Tools for Advanced Prototyping for Mobile Apps

Joseph Kim Happy Dojo





北京 伦敦 组约 旧金山 圣保罗 上海 东京



Geekbang>. InfoQ



2017年10月17-19日 上海·宝华万豪酒店

主办方

→ 扫描二维码 开启软件开发新思路







E60会员招募李

EGO旨在组建全球最具影响力的技术领导者社交网络,联结杰出的技术领导者学习和成长。

2017年6月30-7月10



SPEAKER INTRODUCE

JosephMobile Developer atKimHappyDojo

Joseph Kim is a mobile developer at HappyDojo based in San Francisco. He focuses on working with startups build mobile apps for iOS and React Native. He loves building prototypes and is passionate about improving the process.



Summary

- Why prototype?
- How prototypes are built now and why they're important
- Introduce ideas and tools we're working on for creative developers to build prototypes in the future
- Explore technical considerations in building prototyping tools





Technical Designer - Designer that invests in coding skills.

Creative Developer - Developer that invests in UI/UX skills.





Why prototype?





- Your company just spent 6 months with
 - 4 developers
 - 1 designer
- Building an app that users can't understand and hate using





- Your company just spent 6 months with
 - 4 developers
 - 1 designer
- Building an app that users can't understand and hate using
- You didn't get the design (UX) right!



- Shipping a production app is a significant investment
- If the app flops it's a big loss





- Shipping a production app is a significant investment
- If the app flops it's a big loss
- What can we do we avoid this situation?











Test

- Test the app yourself until it feels right
- Test the app with new users from the target demographic and make sure it feels right for them





Build - Test - Learn







You just make the best product you can, and you don't put it out until you feel it's right.

- Steve Jobs





How do you know when it feels right?





Getting good at cooking

- Try as many dishes as possible
- Try to copy them
- Experiment cooking as many dishes as possible
- This will expand your sense of taste
- Your sense of taste will tell you if something is right
- WARNING You taste will develop faster than your cooking skills.





Why prototype?





Prototypes

- Build much faster (5x, 10x+)
- Test more iterations before core engineering begins
- Get ideas for how to improve app
- Improvements on top of improvements increase the probability that you're building the right thing



Common Prototyping Scenarios

- 1. Creating a new app
- 2. Major redesign of existing app
- 3. Designing a new feature





Case Studies





1. Creating a new app: Work & Co





1. Creating a new app: Work & Co

- Digital Agency
- 90% repeat business rate
- Top customers like: Apple, Facebook, Google

"Prototypes already are and continue to become an even bigger and more a part of our process. It sounds insanely fast, but for all our projects it's common to see working prototypes within the first week of designing,"

- Calvin Teoh, Work & Co





Framer

- Open source Javascript library especially good at prototyping animations and interactions
- Very popular with designers
- Paid for IDE and design tool













1. Creating a new app: Work & Co

- Example prototype made in framer for Marriott
- https://blog.framer.com/powering-design-agencyworkflows-63f3dd8faf0c







Benefits of this approach

- Work & Co can rapidly iterate with their clients
- Prototypes can be validated through user tests
- No more long cycles where design firms spend a whole month just doing research before jumping in and experimenting
- With rapid cycle time a large space of app design can be explored



2. Major redesign: Uber





2. Major redesign: Uber

- In 2016, Uber began complete redesign of app
- Team prototyped and user tested multiple iterations before major development began

"Framer is integral to our workflow, allowing us to perfect animations and motions and then validate and test flows even before handoff to the engineer."

- Bradley Ryan, Uber



2. Major redesign: Uber



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X8axMiUi bE





Benefits of this approach

- A major new feature motivating prototype was UberPOOL
- Redesigns can have massive scope
- Hard to find design flaws until you start filling out the details of the system
- Uber can get the user experience right the first time before handing off the design to engineering
- Engineers can use the prototype as a reference and spec when building the production version



3. Designing a new feature: Facebook





3. Designing a new feature: Facebook

- Vast majority of designers at Facebook are building prototypes
- Investing in prototyping tools such as Origami Studio

"Prototyping has fundamentally changed the way we design products at Facebook"

- Matej Hrescak, Facebook





Origami Studio

- Visual programming language
- Based on Origami which was built on top of Quartz Composer









3. Designing a new feature: Facebook






Benefits of this approach

- Engineers can focus on implementation
- Engineers are building something the design team has confidence in
- Designers can specify the animation and interactions in a highly precise way through the prototype





Common themes





Effective prototyping makes engineering time more productive





Prototypes are part of the new spec

- With apps involving animation and gestures, it's unrealistic to write out the spec in words
- Prototypes as part of the spec save engineering time





Spending core engineering time on something users won't understand or like is a huge waste





Prototyping is an industry best practice





Companies that don't prototype are at a huge disadvantage to those that do





Common Prototyping Scenarios

- 1. Creating a new app
- 2. Major redesign of existing app
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1. Scenario -Creating a new app







I want to build the next great home sharing app like Airbnb, but I want it to be more social like Instagram.





What do we do? How should we build the prototype?





Many tools for creating prototypes





Many tools for creating prototypes

- Framer
- Principle
- Marvel
- Origami Studio
- proto.io
- Craft Prototype
- Many more...





Framer

- Interaction are written in code, but the library is only used for prototypes and is not a general purpose framework
- Since the implementation is in Javascript it feels slow which hurts its realism





Origami Studio

- Interactions are fast and can be used to generate code, but the more complexity you add the slower it gets
- You have to use a visual programming language to program interactions





Not necessarily the best prototyping tools for creative developers

- Biased towards designers
- Trade-off expressiveness for simplicity
- Hard to incorporate real data
- As a developer, I am skeptical about learning a framework or new software that's only good for prototyping



Creative developer priorities for prototyping tools

- Fast dev-to-test loop (~ 1s)
- Minimal time to get started
- Realistic
- Want to use a general purpose framework
- Supporting tools
- Code reuse, or at least easily portable





How should we build our prototype?



I want to build the next great home sharing app like Airbnb, but I want it to be more social like Instagram.





Proposal - Use React Native to build the prototype





React Native

- Cross-platform mobile development framework
- Supports iOS and Android
- Very performant animations and gestures
- Write code in React and Javascript
- Can build hybrid apps and easily bridge to native components









Fast dev-to-test loop (~ 1s)

- React Native bundler can automatically detect changes and reload the app
- Works on simulator or on device
- Faster than normal native development





Minimal time to get started

- Just exploring a new idea
- Don't want to recreate the UI, yet





Basil - Experimental tool to convert native iOS UI to React Native

- Export UIView hierarchy to JSON and images
- Convert to React Native
 - Currently just converting everything to a hierarchy of images
- Minimize the time to get started prototyping





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Process using Basil

- Capture multiple screens from Airbnb and Instagram
- Isolate pieces of the UI as reusable components
- Generate the reusable components as React Native
- Restitch React Native components with new functionality





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UlView-1-5208166147.json					
		///			



```
return (
 <View>
   { defaultRootRender }
   View
     style=II
       top: 48 + 20,
       backgroundColor: 'white',
       paddingVertical: 5.
       borderTopwidth: 1,
       borderBottomWidth: 1.
       borderColor: '#d6d5d6'.
     He
     cText
       style=[f
         paddingLeft: 14,
         marginVertical: 4,
         fontSize: 18,
         textAlign: 'left',
         fontWeight: '300',
         color: '#lelele'.
         letterSpacing: 0.5.
       { 'FRIENDS WHO STAYED IN THIS AREA' }
      (Text)
     // InstagramHeadWrapper is our new scrollable Instagram bar 🗤 ]
     <InstagranHeadWrapper
       onButtonClick={(buttonIndex: number, buttonPositionX: runber) => {
         this.setState({
           activeButton: [
             index: buttonIndex,
             x: buttonPositionX.
         Đ
        Bł.
       herizontalPadding={8}
   </view>
   { /* Scrollable feed view */ }
   <ScrollableContentView >>
   <FloatingSegmentedButtorContainerComponent1 />
   { /* Modal when selected Enstagram head */ }
   { modal }
  </ View>
):
```

Restitching it back together











Realistic

- Users can test on device
- Native performance
- Gestures
- Animation
- Real data




Supporting tools

- React Native has an excellent ecosystem of tools available and being built
- React Native packager for rapid reload while developing
- Chrome debugger for understanding and fixing bugs
- Typescript for type safety
- Visual Studio Code to edit JS/TS
- XCode for debugging
- Buddybuild for reshipping prototypes to stakeholders





General purpose framework

 React Native is worth learning for mobile developers even if it is not being used for production







Code Reuse

 Prototypes in React Native can be used as a reference to re-implement natively.





Original swiping stories



Garden Retreat steps from Haight St

Entire place Hosted by Sara



88		E.	P
1mr			Ŧ
3 quests	1 room	2 beds	1 bath

About this home

One bedroom sanctuary with a beautiful cordon viou and corry fireplane. Correct

\$185 per night

Check availability





Swiping stories with overlay



Garden Retreat steps from Haight St

Entire place Hosted by Sara





About this home

One becroom sanctuary with a beautiful

\$185 per night

Check availability





2. Scenario -Major redesign of existing app







Let's redo our entire flagship app in the Google Material way.





2. Major Redesign

- Create new components from Sketch and existing app
- Re-stitch together and prototype new materialstyle animations in React Native











3. Scenario -Designing a new feature







We need to make the sharing flow more delightful. Our designer is a wiz with Framer. Have them send me some comps.





3. Designing a new feature

- In this scenario we want a designer to build the prototype using Framer
- So instead of generating React Native we generate React SketchApp which is used to make a Sketch file.
- Then we will import Sketch into Framer









Bon Geekbang>. InfoQ

React SketchApp

- Built by Airbnb
- Renders React Native to Sketch
- https://github.com/airbnb/react-sketchapp











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Technical considerations building prototyping tools





Basil Embed

- Static library that exposes view hierarchy via embedded http server
- Can be injected into own apps
- Can be injected into 3rd party apps if iOS phone is jail broken





Electron

- We originally tried building the app as an electron app
- Lot of abstraction layers
- API is not as direct as macOS
- Performance and interactivity such as drag-anddrop a challenge





Mac App

- Familiar as an iOS developer
- Relatively performant on first pass
- Code seems to be more maintainable





Model driven architecture

- Images and position, size
- Platform specific meta-data
- Convert from any platform to common model
- Convert from common model back to any platform









How will the process of prototyping continue to evolve?





Still a large gap between tools and processes between design and development





With tools like Basil that can convert from one format to another we can reduce the overhead from switching tools





Design is not just what it looks like and feels like. Design is how it works.

- Steve Jobs





Design is not just what it looks like and feels like. Design is how it works.

- Steve Jobs

Engineers need to be a part of design process





Prototyping is a creative process





By investing in creative skills and tools engineers can become more effective at prototyping





THANKS!





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