

# 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](mailto: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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