

Table 14.1 Checklist: Working Interface vs. Paper Prototype

This checklist is a tool that will help you evaluate the potential usefulness of paper prototyping for your project. For each row, place a check mark in the column that best describes your project. The number of checkmarks in each column isn't especially important, and not all factors will apply to every situation. The main thing you should do is look for "showstoppers" that could prevent you from testing the working interface.

	<i>Working Interface</i>	<i>Paper Prototype</i>
People and Logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> There are only a few people working on the design, perhaps 3 or 4 at most <input type="checkbox"/> The people directly responsible for the design are already proficient with a computer-based tool like VB, Dreamweaver, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Everyone working on the design has a technical (i.e., programming) background <input type="checkbox"/> The development team and users are all located within a reasonable commuting distance, or remote testing is a viable option <input type="checkbox"/> The users are readily available. They won't be upset if we have to reschedule a test, and a few rescheduling fees won't break our budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The product team is larger <input type="checkbox"/> Using a computer-based prototyping tool would require a learning curve before we were proficient enough to prototype what we envision <input type="checkbox"/> There are non-programmers on the team whose input is important, such as tech writers, customer support reps, or Marketing <input type="checkbox"/> We aren't all in the same geographic area and remote testing isn't a good option – if we're going to do usability testing, someone has to travel <input type="checkbox"/> The recruiting firm charges us a fee to reschedule users, or the users are people we don't want to inconvenience
Development Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The interface is a standalone piece of software or other technology – it doesn't rely on other stuff <input type="checkbox"/> All the software modules needed for usability testing are stable, or we're confident we can test around the problems without too much difficulty <input type="checkbox"/> It's not a problem to pause development for a couple of days to do usability testing <input type="checkbox"/> It's not difficult to set up a test environment, including hardware, databases, accounts, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> We can control everything the user sees, including product databases and ads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> There are many software modules involved in successful completion of the tasks <input type="checkbox"/> Some software modules are under development, are of uncertain reliability, or otherwise not under our direct control <input type="checkbox"/> People are constantly submitting changes – we either have to ask them to hold off for a few days or we'd need to set up a separate test environment <input type="checkbox"/> It would take time and/or money to set up a test environment, or it would be hard to create one that's sufficiently realistic <input type="checkbox"/> Some of the content comes from sponsors, manufacturers, or other outside sources, and we can't always predict or control it

Tasks, Data, and Test Scenarios	<input type="checkbox"/> Reset procedures are minimal – transactions can be easily faked or reversed <input type="checkbox"/> Installation and configuration are not being tested <input type="checkbox"/> There are no long delays for the user to sit through – a minute at most, and usually less <input type="checkbox"/> We want users to bring their own real tasks to the test session	<input type="checkbox"/> Resetting the test environment between tests is complicated – transactions are real, high consequence, or difficult to undo <input type="checkbox"/> Tasks include installation or configuration <input type="checkbox"/> The user may have to wait more than a minute or two for the system to do its processing <input type="checkbox"/> The set of tasks is known in advance; we've created them
Timing and Scope	<input type="checkbox"/> Usability testing can wait until the middle or end of the development process <input type="checkbox"/> There is a previous working version of the interface <input type="checkbox"/> We can't make huge changes at this point, just a few tweaks	<input type="checkbox"/> Usability testing before or during development is desirable <input type="checkbox"/> The interface doesn't exist yet or needs to be substantially redesigned <input type="checkbox"/> We know there are significant problems, or we'd like to experiment with solutions

Note