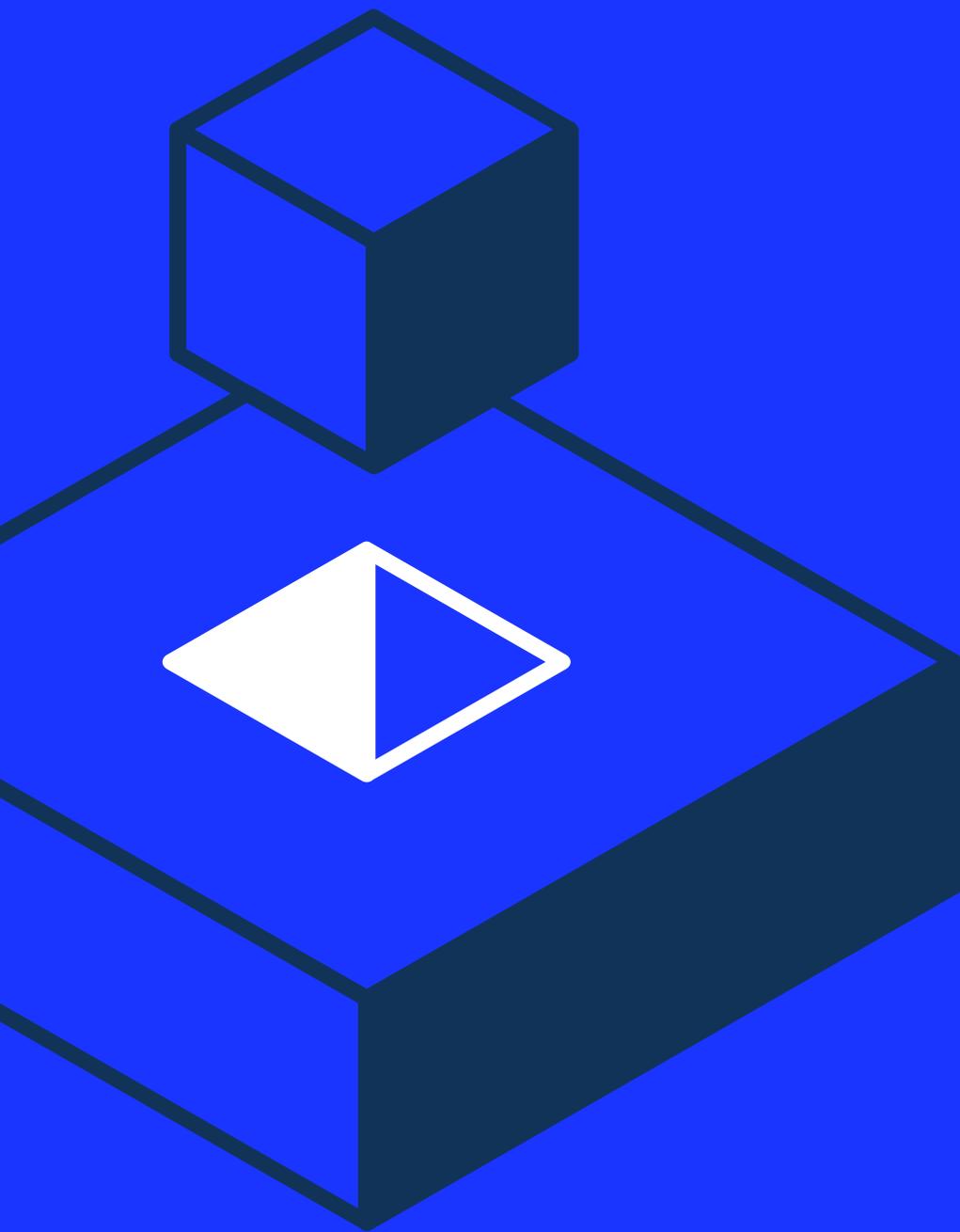


Code
Addict's

The Design Sprint

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UK

15 Blackwell Close
N21 1UL, London

Poland

Mielżyńskiego st. 27/29
61-725 Poznań

Code Addict's way to go.

This article is a quick introduction to our process in how we approach product design. For your convenience, we have simplified the brainstorming process for complicated projects with these four easy steps.

The Design Sprint.

Over the years, we have worked through many project kick-offs and estimations. For the initial concept design stage, the purpose is to have your product planned, sketched, and estimated to the highest degree before the start of the development process. This step allows us to understand what the client needs and what the software will do for the user. The main focus is for us to clarify the biggest challenges of the project prior to development. Overall, this phase takes a week, but is critical to the success of the project.

Step I: Understand

First meeting and open discussion.

We meet couple of times with the clients and all people involved in the products creation. We openly ask questions with a sole purpose of understanding what the product is designed to do. Standard questions include why the client is interested in developing the project, what are the key values, and the ultimate ideas behind its creation.

Remember, we haven't heard about the project before and were not part of the process in developing the idea. Clients have the chance and opportunity to challenge themselves, and their idea for the purpose of discovering potential issues. We know clients have discussed the idea hundreds of times in the past, so this stage is essentially a pitch practice. The client explains the idea to us as though we are an investor and have never heard about the project before. It is essential clients explain the project to us clearly and answer unexpected questions.

This step makes it easy to separate the weakest points in the concept and reveal the poorly-thought through sections and parts of the product. It is quite often that client is so familiar with their idea that they forget to specify crucial aspects of the product in the initial correspondence.

All of us have piles of sticky notes. Even though we constantly write stuff down, if a sentence, idea, functionality or a user-flow solution seems relevant enough, we put it on a note and stick it to the walls of the conference room. After a meeting, we don't like to jump to conclusions. We sleep on it first, and communicate to the client later.

Step II: The Design Document

Drafting a design document

For this step, we try not to limit ourselves to wire-framing of any sort. Even though we use a lot of paper, it is crucial to write down as many ideas as possible. This process lets us collect important data essential for the development process.

In-between meetings, we read all the notes and compile them into a draft Design Document. The document contains all functionalities we discussed with the client. We make an active effort to keep it as high-level as possible to avoid wasting time on details that will likely change and evolve over the next few days during back and forth correspondence. Afterwards, we finish the design document on our end and send it to the client for approval.

Step III: Mood Board

Choosing the design path for the project

Everyone has their own idea about aesthetics and preferred style of how things look. We understand that and that's why in order to identify the client's preferences, we prepare mood boards and present them. This enables us to learn their way of seeing graphics and design. It's important to remember that this process is very general and exploratory. This step is for our designers to have a better, clearer view of what the client is trying to achieve. It is not an attempt to create a final design. We finish up the design document on our end and send to the client to accept a final draft

Step IV: Prototype

Sketching a prototype for the product.

First, we start on paper with printed wire-frames of the devices that the product is intended to work on. If possible, we like to include someone from the clients team in this step. It gives us a clear and immediate feedback on our ideas, and also lets the client re-evaluate the products functionalities and layout assumptions. We go through the design document from the top to bottom and focus on each problem and a functionality separately.

All of the team members involved in the products development sketch a current screen and then we discuss it one by one. We mark the solutions and ideas we like, and add notes to a designated areas if necessary. These sessions should not take longer than three hours. We've noticed after that time our minds tend to find a quick, not so thought-through solutions we usually have to change later. On occasion, we do two or even three of these sessions to ensure optimal project development.

When we feel satisfied with the data collected, we give it to our UX design team to design a digital-ready wire-framed prototype. We love how Sketch, MarvelApp and Principle make our lives easier. Thanks to those applications, we've reduced the digital prototyping process to 2-3 days. After the client and our team has accepted and tested the prototype, we let our engineers take over and begin development.