context

- Define project goal
- Create a *learner experience map*
- "Ask the experts"
- Create *Performance Canvas*: Responsibilities, cognitive and behavioural tasks
- Prioritize gaps

Outcome:

- Learner experience map
- Performance canvas



DEFINE

Day 2

Define the learning and content needs

- *The Practice Roadmap*. Brainstorm a playlist of practice activities
- *Just Enough*: Identify just enough content resources to support practice activities
- *Lightning demos*: Find solution inspiration from examples

Outcome:

- Practice activity roadmap
- Content needs matrix



IDEATE

Day 3

Ideate and choose a solution

- *Learning Modes*: Learn options for creative solutions
- *Solution Sketch*: Individually sketch a solution
- *Solution Choice*: Present solutions and select a winner
- *Storyboard* a solution segment

Outcome:

- Solution storyboard ready for prototyping



PROTOTYPE

Day 4

Build a prototype of the solution

- Assign roles
- Build an *minimum viable prototype*:
- Trial and revise
- Prepare for learners

Outcome:

- Functional prototype



VALIDATE

Day 5

Test the prototype with real learners

- Interview 5 learners as they experience the prototype
- Observe response patterns
- *Summarize and learn*
- *Plan next steps*

Outcome:

- High level program plan and validated prototype