



HOW TO RUN SUCCESSFUL DESIGN SPRINTS

As presented in [Design Sprints - a Speakers' Corner event from Innovate Island on 07/05/2021](#)

[George Krasadakis](#)

1. The 'Design Sprint' explained

The purpose, the structure, the key elements; definition of success

2. The Success Factors

What makes a Design Sprint successful – things to do, risks to manage

3. The 'connected' Design Sprint

How to improve Design Sprints – in terms of preparation, execution, business value

1. The 'Design Sprint' explained

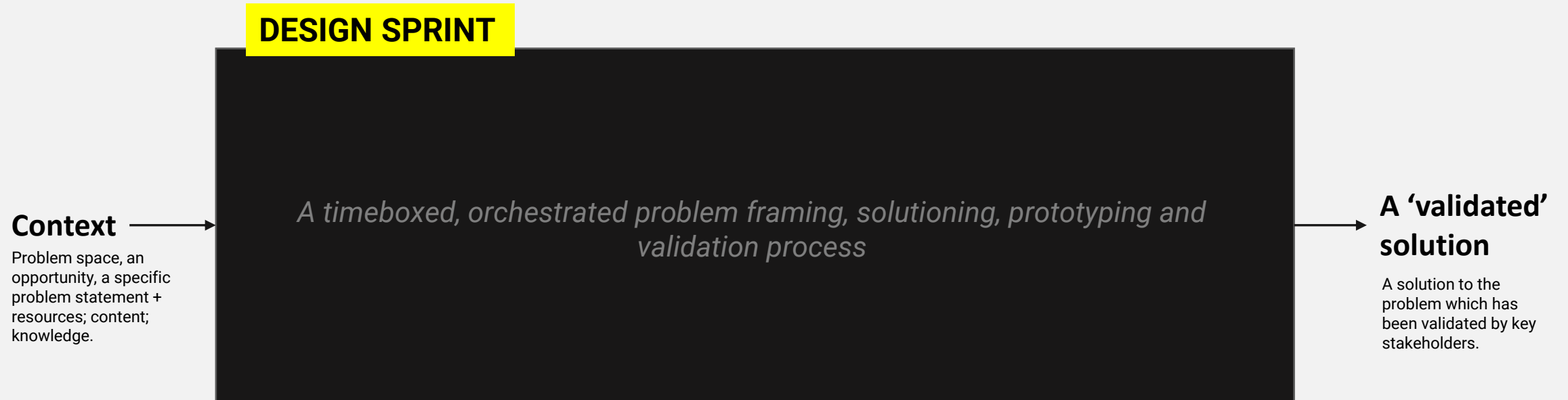
What is a 'Design Sprint'?

“A time-constrained, five-phase process that uses design thinking with the aim of reducing the risk when bringing a new product, service or a feature to the market.” - en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Design_sprint

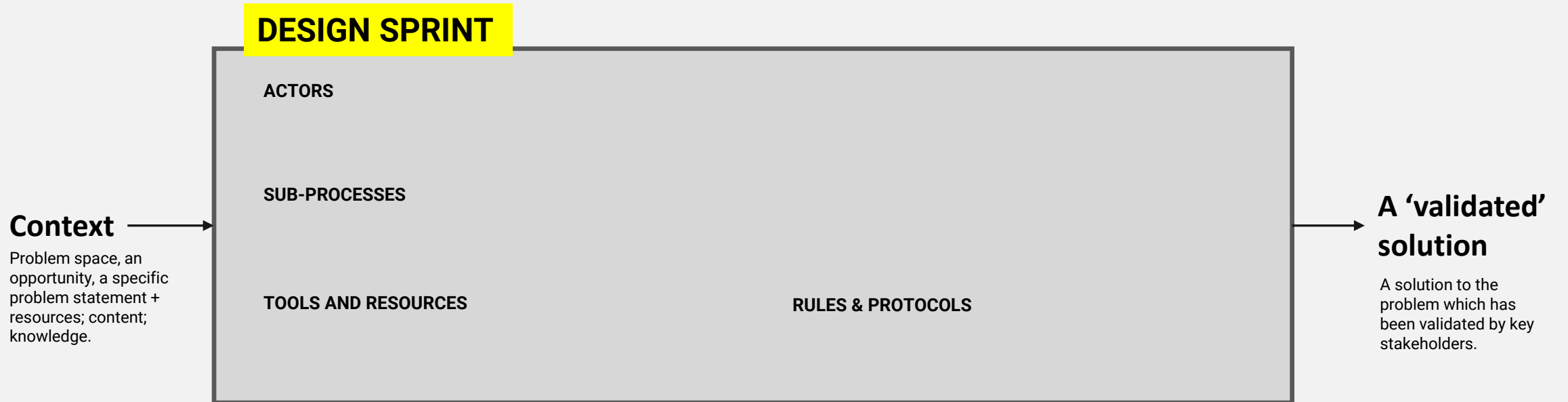
What is a 'Design Sprint'?

A timeboxed, orchestrated *problem framing*, *solutioning*, *prototyping* and *validation* process.

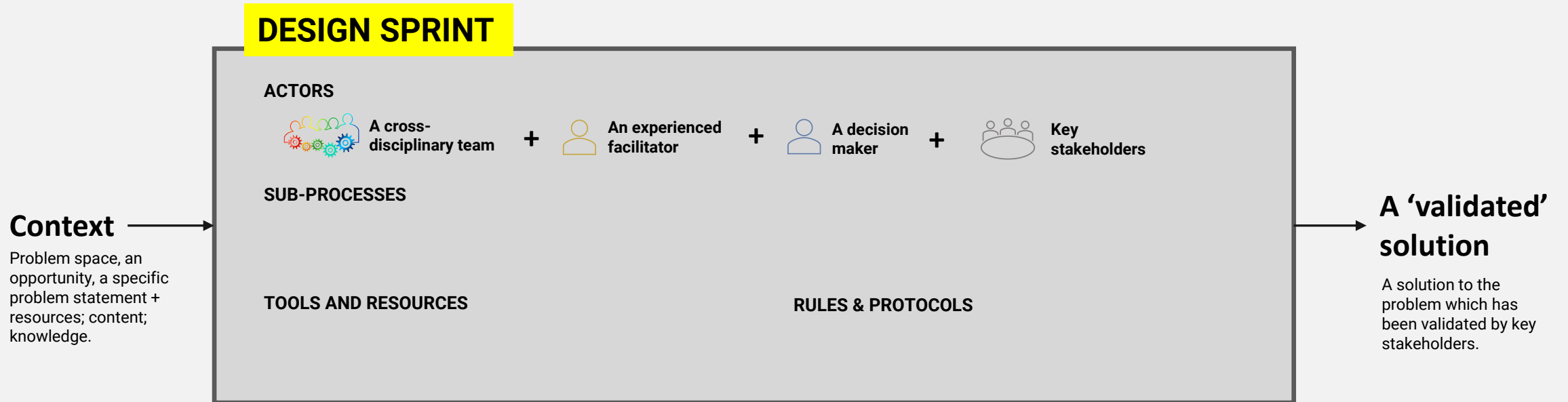
What is a Design Sprint?



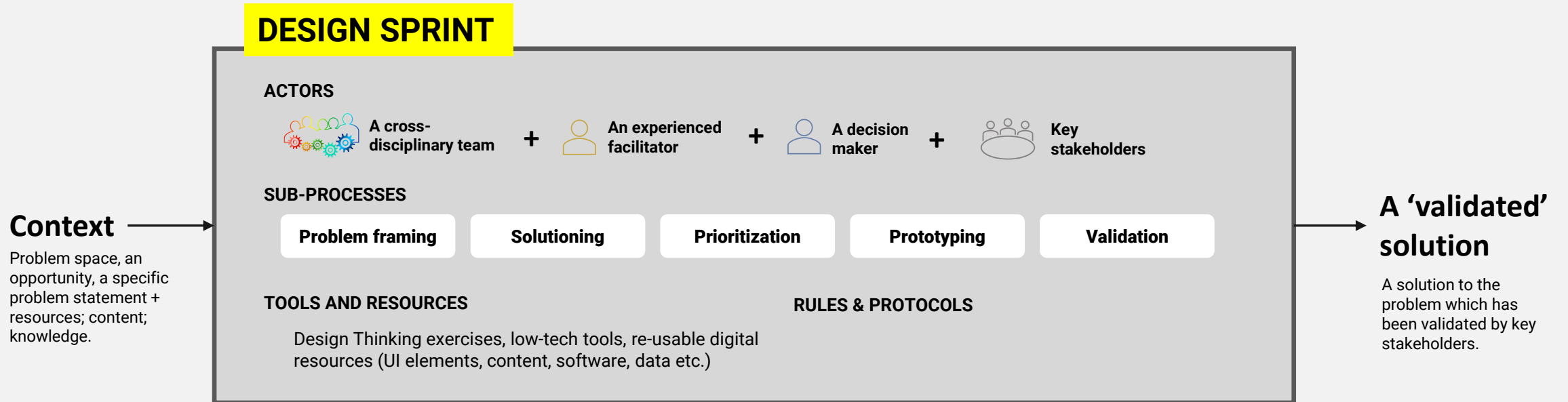
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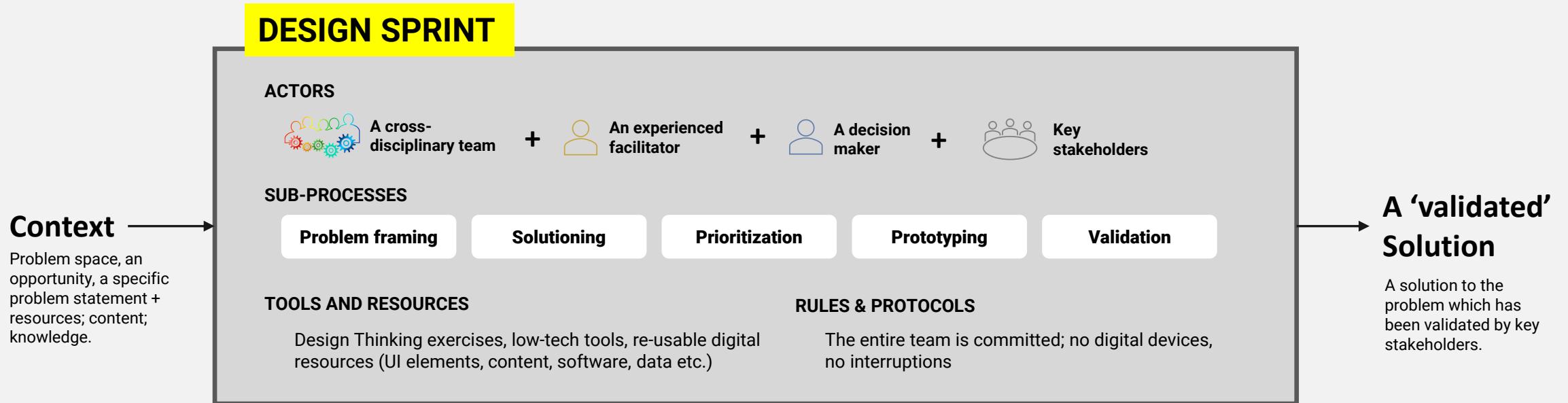
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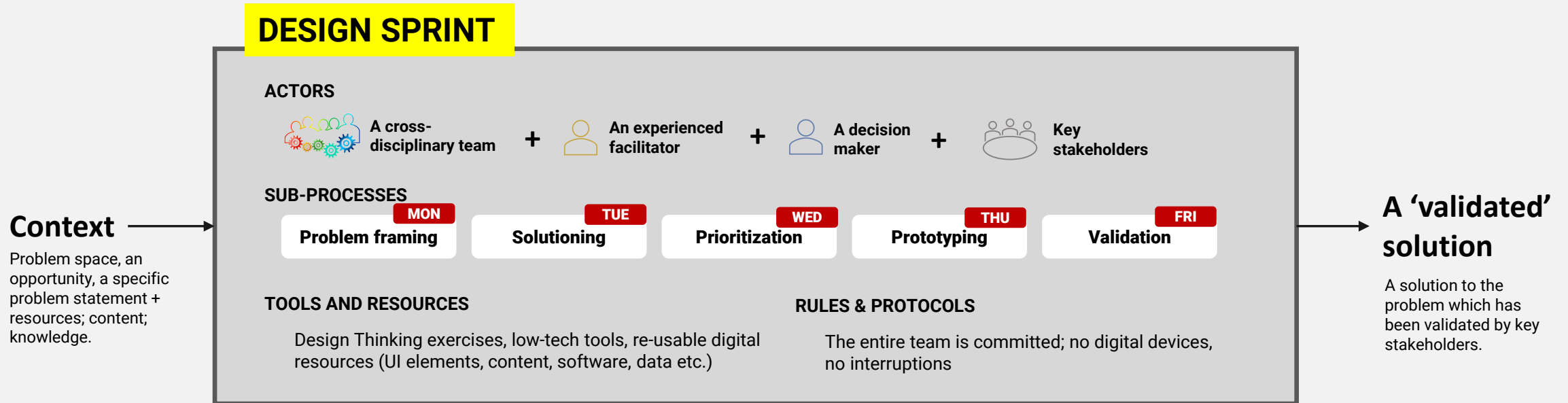
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What is a Design Sprint?



Design Sprints: Outputs, Outcomes, Success

Desired Outputs

1. A well-articulated and framed **problem**
2. A defined **solution** and a high-level roadmap
3. A package of **feedback** and validation of the solution, by the key stakeholders.
4. A collection of associated problems.
5. A collection of **ideas**
6. *Wireframes, architectural diagrams, user journeys, clickable prototypes, low-tech prototypes*

Desired Outcomes

1. **Clarity** regarding the problem, and the overall direction
2. An ambitious **vision** – regarding the ‘solution’ or the product
3. **Alignment, inspiration** across stakeholders and groups
4. A boost of the **innovation culture** and the importance of the cross-disciplinary collaboration

Successful design sprints deliver outcome in at least some of the **above** directions. It is the beginning of a long process of product definition, iterations and development.

Less successful design sprints deliver just outputs and, occasionally, *noise*.

Design Sprints: Do you need one?

Design Sprints are expensive events. Consider running one when:

1. There is a **major, strategic, complex problem** to be solved
2. There is **high degree of uncertainty** associated with aspects of the problem
3. There are **no obvious solutions**
4. There are **multiple, cross-domain skills** required

For simpler cases, you should consider other innovation events, such as:

1. Brainstorming or Ideation sessions
2. Wireframing, rapid prototyping or hackathons
3. User research threads
4. Market Intelligence sessions – competition and trends exploration

2. The Success Factors

SF #1: The right team: Diversity of thought; expertise; mindset

Bring the Right skills

Ensure that the right multidisciplinary team with sufficient skills is in the room.



Form the right mindset

Openness, willingness to share, to co-create, to challenge assumptions. Ability to think big but also be pragmatic and purpose-driven.

Leave seniority out of the room

Team must 'forget' about seniority, hierarchy, and authority.

Keep the team small

Limit the team to 6-7 people to ensure pace, and productive interaction. Invite others JIT, as needed

Get the team prepared

Emphasize on the importance of preparation – set the context via pre-reads

SF #2: The Right Context

Create a good pre-read package

Share upfront an executive view of all the aspects of the problem, the goals of the sprint, the process itself

What to share upfront:

1. The problem space, the impacted users, the pain points etc.
2. The strategy and goals of the organization
3. The Technology state of the art.
4. The competition, the startup scene; successful and failed attempts.
5. The Design Sprint process itself – help people to trust the process



SF #3: Readiness for Rapid Prototyping

UI Frameworks

Libraries of reusable UI components, application templates, charts, layouts etc.

Data sets

A catalogue of standardized datasets in the context of the problem – internal and/or external. This could accelerate prototyping of data-driven concepts



Tech Devices

Some concepts might require specialized equipment e.g. AR/VR devices, or the ability to 3D Scan/3D print etc. Ensure that these are provided when needed.

APIs

A catalogue of APIs in the context of the problem could accelerate prototyping

Design Tools

Tools to accelerate the prototyping process – like wireframing, website builders, advanced content/ experience tools etc.

SF #4: A Great Facilitator

*A great facilitator
can make the
difference*

*The facilitator has the
difficult role to
orchestrate the process
and lead this ultra-
creative group to the
desired outcome .*

The facilitator must be able to:

1. Apply the rules
2. Maintain a *fast pace and increased levels of energy*
3. Must ensure that all voices are heard – minimize the impact of ‘power’ and ‘authority’ in the room.
4. Must deeply understand the context – not only the generic structure and rules of Design Sprints

SF #5: Readiness to capture everything

*Add a note-taker
to capture all key
points*

*Consider adding an
illustrator as a 'visual
storyteller' - to compile
the highlights of the
design sprint*

A digitized version of:

1. The ideas, solutions, problems mentioned throughout the sprint
2. The key points of the discussion
3. Sticky notes - typed into a single digital document
4. Diagrams, sketches, flows, wireframes
5. Feedback captured from stakeholders

A 'digital package' that become available to the participants after the event.

A wall covered in numerous handwritten sticky notes, representing a design sprint process. The notes are arranged in a somewhat organized manner, with some larger notes and many smaller ones. The text on the notes is mostly in Portuguese and appears to be a mix of questions, observations, and ideas. Some legible notes include: "DE TAMPOU TEM", "TEMAS PELA NADA 3 PROJETOS ABERTOS SEM DEC-TODA", "EM 17 DE SETEMBRO...", "TEMAS TAMBEM A JORNADA PARA...", "EM 17 DE SETEMBRO A SUPERVISOR A ATUALIZACAO DE...", "EM 17 DE SETEMBRO A SUPERVISOR A ATUALIZACAO DE...", "EM 17 DE SETEMBRO A SUPERVISOR A ATUALIZACAO DE...". The overall scene is dimly lit, with the sticky notes providing the primary source of light and information.

3. The 'connected' Design Sprint

The 'Connected' Design Sprint

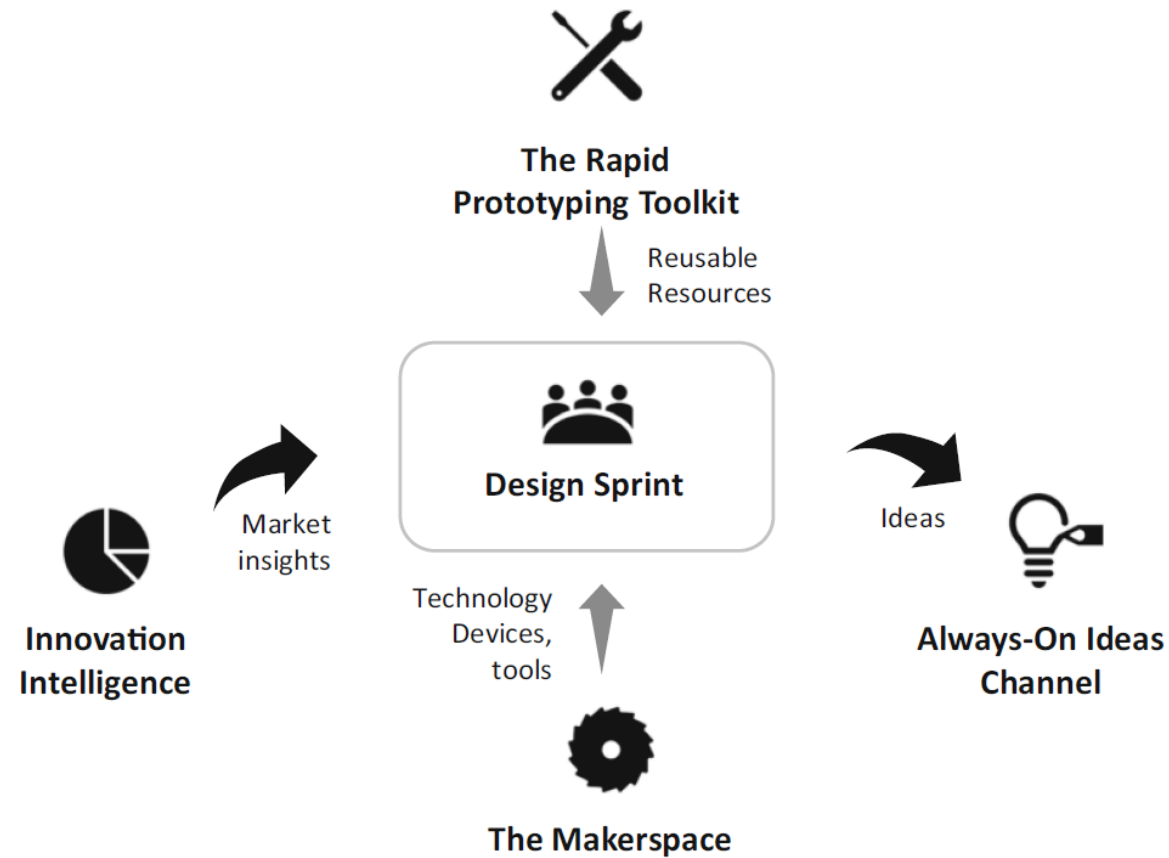


Fig. 10.4 Connecting a design sprint with the innovation framework

Source: [The Innovation Mode](#)

The 'Connected' Design Sprint

*Simplify the set up
and communication
of Design Sprints*

*Introduce the right
templates, leverage
internal innovation tools
and platforms*

How to streamline the set up of the DS

1. **Help the organizer to prepare and share 'the context':** use *content templates*, leverage the *innovation portal* and established channels; participants get a link to a web-page with all the information the need – instructions, pre-read etc.
2. **Help the organizer form the 'dream team'** - a tool that receives the context of the Design Sprint and suggests the right participants
3. **Listen to feedback from participants:** Establish a standardized feedback process to encourage participants to evaluate the design sprint against multiple dimensions.

Source: [The Innovation Mode](#)

Thank you!

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krasadakis.medium.com
[The Innovation Mode](#)

Further reading

[Rapid Prototyping practices for Software Engineering teams](#)

[Idea Management Platforms - Key Principles](#)

[How to Run a Successful Corporate Hackathon](#)

[How to run a successful Design Sprint](#)

The Design Sprint (Knapp, Zeratsky, 2016)

The Innovation Mode (Krasadakis, 2020)



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