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YOU WANT TO BUILD BETTER PRODUCTS FASTER.'
EV WILLIAMS, FOUNDER OF MEDIUM AND TWITTER

SPRINT

how to
SOLVE BIG PROBLEMS
AND **TEST** NEW IDEAS
IN JUST **FIVE DAYS**

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WITH JOHN ZERATSKY & BRADEN KOWITZ

from **GOOGLE VENTURES**

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

One morning in May 2014, John Zeratsky walked into a building in Sunnyvale, California, USA. He was there to talk with the company Savioke Labs. John's company, Google Ventures (GV), had **invested** money in Savioke Labs.

When John entered the building, the first things he saw were lots of desks, computers, and coffee cups. Then, he saw the machine. It was three and a half feet tall, and it looked like a kitchen trash can. It was white, and there was a small computer **screen** on the top of it, which looked like a face. The machine started to move forward across the floor.

"This is the Relay robot," said Steve Cousins. Steve is Savioke's **founder** and **CEO**. He was wearing pants and a dark T-shirt, and he looked like a school science teacher. "We built this robot here," Steve said, proudly. "We made it to **deliver** things like toothbrushes, towels, and food to guests in their hotel rooms," he explained. While Steve and John were watching the robot, it drove carefully around a desk and then stopped.

Steve's company wanted to make robots to help people, for example, in restaurants, hospitals, and homes for old people. They decided to start with hotels because all hotels have the same problem—they have very busy times in the morning and evening. At these busy times, lots of guests ask for things in their

rooms at the same time, and there are often not enough hotel workers. This is when robots can help.

But there was one big problem for Savioke. They did not know if the hotel guests were going to like the robots or be frightened by them. So, how should the robots behave with real people? Savioke's **designer**, Adrian Canoso, had lots of ideas for making the robots more friendly. But before he could start work, the people at Savioke had to make some decisions. How should the robot speak to the hotel guests? And what would happen in the elevators?

"I don't feel happy in elevators. I never know if I should talk to the other people," said John.

"That's right," replied Steve. "What happens when a robot gets into the elevator?"

Savioke Labs had only opened a few months ago. The Savioke team had arranged with the hotel company Starwood to try their robots in some of Starwood's hotels. But there were still lots of questions about the robots for the team to answer. And there were only a few weeks left before they had to start trying the robots in the Starwood hotels. It was a great time to try a sprint.

So, what is a sprint? Who are we? And what does our company, GV, do? The sprint is a special way for companies to answer questions and solve problems. It is a five-day **process** that any company can use. We, the three authors of this book (Jake Knapp, John Zeratsky, and Braden Kowitz), all work for GV. GV invests in **start-ups** and we developed the sprint to help new

companies answer questions and solve problems quickly.

For the Savioke sprint, our sprint team just had to answer that one big question: “How should our robots behave with people?” First, the Savioke team made sure that they had a clear week in their diaries. Then, on Monday, they made a list of all the things that they knew about the problem. On Tuesday, they changed from talking about problems to finding ideas and **solutions**. On Wednesday, they chose the best ideas from the day before. On Thursday, they built a great **prototype** of their robot in one day. (This was possible for two reasons. First, the team had already agreed on the best ideas on Wednesday. Also, for the test on Friday, the robot had to do only one thing: it had to deliver a toothbrush to a room.) Finally, for the last part of their sprint on Friday, the group took their robot to a hotel where they could try their ideas with some hotel guests.

For the test, Michael Margolis, who works with us at GV, met a guest in her hotel room. At first, Michael did not want the woman to know what the test was about. He asked her some questions about what she did when she was traveling. “Where do you put your bags? When do you open them?” (All the questions that Michael was asking had come from the Savioke team.)

“What would you do if you forgot your toothbrush?” continued Michael.

“I’d call the front desk for a new one,” replied the woman.

“OK,” said Michael. “Make the call.”

She picked up the phone and called the front desk.

“No problem,” the receptionist replied. “I’ll send you a toothbrush right away.” When the woman put down the phone, Michael continued to ask her questions that might give him more useful information. “Do you always use the same bags? When was the last time that you forgot something in a hotel?”

Then, the phone rang. The guest picked up the phone and heard, “Your toothbrush has arrived.”

The woman opened the door. (There was a hidden video camera in the room and the Savioke team was watching her at their office. They really wanted to see her face when she saw the robot for the first time.)

“Wow!” she said. “It’s a robot!”

The woman took the toothbrush and pressed the screen on the robot to say that she had received it. Then she pressed the screen again to give the robot five stars out of five. When she did this, the robot danced to show it was pleased that the woman was so happy.

“This is so cool!” the woman said. “If this hotel starts to use robots, I’ll stay here every time.”

The other guests in the test behaved in the same way as the first woman guest. They all thought the robot was great. Nobody felt nervous when the robot arrived. Everything was a big success—even the robot’s “happy dance.” It was a **risky** idea to make a robot that behaved like a real person. But now the Savioke team was confident because they had tested the idea. Three weeks later, the hotel started to use the robot all the time.

There were stories about the robot in national newspapers. By the end of the summer, so many people wanted to buy the robots that Savioke was not able to make enough of them.

Good ideas are hard to find. Even if you have a great idea, it is not certain that you will succeed. This is true for start-ups and for big companies. What is the most important thing to work on and how do you start? What will your idea look like in real life? How do you know when you have the right answers? We and the people we work with at GV help companies to do sprints. We have worked with many different kinds of company—big and small. We invest in the companies we work with, so start-ups do not have to pay us for advice. We do sprints because we succeed when the companies that we invest in succeed.

This book will help you to run your own sprint so that you can answer your most important business questions. On Monday, you will discuss the problem and decide what you need to think about most. On Tuesday, you will start to think about different solutions to the problem. On Wednesday, you will make some difficult decisions. On Thursday, you will make a prototype. And, on Friday, you will test your prototype on real people.

First, we are going to look at how to prepare for a sprint.

CHAPTER TWO

Prepare the stage 1: Project

James Freeman loved fresh coffee. In 2002, he left his job as a musician to start a coffee company. At that time, it was impossible to find coffee with the date that the coffee beans were roasted on the bag. So, James decided to do the job himself. He roasted the coffee beans at home and then drove to markets in Berkeley and Oakland, California, where he made and sold coffee from a **cart**. He was polite and helpful to his customers and the coffee tasted great.

James called his coffee cart Blue Bottle Coffee. Soon he had lots of customers. In 2005, he started roasting in a friend's garage in San Francisco. His business grew, and he opened more cafés. His customers thought that his coffee was the best in the country. The baristas—the people who make the coffee in the cafés—were friendly and they knew a lot about the coffee that they were making. The business seemed perfect. But James did not think that his business was perfect yet. He wanted to open more cafés. And he wanted to deliver coffee from Blue Bottle Coffee to people's homes. This included people who did not live near a Blue Bottle café.

So, in October 2012, James asked some **investors** for help and they invested \$20 million in his business. James had lots of plans for the money. The most obvious idea was to build a