Identify a Variable

WHY identify a variable

Identifying a variable you want to test helps you understand what kind of prototype you are going to create. Most prototypes should not simply be mock-ups of a solution you have in mind. Instead, create prototypes – which may not look like or wholly represent your solutions at all – that help you learn about specific aspects of your solution or mindsets of your users. When you identify a variable you can save energy in not creating all the facets of a complicated solution, and, more importantly, the results of testing with users will often be more conclusive and nuanced.

Incorporating too many variables into one prototype can water down the feedback you'll get from your users – what was it were they responding to? You might never find out. Identifying a variable also gives you the opportunity to create multiple prototypes, each varying in the one property. Giving a user tester a choice and the ability to make comparisons often results in more useful feedback because that person is encouraged to promote one option over another (rather than a less useful "I like it" response you might get with one prototype).

HOW to identify a variable

Prototype with a purpose; think about what you are trying to learn by making a prototype. Identify one variable to flesh out and test with each prototype you build. Bring resolution to that aspect of the prototype. Remember a prototype doesn't have be, or even look like the solution idea. You might want to know how heavy a device should be. You can create prototypes of varied weight, without making each one operable. In another example, you may want to find out if users prefer getting delivery or picking up themselves – you may not even need to put anything in the box to test this.