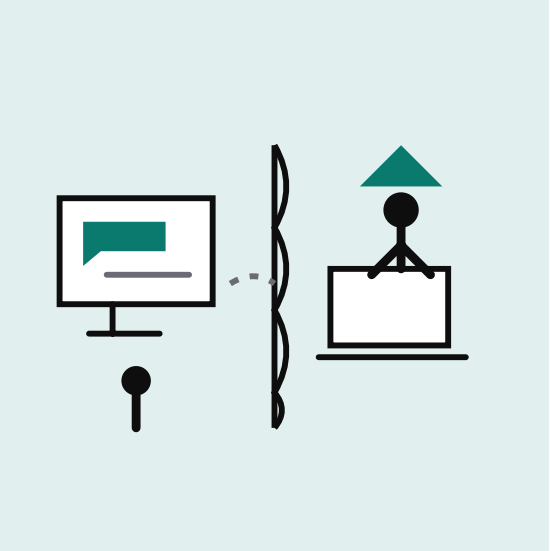
Method

Wizard of Oz

A prototype in which a hidden person, the “wizard,” produces the system's responses by hand while the participant uses it as if it worked on its own.



In Spanish

Mago de Oz

Origin

Kelley (1984) gave it its name; the technique had been used before, for example by Gould, Conti and Hovanyecz (1983)

Output

People's reactions to a simulated system and what the real system needs to do

What it’s for

It lets you check whether an interactive idea, such as an assistant or a service with artificial intelligence, makes sense to people before you program it.

Key elements

Make it feel real

The person experiences it as if the system already worked.

A wizard with a script

Whoever responds rehearses first and follows rules, so the system behaves the same in every session.

Tell them at the end

Afterward, explain who was responding and talk about the experience.

How it’s done

1

Prepare the tasks, the wizard's script, and a place where the wizard can't be seen.

2

The person tries it and the wizard responds live.

3

Adjust the script and test again.

Applications in design

When to use it

To test an assistant, a chat, or any “intelligent” system before building it.

Avoid

Letting the wizard improvise: if the answers change every time, you won't know what failed.

Don’t fall for it

Make sure the wizard isn’t slower than the real system would be: delays give the simulation away.

Connections

Used by

- Conversational design
- Service design
- AI design
- Sound design

Related to

- Role playing
- Prototyping
- Experience prototyping
- Usability testing

Authors and works

1984	**J. F. Kelley**	He used it to design a calendar program that understood English sentences: at first he gave every response himself and, as the program grew, he stepped in less and less.
2018	**Marc Stickdorn, Markus E. Hormess, Adam Lawrence and Jakob Schneider**	They describe it as a cheap way to prototype services, with “wizards” who play people, devices, or the environment.

Sources

Original sources

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