

Integrating Axure Into Your Development Process

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Common Goals & Concerns

Companies looking at adopting Axure & prototyping are typically trying to achieve the same goals & have the same concerns

- Goal: Reduce the difference between what's specified in the requirements & what gets developed
- Goal: Make our site more interactive
- Concern: Should we prototype the whole site?
- Concern: Should we re-do all our existing documentation in Axure?

Building what's specified

Software like Axure will help, but what you really need is a person who understands both business and technology

- If you don't have a user experience design process in place, Axure will only kind of help you
- User experience designers are skilled at coming up with solutions that meet business goals in a user-centric manner within the technological context a system must exist in
- Once you establish a UX design process, your UX designer can use Axure to facilitate *iterative* conversations with the business & IT
 - To BAs & stakeholders: "Is this what you meant?"
 - To IT: "What will it take to build this?"

Building what's specified

If you don't have the luxury of access to UX design resources there are still some things you can do to get closer to this goal..

- Get IT input on what they need from you in terms of documented wireframes. Pay special attention to annotation fields!
- Structure your prototype to accommodate IT's documentation needs, including adding relevant annotation fields and removing irrelevant ones
- While you're prototyping, seek IT feedback frequently and regularly

Increasing interactivity

If you are going to make your site more interactive, prototyping isn't enough... user testing must be frequent & regular!

- Establish a pool of users you can contact and test with on short notice to reduce the time & overhead of recruiting for each test
- Prototype & test your core interactions first before building out the whole prototype (proof-of-concept testing)
- Once you've built the whole prototype, perform an integrated test that evaluates how well all the features work together

Should we prototype the whole site in Axure?

No.

Should we put all our old docs in Axure?

No.

Not helping. I wanna get my money's worth!

Here are two things that will help you dissuade your boss from these fool's errands

1. Large Axure prototypes are unwieldy and difficult to manage.
 - When you generate a prototype, you can't choose which pages to generate. It's the current page or all pages, no in between.
 - Without some really thoughtful planning and knowing what you will do ahead of time, managing a very large prototype can result in a lot of tedious rework
2. Documentation is an artifact of the design process
 - It is of no use if it doesn't describe how to build something new or something better
 - Re-documenting in Axure is time consuming busy-work

Contexts

Consultancy/Agency

Usually these types of organizations respond well to efforts toward improvement and individual initiative...

- Communicate the benefits of prototyping & how easy Axure makes it to your management. Suggest try a project with it. Do not fail to mention the free trial. With enough whining & begging, it can be possible to extend your trial if necessary
- Do your project & keep track of what sucks & what rules. Do not be afraid to ask questions on the forum, Twitter, or to support@axure.com. Do a lunch'n learn with your team to get them excited too.
- Go back to management with your experience. Make sure you focus on how this can allow you to be more effective for your clients.

Consultancy/Agency

In terms of working Axure into your actual process...

- Get all your UXDs trained in on it to get moving quickly. Now, if only I knew someone who did Axure training...
- Decide what you're going to use it for... at Evantage, we use it for all our main UXD deliverables except site maps.
- Develop a Word document template (.docx) for specs
- Develop a template .RP file with common structural elements (instructions, change log, site map structure, etc.) & assets you reuse a lot (e.g., custom widgets for rollover links)
- Do all your design thinking *outside of Axure!*
- Structure your prototypes to accommodate change

Agency with a platform

Integrating Axure into these organizations is much the same as for regular agencies, just with more emphasis on reuse

- Unless you've got a pattern library already, don't start there. Focus on project work first & follow appropriate pattern library creation best practices to build yours in Axure.
- Create a widget library for small, isolated interactions that require only moderate customization to be effective
- Create masters & custom widgets for page types, grids, & larger interactions or content areas, objects that require significant customization to be effective
- Store these in a template .RP file that also includes any widget styles that are required for the library

Corporate & No UX Team

This is a challenge any way you slice it. Axure will be helpful here, but it is not a solution

- Focus your efforts on how a prototype & spec can help with the requirements gathering & communication process
- We'll discuss how Axure can fit into that process...
- ...and how to set up Axure to accommodate it

Corporate & No UX Team

Axure can help smooth the requirements gathering & communication process

- An Axure prototype will help you analyze what the requirements call for, put it in front of stakeholders and ask, “Is this what you meant?”
- An Axure spec will help you document the behavior of the UI in great detail
- An Axure prototype will help you communicate with developers, asking them, “Can you build it like this?”

Corporate & No UX Team

You do this by adding a step between gathering requirements & handing them off for development.

- In this step, go to development first to get their feedback on the information they need to see in the spec, i.e., what annotation fields do they need?
- Then prototype & annotate the screens & interactions and continually go back to the stakeholders for validation
- Get development feedback frequently too, after stakeholders have validated
- Generate both an annotated prototype and spec for development and walk them through both together at handoff.
- With all this collaboration you've done up front, there should be no surprises and few questions

Mark's Stuff Goes Here

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